

**REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 03791535 (England and Wales)**

**REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1079046**

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND  
UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021  
FOR  
UNLOCK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EX-OFFENDERS LIMITED

	Page
Report of the Trustees	1 to 24
Independent Examiner's Report	28
Statement of Financial Activities	29
Balance Sheet	30 to 32
Notes to the Financial Statements	33 to 41
Detailed Statement of Financial Activities	42 to 43

The trustees (who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006) present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2021. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015).

## REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

### Unlock National Association of Ex-offenders Limited

Working name	Unlock – for people with criminal records
Registered Company number	03791535 (England and Wales)
Registered Charity number	1079046
Registered office & operational address	Maidstone Community Support Centre 39-48 Marsham Street Maidstone Kent ME14 1HH

<b>Trustees</b>	Mark Rowe, Chair Michael Pattinson, Vice-chair Nigel Parsons, Treasurer Salima Budhani Mark Day Faye Goldman Leigh Hardy Steven Lorber Mandeep Mahil Emma Wilson Hamish MacLellan, appointed 18 May 2020
-----------------	--

<b>Senior Management</b>	Angela Cairns, CEO, appointed 17 May 2021 Julie Harmsworth, Deputy CEO
--------------------------	---

<b>President</b>	General The Lord David Ramsbotham GCB CBE
<b>Vice-President</b>	Judge John Samuels QC

<b>Patrons</b>	Kate Adie OBE DL Dr Silvia Casale Dr Deborah Cheney Prof Andrew Coyle CMG Dexter Dias QC The Rt Hon the Lord Garnier QC Prof Nick Hardwick Matt Hyde FRSA Baroness Helena Kennedy QC Flo Krause LLB Prof Shadd Maruna Jill Stevens
----------------	---

<b>Bankers</b>	NatWest (Larkfield), 718 London Road, Larkfield, Aylesford, Kent ME20 6AN
----------------	---

<b>Independent Examiner</b>	Calcutt Matthews, 19 North Street, Ashford, Kent TN24 8LF
-----------------------------	---

## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

### **Governing document**

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust, and constitutes a company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

Following an extensive review of Unlock's memorandum and articles of association, the board of trustees unanimously passed a new set of articles of association by special resolution in June 2020. The new articles of association provide for greater clarity and practical ease of administration, including setting trustee tenure periods and the appointment of a vice chair. There were no changes to the objects, rules on paying a trustee or what happens if the charity is wound up. The articles of association were submitted to and accepted by the Charity Commission, with the Commission's records being updated accordingly in July 2020. Companies House was also notified.

### **Recruitment and appointment of trustees**

The board carries out an annual review to decide whether there is a need to recruit new trustees. If during the year a trustee leaves, the board will decide whether to recruit at that time. New trustees are openly recruited through advertisement across appropriate forums. One new trustee was appointed this year.

### **Trustee induction and training**

New trustees have an induction session at Unlock's office or virtually to meet other trustees, staff, and volunteers to gain a better understanding of Unlock's work, priorities, and how it operates. They are given the charity's key documents and assigned to read guidance issued by the Charity Commission and Companies House.

### **Organisational structure**

Unlock is a charitable company governed by a board of trustees with day-to-day operations delegated to the CEO.

### **Related parties**

No related parties exist other than the funders identified below.

### **Risk management**

The trustee board has carried out a review of the major risks facing the charity. A risk register is in place which prioritises these risks and identifies mitigating factors, systems, and controls in relation to each. Trustees follow a comprehensive monitoring and review process to capture new risks that may arise and ensure that systems are in place to manage these.

### **Governance**

Trustees attend scheduled board meetings four times a year; in 2020-21 trustee attendance rate was 93%. Individual trustees lead on specific areas of governance, including: safeguarding, risk management, whistleblowing, finance, GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), digital development, human resources, governance code and fundraising. They are encouraged to attend training events and seminars to develop their roles and increase their contribution to the charity's governance. Trustees also undertake ad-hoc tasks as and when required and task-specific working groups are formed as needed and meet separately.

In working towards fulfilling Unlock's vision and achieving high standards of governance and leadership, the trustee board applies the Charity Governance Code. Overseen by the Charity Commission, the Code sets out principles and recommended practice to help us achieve the highest standards of governance and leadership. The board assesses its performance against the Code annually.

Unlock operates within an equal opportunities framework that is inclusive of people with criminal convictions and seeks to attract trustees with a wide range of backgrounds and experience. Approximately half of our trustees and staff have a criminal record. Further work on equality, diversity and inclusion is taking place across the course of Unlock's forward strategy.

### **Interests**

The trustee board maintains a register of members' interests as a measure of good practice and to manage any conflicts

that arise. The register is updated and reviewed annually.

### **Safeguarding**

Unlock has a robust safeguarding policy and other related policies including whistleblowing with named lead trustees for both. In this reporting period, no safeguarding incidents have been identified as relevant for reporting to the Charity Commission via a serious incident report and no whistleblowing concerns were raised.

### **Management**

Management and development of the charity are delegated to the CEO who reports directly to the chair of trustees. A framework of financial delegation is set out in a policy and procedures manual. Systems for line management, appraisal, staff development and supervision are in place, together with grievance and complaints procedures.

### **Remuneration policy**

The trustee board sets the CEO's salary. Staff salaries are aligned to the NJC pay scale and are reviewed annually with any changes approved by the board. Salaries are banded relative to levels of responsibilities.

### **Public Benefit**

Unlock assists people with criminal records to live positive, crime-free lives. In planning the charity's activities this year, the trustees paid due regard to Charity Commission guidance on public benefit. Our activities and beneficiaries are described below and in the 'About Us' section of our website, [www.unlock.org.uk](http://www.unlock.org.uk).

## **OBJECTIVES**

As stated in our governing document, Unlock's charitable objectives are:

"To advance education and promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of people who have received a criminal record (including those who have suffered a legal restriction on their liberty at any penal establishment as a punishment imposed by a court of law, received a non-custodial sentence, fine or any other court or other recorded disposal, such as a police caution), in particular but not exclusively by the provision of information, advice, advocacy and training, and the undertaking of research and policy work, with the object of improving the conditions of life of the aforementioned persons."

### **Purpose**

Unlock is a national independent advocacy charity that supports, speaks up and campaigns for people facing stigma, prejudice and discrimination because of their criminal record. We believe that everyone should be able to move on from their past and contribute fully to society. We provide information, give advice and take on cases to help people overcome the obstacles they are facing because of their criminal record. Many people feel like they are serving a second sentence of stigma and discrimination. To challenge this injustice we collect evidence, speak out and campaign for change so that policies, practices and attitudes allow people the opportunity to reach their full potential.

### **Vision**

Our vision is of a fair and inclusive society where people with criminal records are free from stigma, prejudice and discrimination.

### **Mission**

Our mission is to advocate for people with criminal records so they can move on positively in their lives. Specifically, we:

- Support people with criminal records to navigate their way through challenges.
- Campaign for changes to legislation, policies and practices of government, employers and others.
- Research, present evidence and raise awareness of the systemic issues faced by people with criminal records.

## **OUR BENEFICIARIES**

### **A criminal record affects a large number of people**

There are nearly 12 million people in the UK with a criminal record, the vast majority of whom have put their mistakes behind them and are living law-abiding lives. Yet for many, their criminal record anchors them to their past and gets in the way of them fully contributing to society.

### **It's not just those who have been to prison**

The total cost of reoffending is up to £18 billion a year and 75% of individuals leaving prison make a new claim to an out-of-work benefit within two years of release. We regularly hear from people who say, *"The real sentence started after I was released from prison"*. However, over 90% of people with a criminal record have not been to prison. A third of men and one in nine women have a criminal record by age 53. Ministry of Justice (MoJ) research found that three-quarters of those convicted before the age of 53 had only been convicted once.

### **The injustice of a second sentence**

People with criminal records can find themselves locked out of society and continually punished for things for which they have served their sentences. This injustice can be seen in the numbers of people still unemployed many years later. Around a third of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance have received a conviction or caution in the previous ten years. Unlock's work is founded on the principle that people who have already been punished by the criminal justice system should not face further punishment or exclusion from aspects of civil society.

### **A criminal record is crippling for employment**

Fair access to employment benefits everyone in society. According to MoJ research, the most important factor identified in stopping reoffending was having a job. However, 75% of employers discriminate against applicants on the basis of a criminal record and DWP/YouGov research shows that 50% of employers say they would not recruit 'offenders or ex-offenders'. Feeling shame or embarrassment about their earlier transgressions, people will often avoid applying for jobs which require criminal record checks. There is clear evidence from the United States that reform of criminal record checking gets people off welfare and into work.

A criminal record acquired in youth can be a life sentence. A young person can change quickly, but their criminal record does not: young adults, in particular, can find a criminal record holding them back at a key period in their working lives and well into adulthood. In the last five years, over a million criminal records were disclosed on standard or enhanced DBS checks; even though the offences were from over 30 years ago and the records were received by people when under the age of 25.

### **A criminal record can further entrench racial inequality**

Ethnicity can impact on the type of criminal record someone receives. Data since 2009 shows white people have had a consistently lower average custodial sentence length for indictable offences than all other ethnic groups. Black teenage boys are more likely to be charged with murder than manslaughter and more likely to receive a higher or maximum sentence than white boys. One in four black teenage boys guilty of manslaughter were given maximum jail terms, while white children found guilty of the same crime were sentenced to no more than 10 years, with the majority getting less than four. Our research shows that people feel the criminal records disclosure regime disproportionately impacts certain racialised groups. The disclosure regime exacerbates problems faced by people already treated more harshly at all stages in the criminal justice system. Ways to minimise or delay the use of criminal records may benefit racialised groups in particular, but would result in a much fairer system for everyone.

### **The prejudice is wide-ranging and has intensified**

When the current system of criminal background checks was introduced in 2002, around 1.2 million checks were processed. There are now over six million checks a year, of which over four million are at a higher level, meaning that spent convictions can be disclosed. Since the launch of the Police National Computer in 1974, criminal records have evolved from being used merely for crime detection purposes, to becoming a means of categorising people as potentially 'unsuitable', 'risky' or even 'undeserving'.

Despite some recent positive improvements to the criminal records system, a criminal record can still have a pervasive impact:

- **Insurance** – Insurance cover is often refused or subject to unjustified increased premiums. Insurance

companies regularly take into account convictions that have no relevance to the insurance sought. Insurers fail to follow industry good practice and are often misleading in the questions or assumptions they have, suggesting that people with spent convictions need to disclose these.

- **Housing** – Since 2011 social housing providers have had the right to apply blanket bans to applicants with criminal convictions. Many providers ask on application and apply some form of exclusion for those who declare a conviction.
- **Access to education** – In 2018 UCAS removed the ‘criminal convictions’ box for applicants to non-regulated courses at university. But most universities continue to collect this information and we regularly hear from people who find that old and minor criminal records cause problems when applying to university, particularly in accessing courses like social work and healthcare.
- **Travel** – Visa requirements and confusing travel restrictions can deter or prevent travel.
- **Information on the internet** – Media reports online can lead to information about criminal offences remaining publicly accessible for many years, undermining the purpose of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (ROA).
- **Becoming a trustee or senior manager of a charity** – The Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016 prevents charities from recruiting trustees and senior managers with certain criminal records. Amendments in 2018 extended the framework to cover senior staff and also extended the trustee disqualification framework to cover people on the sex offenders register (even when the conviction is spent).

### **It doesn't stop when a criminal record becomes spent**

The ROA established an important legal principle that, after a specified period of time, most criminal records could become ‘spent’ (meaning that they could not lawfully be taken into account in most circumstances). However, over four decades since the legislation’s introduction, its impact has been gradually eroded. Reducing the time periods after which criminal records become spent has been a priority for Unlock. The ever-increasing numbers of ‘exemptions’ limit the protections of the Act and the status of having a criminal record which is now ‘spent’ risks becoming meaningless if it means that people can continue to be discriminated against in a wide range of areas.

### **Many people are not allowed to be ‘legally rehabilitated’**

People who have served their sentence shouldn't keep being punished indefinitely. Yet, under our current system, anyone sentenced to more than four years in prison can never become ‘legally rehabilitated’. Over 8,000 people a year receive a sentence that cannot become spent. That can mean a lifetime of discrimination in employment, higher insurance premiums and difficulties finding housing. Exclusions by sentence or offence type create injustice and embed the idea that some people are inherently incapable of rehabilitation. We do not believe that to be the case.

### **There have been some positive developments, but there is much more to do**

We are proud to have played a key part in recent years in bringing about positive changes that have benefited people with criminal records:

- Changes to the ROA, passed in 2012 and introduced in 2014, reduced the disclosure period for most jobs for hundreds of thousands of people, and also meant those sentences between 30 months and four years could become spent. But it kept a large proportion of people excluded because of the length or type of their sentence and also failed to tackle the underlying issues with the legislation in today's society.
- The Ban the Box campaign, which Unlock co-founded in 2013, now has over 140 employers that commit to not asking about criminal records at application stage. But research we did in 2018 showed that three quarters of national employers continue to ask at this point.
- The introduction of filtering rules in 2013 meant people with some single convictions and cautions no longer had them show up on standard or enhanced checks. Around 120,000 standard or enhanced checks a year no longer disclose criminal records as a result of filtering. But the rules were unnecessarily rigid and meant that many people still had old and minor criminal records disclosed.
- A Supreme Court ruling in 2019, following the first legal intervention in Unlock's history, led to the government introducing changes to the filtering rules in late 2020 which will benefit around 45,000 people a year. But many convictions and cautions still show up on higher-level DBS checks for many years, sometimes forever.

There is much more to do to achieve our mission of a fair and inclusive society where people with criminal records are free from stigma, prejudice and discrimination.

## Strategic aims and planned activities

Unlock's aims, objectives and activities are subject to annual review to look at what we achieved and the outcomes of our work over the previous twelve months. It measures the success of each key activity and the benefits they have brought to those groups of people we are set up to help. The review also helps us to ensure our aims, objectives and activities remain focused on our stated purpose. This report covers the final year of our strategic plan 2016-20, which set out two key objectives as follows:

**1) To support people moving on positively in their lives.** To achieve this, we:

- Provided direct support to individuals through our helpline and case work;
- Provided online support through our information hub, disclosure calculator tool, e-magazine, forum, and news/update subscriber service;
- Operated a volunteering scheme to train people with convictions as helpline peer-advisors;
- Ran training courses on criminal record disclosure for statutory, contracted, and voluntary service providers and practitioners who themselves support people with convictions.

**2) A fairer and more inclusive society.** To achieve this, we:

- Challenged employment discrimination by working with employers to improve their policies and practices, and worked with government departments and agencies to challenge the way they operate;
- Influenced government, employers and others through evidenced research, consultations, strategic litigation, media work and campaigns.

## OUR APPROACH

### Independent

We believe it is important that we hold government, agencies and others to account. We also believe it is important that people with criminal records trust us. That's why we're independent: Unlock neither seeks nor accepts government funding and this is crucial to our model of working. Whilst we aim to work constructively with government and other partners wherever possible, we are also at liberty to take a critical stance on policies which unfairly restrict opportunities for people with criminal records.

We speak truth to power. As a result, the people for whom we exist (our supporters, and our funders) can be sure that our sole motivation is to improve the life chances of people with criminal records. Our power comes from our knowledge of what's happening to people with criminal records, publishing reports, persuading the unwilling, encouraging good practices and exposing those practices which are unacceptable. We're politically independent - but we are not neutral about our agenda of change to criminal records.

### Involve and include people with criminal records

We believe that personal experience is intrinsically valuable, so we recruit people with criminal records throughout the organisation (and particularly as staff and volunteers to deliver our frontline support). Peer experience offers a bridge of understanding, awareness and empathy to people who sometimes find it hard to talk about the issues they face. We also aim for a trustee board where half of the members have a criminal record. We proactively involve and support people to contribute to our advocacy, campaigns and policy work, because people with criminal records are in a unique position to know best about the problems that they face.

### Ear to the ground, voice at the top

We listen and engage every day with people who face difficulties as a result of their criminal record. We have a proven track record of identifying issues, finding solutions and putting them into practice. We influence policy and create systemic change, continually punching above our weight to achieve large-scale outcomes with employers, service providers, advice agencies and government. Too often, policies and systems divide and disempower people; and politicians and organisations hoard rather than share power. We will create platforms and build confidence and capacity for individuals to take more power and to influence.

### **Think big. Act big. Stay small**

We are a small charity with big ambitions. We will constantly adapt our work so that we better meet the needs of the people for whom we exist. To do this, we need to make tough choices; we can't do everything. Longer term, it is important that we are able to ensure that the organisation's core work continues, which means working efficiently and effectively.

### **Work in partnership**

We collaborate and build strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations to maximise our impact. If we are to achieve real change, we also need to work with people and organisations that are different to Unlock, and to develop partnerships that influence the way in which they think and behave.

## **ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Strategy and Planning**

In March 2021, Unlock reached the end of its strategic plan 2016-20. During the year, we undertook significant work to write and publish a new five-year strategy. Led by trustees and senior management, the strategic review process involved consultation with all staff, volunteers, service users and supporters. The resulting **Tackling Injustice, Changing Lives: Strategic Plan, 2021-2026** was implemented in April 2021.

At the same time as publishing our new strategic plan, we also celebrated **Unlock's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday** as a registered charity. Unable to celebrate with a physical event, we were nevertheless touched by messages of congratulations and support, including a note from **Unlock co-founder, Stephen Fry**, who said: *"... I am very proud that UNLOCK, a charity that I was happy to play a part in founding, has now reached its 21st birthday. We can look back on years of helping those with criminal records and making a real difference, but more importantly, we can look forward to new strategies and initiatives which will do even more to help."*

### **Board and Staffing**

One new trustee was appointed this year (Hamish MacLellan took up his post in May 2021). A new vice-chair role was created with existing trustee Mike Pattinson being duly elected to the post.

Following a rigorous recruitment process, the board appointed Angela Cairns as Unlock's CEO in May 2021, with Julie Harmsworth moving from co-director to deputy CEO. Former co-director, Christopher Stacey left the charity at the end of January 2021.

Two new staff posts were also created this year: a digital and communications manager responsible for co-ordinating Unlock's digital presence including developing our websites, and a policy officer who will focus on our work to reform the criminal records regime and influence policy makers and key stakeholders to improve relevant laws and government policy. Both staff took up their posts in September 2020.

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers continued to play a vital role in the delivery of the charity's activities. Our volunteering scheme is described below in 'Activities'.

### **Memberships and working groups**

We continue to work positively to build relationships and partnerships across government, private sector, statutory agencies and the voluntary sector (through body membership, board membership, participatory working groups, and formal agreements for collaborative working). Over the past year, significant relationships included membership of the Helplines Partnership; Clinks; Institute of Employability Professionals; Probation Institute Learning Provider Endorsement Scheme; Free Representation Unit; Clinks; NCVO; Small Charities Coalition; FSI (Foundation for Social Improvement) and Charity Comms.

A key part of our policy and campaign work is to work with other organisations including: Alliance for Youth Justice; Clinks; National Association for Youth Justice; Founding member of the 'Wipe the Slate Clean' campaign; Member of

the Criminal Justice Alliance; Information Commissioner's Office; Ministry of Justice; Home Office; Disclosure and Barring Service; Transform Justice: developing the #FairChecks movement; Business in the Community (BITC); New Futures Network and Employers' Forum for Reducing Re-offending (EFFRR).

Unlock is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and the Fundraising Regulator.

## **Communications**

### *Press and media*

We continue to build our press and media engagement work, to grow awareness of our work and services as well as support our campaign and policy objectives. This year we have developed our approach to include the voices of people with criminal records in our media work and continued to embed our agreed principles of autonomy and informed consent; respect and dignity; anonymity and remuneration. We have also developed productive and ongoing relationships with a number of key journalists, thereby increasing our pool of engaged media contacts to whom we can pitch proactively. Examples of media engagement include:

- Edwina Grosvenor's podcast: Criminal records and stigma
- Personnel Today: MoJ sentencing white paper – reform of the ROA
- Law Society Gazette: MoJ sentencing white paper – reform of the ROA
- BBC Radio Kent: MoJ sentencing white paper – reform of the ROA
- The Justice Gap: MoJ sentencing white paper – reform of the ROA
- Inside Time: MoJ sentencing white paper – reform of the ROA
- The Herald (Scotland): Burglar alarm tester job advert
- Telegraph: Burglar alarm tester job advert
- Telegraph: Filtering changes date announced
- Personnel Today: Filtering changes date announced
- The Times: Filtering changes date announced
- Inside Time: Filtering changes date announced
- UK Human Rights Blog: Filtering changes taken effect
- People Management magazine: Ucheck report re employers' attitudes
- Independent: Women report IWD

### *Social media*

This year (with the arrival of our digital and communications manager) we took steps to improve our social media strategy, including implementing more regular tracking and analysis across all channels as follows:

- Twitter: we have over 12,000 Twitter followers (up from 10,000 12 months ago) and have developed our content to include media such as images, GIFs and short videos - in order to improve engagement.
- Facebook: we had 653 followers at the end of the year and posted 51 times. Our most popular post was a video explaining the hard-fought for filtering changes which came into effect in November 2020.
- LinkedIn: we have significantly developed our LinkedIn presence, resulting in our followers almost doubling to 1,014 by the end of the year.

We aim to build on this in the next financial year through the development and implementation of a digital marketing strategy.

### *Publications*

Throughout the year we published a number of reports and briefings and responded to government consultations. Examples include:

- 'Angels or witches': The impact of criminal records on women (March 2021)
- 'Do I need to disclose my convictions?' – Unlock and Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service's resource for young people and professionals (December 2020)
- 'The cycle repeats itself' – Unlock's response to the MoJ sentencing white paper (December 2020)
- 'Settled status: what you need to know if you are an EU citizen and have a criminal record' (Online information) and a one-page summary (October 2020)

- Criminal Injuries Compensation Review 2020 – Unlock submission (October 2020)
- Criminal records: a comparison between England and Israel (Dana Segev, September 2020)
- Thinking differently: Employers’ views on hiring people convicted of sexual offences (with Prison Reform Trust, September 2020)
- College of Policing consultation – Code of Practice for the Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS) (September 2020)
- Checked out? Ineligible criminal record checks and how to prevent them (July 2020)
- Briefing: Reforming the criminal records disclosure regime (July 2020)
- The rationale behind the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Dr Andrew Henley, July 2020)
- Which cautions and convictions would be removed from a standard or enhanced DBS? Brief guide based on plans announced in July 2020 (July 2020)
- Impact on Covid-19 on people with criminal records: Briefing to the Justice Select Committee (June 2020)
- Financial incentives to encourage the employment of people with convictions (June 2020)
- Our support in numbers 2019/20 (June 2020)

### *News & updates mailing lists*

Unlock has an open subscription mailing list where people can choose to receive one or more periodic updates and publications. Especially helpful for individuals with convictions, practitioners, and employers, they include:

- News/updates from the information hub for people with convictions (sent monthly)
- Quarterly newsletter – a summary of all updates, sent to everyone on our public mailing list
- Unlock News – latest news and updates about Unlock, our policy work, news & media, and vacancies (sent on an ad hoc basis)
- News/updates relating to recruiting people with convictions specifically for employers and recruiters (sent on an ad hoc basis)
- News/updates including training opportunities for front-line practitioners (sent on an ad hoc basis)
- Supporter newsletter sent quarterly to funders and donors
- Press releases are sent to our media list and subscribers.

## IMPACT

By working to meet the needs of our beneficiaries and by advocating for systemic change, Unlock continues to have a positive impact on the lives of people with criminal records, their families and friends, and on building a fairer and more inclusive society. Analysis of beneficiary feedback across all of our activities shows the people we support are better able to successfully negotiate the ongoing, changing and increasingly complex challenges that can derail the most positive of intentions. As a result, they have improved resettlement chances, suffer less social exclusion, and are empowered to move on positively with their lives and achieve their potential.

A particular highlight for the charity in November 2020 was winning the prestigious ‘**Outstanding National Organisation’ award at the Criminal Justice Alliance Awards**. In presenting the award, the judges said, “*Unlock is doing fantastic work for the rehabilitation of offenders. Their work is clearly changing lives. It enables people to move on with their lives and reintegrate into society. The legal changes they have influenced will help so many people gain employment and will ultimately help to prevent reoffending...They have campaigned for many years for a fairer system of criminal record disclosure, aiming to give people a better chance to change their lives. Their careful and determined actions through legal and political avenues are now paying dividends. They have laid a path that is leading to a fairer deal for people with past criminal convictions*”.

## ACTIVITIES

### OUR FIRST AIM: HELPING PEOPLE TO MOVE ON POSITIVELY IN THEIR LIVES

Unlock provides information, advice and support for people with criminal records, their families and friends and the professionals who work with them. These are delivered directly through our helpline, volunteer scheme and training courses for professionals working to support people with criminal records within their own organisations, and indirectly through our online resources.

Despite the challenges we faced when our office temporarily closed and resulting loss of volunteer support, the number of people using our services saw an increase on the previous year (see table below).

	2019-20	2020-21
<b>Direct support</b>		
Helpline	7,803	8,049
Case work (completed)	11	9
<b>Self-help support</b>		
Information Hub user sessions	1,132,371	1,145,680
Forum members	3,764	4,029
theRecord subscribers	3,584	3,777
theRecord website user sessions	110,805	114,090
Disclosure Calculator uses	45,751	49,531
<b>Volunteer scheme</b>		
Volunteers supported (across the year at different times)	5 community-based 5 serving prisoners	4 community-based 0 serving prisoners
Hours worked	4,286	1,636
Non-office based	5	5
<b>Support for practitioners: Training</b>		
Training events delivered	17	14
Number of people trained	220	240

#### Supporting people directly

##### *thehelpline*

Unlock's helpline provides confidential, accurate, reliable and non-judgmental information, advice, and support for people with criminal records. It is entirely peer-delivered by trained staff and volunteers whose personal experience allows them to offer an empathic response to people seeking our help.

Helpline users are empowered with factual knowledge that helps them to understand how to improve their own individual circumstances – getting jobs, education opportunities and training, accessing housing, improving their financial situation, travelling abroad and much more. They then feel better able to cope with the challenges of living with a criminal record, less isolated because they have access to a community of other people who share their desire to move on in life, have improved self-confidence, and are better able to engage with wider society. These strengthened emotional foundations lead to better family relationships, improved life outcomes, and reduced motivation to re-offend which, in turn, has a positive effect on wider society.

##### *Helpline performance*

Whilst a physical office is essential for Unlock's helpline to operate fully, and in particular to support our volunteer scheme, we were able to put measures in place which enabled continued delivery of our services even when government restrictions meant that our office had to close. This enabled us to create a more flexible and effective

approach that can be integrated into helpline development and mitigate against unforeseen circumstances that may arise in the future.

In March 2020, helpline staff and some of our volunteers moved to home-based working until we were able to reopen the office in July 2020 following government guidance for safe working practice. We then faced significant challenges recruiting and working with volunteers when travel remained difficult or unsafe. Again, responding to further government restrictions, our office closed in January 2021 with the team moving to remote working until restrictions were again lifted (in summer 2021).

Alongside these challenges, we saw an increase in the number of people contacting Unlock's helpline. With many people facing challenges related to employment and volunteering, we provided them with information and guidance to better understand their options and make informed decisions. The impact of a criminal record being an additional problem to getting employment during the pandemic was corroborated by helpline staff who saw a significant number of enquiries from individuals who were now job hunting – these individuals having had secure jobs for many years, they had never previously needed a formal criminal record check or been asked to disclose their criminal record to an employer.

By replacing a fixed landline telephone system with an internet-based one, staff and volunteers were able to work remotely during office closures and observe social distancing when it re-opened. In this way we were able to continue to keep our helpline running whilst ensuring the safety of staff and volunteers. Although we had fewer volunteers, no staff were furloughed or absent with Covid-19. The new system also allowed us to introduce Relay UK to the range of helpline contact channels, helping deaf people and those with hearing loss or speech impairment to communicate using an app on their smartphone or tablet.

Building on last year's pilot, a live webchat service remained available to people using our online Information Hub. With fewer helpline advisors available however, operating hours were limited. Nevertheless, webchat remains a popular option for those seeking a personal response and we aim to expand availability during the coming year.

#### *How we monitor*

Helpline users are routinely asked to provide feedback through web links or by using a feedback form. This helps us to monitor the support we provide, track outcomes and identify recurring and arising issues that may be advanced internally to be addressed at policy and practice level. Ten percent of people using the helpline are followed up to find out how they applied our advice and support and the difference it made. Results showed that 23% of calls result in a positive hard outcome (such as a job or education offer, insurance cover or housing) and 30% in a positive soft outcome (such as confidence, actions, knowledge and understanding their rights and responsibilities).

Twice each year we also ask all callers to complete a survey during a two-week period. The impact of Covid-19 on our resources this year meant that we were unable to carry out the second survey this year, but analysis of the most recent survey showed that:

- 95% of people reported that they had found what they were looking for when contacting Unlock;
- 73% felt that our service was better for them because Unlock is independent of government;
- 93% felt our advisors themselves have 'been there' and respond in an empathic way because they have their own first-hand experience of obstacles facing a person with a criminal record;
- 57% of people said they didn't know where else they would have turned had they not come to Unlock.

#### *User feedback:*

- *"I've had a response back from the DBS today in regards to the formal representation that I submitted to them a few weeks back. They have sent a 'no further action letter' and stated I'm able to work in regulated activity if I wish to do so. Can I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your help and support over the last few months; it hasn't been easy but your advice has kept me going. Thank you unreservedly. And to your organisation for all the hard work and support you give to people it really does help."*
- *"Thanks very much for your help. I have been at the brink of suicide over these matters throughout the years. I really do appreciate everything you have done for normally decent people who are treated like pariahs!"*
- *"I'm now up and running my own company. That would be a cause for celebration in itself, but I also have clients. It's been just over a year since I lost my job and the past 12 months have been tough, but with the support and help from people like you and others, I got through this and the future does not seem as daunting."*

- *“I’ve just heard from the DBS panel and glad to say it was good news and I can continue with my training and volunteering. I’ve been blown away by how helpful Unlock has been and doubt whether I could have made some of the positive steps I’ve taken without your input.”*
- *“Your amazing campaign to ban the box has been worthwhile to me and my family and although there is still a long way to go. I pray that you will continue to help others like me. I am still in the process of trying to get rid of the caution. I am very hopeful but even so I cannot begin to explain and be grateful and amazed at the support you have provided to me over the years via email and telephone. I have never felt rushed or like my problem was trivial. Thank you Unlock very, very much. I will continue to support in order to help others too.”*
- *“I have been able to insure our home today. We had been insured with Premier for house and content they did not ask about anyone with a prison sentence but today on renewal they did and we were refused cover. You emailed me with a list of insurers and we have peace of mind.”*

### **Volunteer scheme**

Unlock’s volunteer scheme provides opportunities for people with criminal records to train as helpline advisors. Based at our Maidstone office, volunteers are trained as front-line advisors, working alongside staff to provide a unique, wholly peer-delivered information, advice and support service enabling us to respond to many more people than would otherwise be possible. The scheme is open to those living in the community and others on day release from prison, enabling them to gain valuable workplace skills and experience as well as to build back confidence and self-esteem. Others living too far away to travel offer support as content writers and researchers.

All volunteers are encouraged to take an active part in Unlock’s activities and are invited to other training opportunities whenever appropriate. Future volunteers will continue to undertake our disclosure training (endorsed by the Institute of Employability Professionals) and trained in the use of Lamplight, our online monitoring system. Next year we shall also support one of our regular volunteers to study for an Information, Advice and Guidance NVQ2 level accreditation with a view to moving to NVQ3 on completion and the organisation opening the offer to others.

Covid-19 restrictions impacted significantly on the scheme this year with fewer volunteers being available during the periods when the office was closed. Three pre-existing volunteers were supported throughout the year and were able to work at various times as restrictions allowed. The restrictions meant that we were only able to recruit from the community as prisoners were no longer allowed outside of prison to work. As a result, volunteers responded to half the total number of enquiries that we would have anticipated otherwise. Nevertheless, using new telephone technology and prioritising of staff time and activities to respond to user needs, the helpline team responded extremely well to the demand and exceeded our annual target.

A recruitment drive and online training programme for new community-based volunteers and communications with HMPs East Sutton Park, Rochester and Standford Hill are underway, with the expectation that we would be able to return to an office environment in July 2021 as provided for in the government’s ‘roadmap’.

#### *A volunteer’s experience:*

*“I had always known about Unlock as I had used their helpline in the past, so when I saw on their website that they were looking for volunteers, I sent off my application.*

*Having successfully completed the interview I started as soon as I could... Before being let loose full training was given in all aspects of subjects that come across the helpline and on how to answer enquires received. What I found important was that you were not just thrown in the deep end and made to swim; the training was at the pace of the person undertaking it. Once completed I started off answering emails and letters under supervision, then once I had accomplished this I moved onto the telephone.*

*Offering advice and guidance not only to people with criminal records but also external stakeholders, has made me realise how much support is required and how much at times the help is not there for individuals, and how many individuals face disadvantage and discrimination.*

*While assisting on the charity’s helpline I have also assisted in a number of research tasks, including looking at housing policies of councils within the UK and how they affect a person with a criminal conviction. This insight along with the skills and knowledge I have gained in offering advice and guidance has made me see how important advocating for change is, and the job that we do helps a sector of society that is greatly penalised by the communities they live within.*

*The skills and abilities I have gained have come to the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic. The learning curve increased greatly in having to undertake remote working to ensure with other staff members that*

*the helpline has been fully active. This has included tracking criminal justice and Government websites for changes in legislation announced during the lockdown, for instance identifying changes to security vetting procedures and also the impact a person under ROTL has dealt with the implementation of the furlough scheme, and ensuring that this is correctly communicated.*

*My work on the helpline continues as we get ready to return back to the office, and reflecting back I am thankful for the opportunities I have been given in learning new skills and abilities. When volunteering you feel you have a purpose in life, when most other people turn their back on you. There is a great satisfaction when you realise that you have helped someone and you can hear in their voice or through the tears over the phone how much the advice and guidance you have given them has made such an impact on their life and helped in the problem that they have called you about.”*

### **Individual case work**

On occasion, our helpline team will go beyond normal helpline support to take up a case on behalf of an individual when necessary. Such cases are taken on either to achieve a positive outcome for that person, or where the intervention supports our current policy work or a particular project which, if successful, would benefit a large number of people. Even if unsuccessful, a case can increase our body of evidence to inform further work.

This year we supported 21 individuals with eight cases being completed and 13 ongoing. The following examples of case work show the range and complexity of issues. We successfully challenged:

- The admissions process of a university that had refused to admit a student onto a nursing course because she had a criminal record, then refused to allow her an appeal. After our intervention they agreed to allow an appeal and at a Health and Conduct Committee meeting, the panel found in the applicant’s favour and subsequently admitted her onto the course.
- A local council that was using 'Disqualification by Association' disclosure forms and were asking all their employees to provide details of unspent convictions of people they lived with. The legal requirement to provide this information had been scrapped in September 2018.
- A housing association which had refused to place an applicant on its housing list because of their criminal record, when in fact their conviction was spent, meaning that it was unlawful to take it into account.
- A university and a regulatory body whose application and admissions processes included ineligible and misleading questions.

### **Support for people in prison**

Our helpline regularly receives letters and calls from prisoners on a range of issues and particularly about resettlement. Unlock’s helpline number is on the prison pre-approved list with a PIN number that means a prisoner can call us without prior permission or cost. With reduced access to many prison resettlement teams due to Covid-19, we saw an increase in the number of calls from prisoners seeking information.

Reaching pro-actively into the wider prison estate, we worked with software developer, Socrates Software, to include relevant pages from Unlock’s Information Hub site as part of a ‘Release’ app, available via a smart phone or tablet to people leaving prison from 45 sites. We have also continued to provide a quarterly column for the prison newspaper, InsideTime, reaching around 60,000 prisoners per edition.

### **Supporting people digitally**

With limited helpline capacity and a large potential beneficiary group, we maintain a number of online resources so that people can find the information they need, at a time and in a way that suits them best. Accessible from Unlock’s main website ([www.unlock.org.uk](http://www.unlock.org.uk)), six options are available:

- a) *theInformationHub* ([hub.unlock.org.uk](http://hub.unlock.org.uk))
- b) *theCalculator* ([www.disclosurecalculator.org.uk](http://www.disclosurecalculator.org.uk))
- c) *theForum* ([forum.unlock.org.uk](http://forum.unlock.org.uk))
- d) *theRecord* ([www.the-record.org.uk](http://www.the-record.org.uk))
- e) *Recruit!* ([recruit.unlock.org.uk](http://recruit.unlock.org.uk)) – a resource for employers.

Each of the sites serves a different purpose (reported on below), and their use is routinely monitored. Using Google analytics, we record the numbers of people reached, and use various methods to capture and analyse user feedback through:

- Disqus: all articles and blogs on our websites have the facility for people to comment or start (or respond to) a discussion. Any contributions made through Disqus are reviewed before being made live and, if appropriate, a member of staff will follow-up. There were 486 comments and 372 votes received this year.
- Wufoo: this is a more general feature that enables people to give feedback about their experiences of using either the helpline or the websites (we receive an average of 10 every month).
- Six-monthly pop-up surveys.

Research was carried out this year to help shape the future development of the ways in which we help individuals. We asked survey participants to select from a list of options, those methods they would use to contact Unlock (they could select more than one). We learned that whilst 65% of people would use the helpline, 73% would use webchat and 71% online guides. We also worked with a digital agency called Difrent who carried out one-to-one user testing of our Information Hub. These fed into a new website design that will be more user-friendly and better meet different users' needs. The new website is scheduled to be launched in autumn 2021.

#### **a) theInformationHub**

The hub is a comprehensive source of information and guidance on tackling issues such as employment, insurance, travel, education, housing, relationships, finance, filtering, disclosure – in fact just about everything in life that is affected by having a criminal record. Designed and published for individuals, we are pleased to make our resources freely available to other organisations – statutory and non-profit – who routinely use them in their work. In this way we are able to benefit as many people as possible.

The hub is continually updated to reflect latest information and new guidance relating to changes in legislation and other important events affecting people with criminal records. Key revisions this year included:

- The impact of Covid-19 on employment and volunteering
- 'Settled status' information for EU citizens with a criminal record living in the UK and travelling to the EU (after 'Brexit' on 1 January 2021)
- Filtering of cautions and convictions from standard and enhanced DBS checks following changes to the disclosure rules introduced in November 2020
- Telling a partner, family member or friend about a criminal record
- What a person may need to know if convicted of a sexual offence.

#### **b) theCalculator**

Unlock's disclosure calculator is a free, instant, and confidential way for people to find out if and when their record is or will become spent and no longer needing to be disclosed under the ROA. Used nearly 50,000 times this year by individuals, statutory agencies, service providers and private companies, the tool is able to process multiple convictions, non-standard sentence/disposals and a mixture of different sentences.

Analysis this year showed that 56% of users found that all their convictions were spent, with 40% revealing a combination of spent and unspent convictions. Whilst good news for many, 4% of users discovered their conviction(s) will remain unspent for the rest of their lives.

#### *User feedback:*

- *"I am a lawyer and it would have taken me ages to get the information you have given me. God bless you for your good work. From what I heard on radio 4 today and the result of your online calculator, a great weight has been lifted from my shoulders!"*
- *"I used the calculator and was able to determine that my sentence has been spent. This will open many doors because I've always thought I had to answer yes to the felony question."*
- *"Oh gosh I've been so confused about spent and unspent; this has put my mind at rest and I can now look forward with clarity, I can't thank you enough. I put my details in on my one and only conviction, 8 weeks suspended in 2019 I was so confused about it, but just adding my details and my conviction dates helped me to*

*understand. I can now sleep at night!"*

#### **c) theForum**

With more than 4,000 members, *theForum* provides a unique, national peer networking opportunity for people to support each other as they move on from their past. Unlock's role is as facilitator, allowing members their own space to share experiences and talk about how they feel. There is little opportunity for this in the "real" world, where many people feel isolated and too ashamed or embarrassed to share their convictions.

The strength of the forum can often be seen in the way in which members support each other emotionally – often beyond what a helpline can do. Popular threads this year include: *'Friend thinking of disclosing my conviction to neighbours'*; *'Police access to my flat'*; *'Polygraph testing'* and *'Has the Schengen system changed?'*. We encourage forum members to use our other online resources and this year introduced a "What's new in the community" section, which brings together positives stories and information from other Unlock websites.

#### **d) theRecord**

*theRecord* is an online magazine that provides a regular stream of readers' personal stories and experiences as well as news and opportunities. This year we published 33 articles from our readers and shared information from other organisations, including paid and volunteering opportunities. One story was from Stella (not her real name), who, whilst training to be a counsellor, explored the reasons why she found it so difficult to ask for help when she needed it most in, 'The positive power of talking':

*"I received a conviction for fraud approximately 20 years ago which resulted in a four-and-a-half-year prison sentence. Shocking as it was to go to prison, I believe that it was prison that helped me become a better person – less uptight, less anxious, a person that wasn't afraid to ask for help and ultimately somebody that was a lot happier in themselves.*

*To the outside world, my life prior to prison must have seemed perfect. Good job, great salary, lovely home, marvellous holidays abroad. But behind the scenes I was massively in debt, living beyond my means and defrauding the company I worked for. I was a mess.*

*Over the years I've had a lot of time to reflect on what went wrong and what I could have done differently. Without a doubt, I should have spoken to somebody about my problems and asked for help. So why didn't I? There's probably been loads of research on this but for me, it was fairly simple: I was too proud; I didn't want to come across as incompetent; I didn't want to be judged; And maybe, I just didn't really want to change. If I got help then I'd have lost the lifestyle and habits that I had.*

*I feel so ashamed writing that, it makes me sound unrepentant and that's probably how I was at the time. I didn't want to be told what I needed to hear; it was far easier to keep the status quo.*

*Twenty years on and I'm in a different place; training to be a counsellor and it's obvious to me now, that talking really does help. I know from the clients I see in my current work placements that many of us are feeling emotionally overwhelmed. The Pandemic has seen us lose friends and family and lock-down has seen the mental health of many deteriorate. Talking won't change what's happened to us but it can help to bring us some relief. When I started my counselling training, there were several times when I thought my criminal record might scupper my dreams. I couldn't see an answer to my problems and started to be consumed with negative thoughts. But for once, I took my own advice and asked for help – I rang the Unlock helpline.*

*The advisor I spoke to didn't immediately solve my problems but whenever I presented her with a negative statement, she'd come back at me with a couple of options – one of which seemed to be: "Do nothing and keep feeling sorry for yourself". These chats were a bit like re-programming a computer. Slowly all my old thoughts were erased replaced instead by more constructive ones.*

*As somebody with a conviction that will never be spent, I'm sure I'll have a few more wobbles along the way but you know what – I'll keep on talking."*

#### **e) Recruit**

Developed as part of our Fair Access to Employment project, our Recruit website provides advice, guidance, and templates for employers to use to develop fair recruitment policies and practice. In the past year, the site was used 37,079 times by 31,000 different users, of which 30,862 were new this year (90%), who between them accumulated 67,621 page views. Featured employers include Marks & Spencer, Halfords, Virgin Trains, Ricoh, Cook, Greggs and Timpson. The Project is reported on below in 'Key Programmes of Work'.

Many employers contacted us over the past year to confirm information or ask advice, after looking at Recruit and, in some cases, this led to in-depth policy reviews and tailored, detailed advice. This not only showed the value of the site's open-access resources and enabled us to reach more employers, but also created a workload as we responded to the needs of employers who are proactive in improving their policies and practices.

### **Online support in relation to our policy work**

Website users are encouraged to become contributors to all our online channels (especially *theForum* and *theRecord*), sharing individual stories and providing peer support for others in similar circumstances. This powerful sense of community provides 'soft' support and empathy as well as hard, useful facts. The experiences of our users directly influence our policy work allowing us to identify recurring issues and take action to advocate for systemic change of policy or law to improve circumstances for many people.

### **Supporting providers and practitioners: criminal record disclosure training**

Our experience is that practitioners working with people who have convictions often receive little training on understanding and supporting people with the long-term effects of their convictions. We regularly receive contact from practitioners who do not feel confident in giving advice to their clients. Mistakes can prove costly, with people missing jobs and other opportunities because of being given inaccurate advice. Some have even gone on to get a further conviction.

Unlock is a small organisation with limited resources, but the depth and extent of our specialist knowledge in living with a conviction is unique. Consequently, we can offer a range of training courses to practitioners (individuals and organisations, including statutory bodies) to help ensure they provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date advice and support to their clients. Training courses are endorsed by the Probation Institute and the Institute of Employability Professionals and are mainly offered as one-day workshops. They are primarily aimed at organisations and individuals who work with and advise people with criminal records and cover a variety of issues on and around disclosure.

As well as supporting individuals, we also share knowledge and best practice with other organisations through disclosure training workshops, so that they are able to support their own clients in tackling the problems they face. At the same time, we generate earned income that supports our wider work. Past participants included CAB, Shelter, probation service, employers, Jobcentre Plus staff and many more.

Government restrictions impacted immediately on the delivery of our usual face-to-face training with the cancellation and postponement of booked sessions. To mitigate against the loss of earned income generated by training delivery, we received a National Lottery Covid-19 grant to re-develop the various courses for delivery online. Subsequent feedback and further development have meant we have been able to successfully continue this work with a legacy of a permanent resource for the future.

With face-to-face delivery being impossible, all of our one-day workshops during 2020/21 were delivered online using Zoom or Microsoft Teams. For those looking for a shorter, more condensed version of our one-day training, we developed a new 2-hour webinar on criminal record disclosure. Across the year we delivered 17 training sessions to 220 attendees.

97% of course attendees who completed feedback forms rated the session Good or Excellent overall. Before attending, on average they rated their knowledge of the disclosure of criminal records as four, which rose to eight after completion.

#### **Feedback included**

- *"Great course. Really enjoyed it and looking forward to sharing my knowledge with my wider team."*
- *"Presenter had an excellent knowledge and was able to give clear understanding to people like myself who can get a little overwhelmed with too much information due to my dyslexia".*
- *"All round a good training session, very well put together and plenty of interaction and involvement with plenty of time for questions."*

### **An essential resource for other organisations**

Unlock has gained a powerful reputation as "the place to go" for other organisations to obtain accurate and reliable

information. We actively encourage them to use our materials as part of their work in supporting people with convictions. All our publicly available materials are downloadable, free of charge, as posters and leaflets, or can be integrated into the organisation's own materials.

New users this year included: the House of Commons Library; the National Police Library; Phoenix Futures; Thames Reach and Leicestershire Carers. We also assisted MAC UK to incorporate Unlock information within their leaflet for young people with a criminal record, and Kent County Council to produce their leaflet giving information about disclosing a criminal record.

### **Signposting to Unlock**

Unlock is signposted to by an ever-growing number of employers, universities, statutory agencies, community rehabilitation companies, law firms, banks, voluntary sector organisations, insurance comparison websites, lawyers, and others. These include: Gov.uk Supporting prison leavers guide; Information Commissioners Office; NI Human Rights Commission; Money Advice Service; Jobcentre Plus; Association of British Insurers; Office for Students; House of Commons Library and many others.

## **OUR SECOND AIM: A FAIRER AND MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY**

Unlock's 'ear to the ground, voice at the top' approach means that we listen to our beneficiaries to learn about the recurring issues they face, then we identify where we can advocate for change at systemic and structural levels to resolve them. We do this by:

- Gathering evidence and undertaking research;
- Responding to consultations and making submissions;
- Getting involved in strategic litigation on key issues;
- Encouraging better policies and practices in other organisations;
- Influencing attitudes across different forums;
- Running targeted programmes of work such as our Fair Access to Employment project;
- Supporting individuals to challenge bad practice by employers and organisations.

This year we supported a number of key research projects and panels including:

- Membership of the advisory panel for a research project at the University of Essex, assessing universities' approaches to social work applicants with criminal records;
- Advising a grant-funded Oxford post-doctoral project looking at employer bias against applicants who disclose criminal records;
- Continuing to co-supervise a PhD student at the University of Nottingham, funded by an ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council).

## **KEY PROGRAMMES OF WORK**

### **1. *Fair Access to Employment***

In June 2021, we concluded the second phase of our programme, funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, to tackle the underlying systemic and practical barriers to employment faced by people with criminal records funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. Over the past three years we have supported and challenged more than 150 employers in education, health and social care, engineering, creative industries, charities, construction, sport and leisure, accounting, finance and law. Some employers came to our attention through people contacting our helpline; around two-thirds self-referred through word of mouth or seeing reference to our work on other sites – for example, our edited sections on Xpert HR, or references in sector guidance or industry publications. We're proud that so many employers – including many with in-house HR and legal support – sought us out and made their recruitment practices fairer as a result.

The law in this area is complex and difficult to navigate, with a lack of official guidance from governments and

regulators and few HR specialists having sufficient knowledge or expertise. Our goal is always to improve the employment prospects of people with criminal records so, to achieve this, we need to understand the challenges employers perceive in recruiting from this population and find constructive ways to engage with them. Working with a range of employers across different sectors has allowed us to deepen our understanding of the issues from an employer's perspective.

This understanding has helped us continually improve the online guidance and resources that we offer to employers – including sector-specific guidance for creative industries, charities, health and social care, alongside cross-sector guidance on data protection compliance, assessing criminal records, DBS eligibility and relevant news and updates. Recruit has seen a significant increase in users over the last three years. In the last 12 months alone, visits and users have doubled and page views tripled, suggesting users are looking at multiple pages, which we aim to increase further with targeted resources and sector collaborations.

In 2020 we published '*Checked out? Ineligible criminal record checks and how to prevent them*', a report that explained why ineligible checks happen, why they matter and what can be done to prevent them. The report made recommendations to government, the Disclosure and Barring Service and employers - it can be downloaded from the Recruit website.

In 2021 we delivered information sessions to almost 1,000 staff at the Department of Works & Pension, including prison work coaches and regional leads on 'offender employment'. Knowledge gained from delivering these enabled us to contribute to government initiatives, including Home Office and MoJ guidance, the New Futures Network, and Going Forward into Employment programmes.

We weren't always able to achieve everything we would have liked for reasons beyond our control. Ambitious plans to bring a legal challenge against an employer and/or the DBS hit difficulties with the elements required by law to bring a successful case. Often, the person or people affected were reluctant to be involved in a challenge: fearful of further publicity or repercussions and simply wanting to move on and find a job (a regular theme we encounter, even for lower-level complaints direct to the employer or to the Information Commissioner). The lack of any real penalty for an employer who unlawfully collects or unfairly uses criminal records information is also a deterrent for most people.

Nevertheless, we have been successful in challenging bad and unlawful policies – often before an applicant was affected. We are now seeking funding to build on this approach by formalising our evidence gathering and testing the effectiveness of direct – versus regulatory – engagement. We also want to work with sector leaders and regulators, for example in finance and food production, so that employers have high-level, reliable guidance on how to approach criminal records data.

## **2. Criminal records disclosure system change**

Ruling on a case supported by Unlock in 2019, the UK Supreme Court held that two aspects of the criminal records disclosure scheme were disproportionate and in breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights:

- The blanket rules requiring automatic disclosure of all convictions where a person has more than one conviction;
- The requirement that some childhood cautions be disclosed indefinitely.
- Funded by the Baring Foundation, Unlock worked to sustain pressure on the government to implement the Court's ruling.

By way of response, we:

- Published an updated briefing on reforming the criminal records regime in July 2020 (following the government's announcement that changes would be announced in autumn 2020).
- Held a meeting with Robert Buckland (Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor) in April 2020.
- Worked with Transform Justice Together on the focused #FairChecks campaign and were referenced in exchanges between David Lammy and Robert Buckland and John Spellar and Boris Johnson (July 2020). We engaged in a stakeholder session and held conversations with and wrote to senior civil servants in co-ordination with other charities regarding rehabilitation periods (July 2020) – see page 23.

- Were featured in the Telegraph, People Management and Personnel Today.
- Engaged with DBS officials and continued to interact with government departments, including Home Office, DWP and Equalities Office regarding the changes.
- Met with the Chair of the Youth Justice Board, which published a statement by the CEO on criminal records reform and included in their 20/21 business plan the aim to ‘push for a reform of criminal records’.
- Produced new guidance for individuals on our website, resources for employers and webinars for practitioners to ensure that changes are understood by those who will benefit.
- Used our contacts and communication channels to make sure employers and others are implementing the changes.

Changes to the ‘filtering rules’ on standard or enhanced criminal record checks, issued by the Disclosure and Barring Service, were finally introduced by the government in November 2020. This means that childhood cautions will no longer be disclosed, and the rule that meant someone with more than one conviction had all their convictions disclosed, (regardless of offence or length of time) has been abolished. As a result, we estimate 45,000 people will no longer have youth reprimands, youth warnings, or youth cautions disclosed on higher level DBS checks, and where people have more than one conviction, all convictions will not automatically be disclosed.

However, these changes were not the wide-ranging overhaul of the whole system that we, and others, wanted, so we continue to campaign for more reform. We have:

- Challenged what we believe is a significant technical problem in the DBS’s new filtering guidance.
- Raised issues in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021 (PCSC) which demonstrate the need for wider criminal records review and have secured support from David Lammy and Alex Cunningham.
- Provided support to the Northern Irish Human Rights Commission in a case challenging lifelong disclosure.
- Worked with partner organisations, especially to gather evidence on potential judicial challenges to the “pardon” system for historic gay offences.
- Completed and published a report on the additional challenges faced by women with criminal records.
- Continued to work with Transform Justice on the #FairChecks campaign.

### **3. Criminal records disclosure; call for regime change**

Beginning in April 2020, the aim of this three-year project funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust, is for fewer people to be affected by the criminal records disclosure regime – particularly those who acquired a criminal record as children or young adults. Having continued to pressure the government to respond to the January 2019 Supreme Court ruling (see 2 above), the filtering changes introduced were not the wide-ranging overhaul of the whole disclosure system that we and others wanted to see. We continue to campaign for more reform and have:

- Identified what we believe is a significant technical problem at the DBS which leads to incorrect certificates being issued and are pursuing this “two questions” approach with the DBS and government departments.
- Briefed senior government opposition figures who spoke at the statutory instrument debate, calling attention to the need for wider reforms.
- Briefed officials and MPs about issues in the PCSC, which demonstrate the need for wider review (securing support from David Lammy and Alex Cunningham).
- Interacted with other government departments, including DWP and Equalities Office.

Our plans for April 2021 onwards are to continue our push for a broader review of criminal records. We will do this by following through on opportunities that we have identified, including to:

- Capitalise on the opportunities that PCSC offers and push for broadest possible change by using PCSC as a launch pad for future reforms, and to demonstrate the need for root and branch review. We will also consider judicial review of lifelong criminal record disclosure.
- Ensure filtering changes are genuinely implemented and resolve the “two questions” issue.
- Ensure that people with stigmatised criminal records are treated legally.
- Address the unique impact that criminal records have on women.
- Broaden the scope of criminal records to make them a “whole of society” issue and not solely one relating to the MoJ.

#### **4. EU nationals' settlement – funded by Barrow Cadbury Trust**

Funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust, we continued our work to help secure the rights of EU nationals with a criminal record who were eligible to apply for settled status in the UK, and make sure they are not unfairly excluded. In line with our project plan, we published a set of online resources for individuals and worked with other service providers to disseminate that information as widely as possible. For example, our resources are now being used by CAB South Lincolnshire's EU Settlement Scheme advice team, which include people with criminal records as a specific underserved group. We actively pursued as many opportunities as possible since our resources went live and received good feedback from other groups.

We continued to engage with NGOs working on EUSS issues and participated in roundtables with the House of Commons Legal and the EU Citizens Rights Monitoring group. The focus in those groups recently has been on how custodial sentences impact eligibility for settled status, which whilst not directly within Unlock's purview is an issue that our EU-national service users are also affected by, so we have maintained a voice in those discussions and added that issue to our advice. This work continues in 2021-22.

#### **5. Fair access to university for students with criminal records – unrestricted funds**

Having delivered a pilot project last year, we continued our work to support fair access to university at a reduced level whilst seeking to secure further funding.

People with criminal records are drawn from the same groups which UCAS and the government call "disadvantaged", that is, those least likely to progress to university. Evidence shows that some groups are disproportionately criminalised: racialised people, care leavers, people from low-income households and people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Along with mature students and first-in-family, these groups are under-represented at university. Despite education being widely recognised as a key factor in successful rehabilitation (thereby benefiting people with convictions, their families, communities, and the institution itself), poor admissions policies present serious psychological and practical challenges to access.

*Outcomes achieved this year include:*

- As part of our pilot project, we launched 'Fair Chance Pledge' where universities sign up to demonstrate their commitment to offering a fair chance for students with a criminal record. This year, the universities of Exeter and Glyndwr signed the pledge and we provided extensive advice on their policy and assessment framework. In total, 18 universities have now signed up to the pledge.
- We advised Chester, Durham, Kings College universities and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine on fair admissions. This included extensive advice on policy and practices and applying those to the different systems in place at each institution.
- Inspired by our work on fair admissions, the University of Maynooth's Unlocking Potential project looked at the use of criminal records at Irish universities. We also contributed to their Unlocking Potential podcast, due to be launched in autumn 2021.
- We challenged the decision to reject a postgraduate applicant by a particular university on the grounds that they hadn't followed their own commitment to the pledge and allowed a student to discuss their criminal record in person. As a result, they overturned the decision, convened a fresh panel and allowed the student to attend. The student subsequently received an unconditional offer.

Towards the end of the year, we secured a three-year grant from the Bruno Schroder Trust and we look forward to beginning the project in 2021-22 (details outlined on page 24).

#### **OTHER KEY AREAS OF WORK**

The areas of work that we are focused on can be found on our website [unlock.org.uk](http://unlock.org.uk). Some of the priority areas last year include:

## **Further reform of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**

Unlock has long campaigned for fundamental changes to the ROA, which is the principal legislation governing the disclosure of criminal records to employers, educational institutions, insurers, and housing providers. The current law means that:

- Rehabilitation periods are too long and result in a form of secondary punishment where a person faces continued discrimination and stigmatisation.
- Rehabilitation periods are out of kilter and do not take account of new, less serious forms of disposal such as community orders and speeding fines, which give rise to longer disclosure periods than those applied to short prison sentences.
- Some convictions can never become spent: more than 8,000 people every year receive sentences that mean they can never be legally rehabilitated.
- There is no legal protection for spent convictions: rehabilitated people are powerless to prevent employers, housing providers and others using spent convictions to exclude them.

As a result of these flaws, Unlock is advocating for a root and branch review of the ROA, and the development of fresh legislation that is fit for purpose. Given the importance of understanding the experiences of those with criminal records (and others), we believe the review should be an open policy-making process as recommended by the Cabinet Office. This means engaging with a broad range of experts and people with experience. Specifically, we are calling for:

- All convictions to be capable of becoming spent.
- Amendment of anomalies in rehabilitation periods, especially for children and young adults.
- Introduction of a tribunal process to review individual cases and determine if there is a need for a conviction to still be disclosed.
- Reduction of rehabilitation periods, using clear evidence to demonstrate the need to disclose.

Our work in 2020/21 has focused on influencing the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, published first as a white paper in Sept 2020 and moving through parliament in 2021.

Ahead of the white paper we were successful in our call on the government to propose shorter spending periods for many prison sentences as part of the Bill. However, we continue to challenge other elements of the Bill that in our view need amending and have engaged with government opposition parties to table a number of amendments. Four of these were brought forward by the Labour party's lead on the Bill (Alex Cunningham MP), including the new forms of Cautions being created, and making the list of 'un-spendable' offences easier to amend in future. We shall continue to engage with cross-bench peers to further our proposals in the House of Lords.

As well as work on the PCSC we engaged with the MoJ on a number of issues including: the disproportionate spending regime for motoring convictions (licence endorsement and points elements of a conviction mean that criminal element remains disclosable for longer than would otherwise be the case under the ROA); and amending the Employment Rights Act to protect people with criminal records from unfair dismissal. Working again with the MOJ and directly with the Lord Chancellor, we called for action to address delays in the criminal justice system causing children who commit crimes to be sentenced as adults. Whilst the government has not conceded the need to legislate on this, it has nevertheless committed to a remedial approach to speed up trials for those approaching their 18th birthday to ensure they are sentenced as children and as such receive the appropriate spending period.

## **Challenging the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to extend its 'filtering' process**

The filtering regime changes resulting from the Supreme Court ruling (described above) has created a number of anomalies, which we are pressuring the DBS and Home Office to rectify as quickly as possible. These include:

- Self-disclosure rules do not match those used to produce enhanced criminal record certificates, meaning that some people are required to self-disclose more offences than would be included on an enhanced check certificate.
- Guidance from the DBS on the new filtering rules is poor, especially on the problem of certificates not matching self-disclosure.
- Rushed implementation of the new rules has left some people unable to receive certificates through the DBS

Update Service, and so require expensive and slow manual certificates to be issued.

Although Unlock has not been able to obtain a commitment to a specific timescale, we have been assured that these issues are being actively pursued, and we shall continue to pressure the Home Office and the DBS to ensure that these are forthcoming.

Aside from the issues outlined above, we have continued to pressure the government to produce a fairer and more proportionate filtering process that includes:

- A faster, online first enhanced certificate process that speeds checking and enables individuals to check their own certificate at will.
- A list of offences not eligible to be filtered to be transparent and continually accessible.
- Offences not eligible to be filtered to be reviewed and reduced in line with evidence.
- The creation of a distinct system for the disclosure of criminal records acquired in childhood and a more nuanced approach to those acquired in early adulthood.
- The introduction of a discretionary filtering process, with a review mechanism, which could be accessed by people whose criminal records are not covered by automatic filtering rules.

### **#FairChecks campaign**

In January 2020 – one year after the Supreme Court judgement – we launched a new public campaign: #FairChecks in partnership with Transform Justice. Together, we are calling for the government to reform the disclosure of criminal records, so that minor and very old crimes do not appear on standard and enhanced criminal records checks. This would ensure that those who have turned their lives around are not forced to reveal their convictions long after they have served their sentence. Specifically, we are calling on the Home Office and the MoJ to launch a major review of the legislation on the disclosure of criminal records.

By the end of March 2020 the campaign had seen over 1,000 supporters who had written to MPs, with 446 MPs being contacted. The high point in 2021 was seeing a single e-mail result in over 100 letters and e-mails sent to MPs within a week of the initial sending. #FairChecks tackles all issues related to criminal records, but with the focus on grassroots, practical problems that impact supporters. In 2021 these have included motoring convictions, cautions, filtering and youth criminal records.

### **Stopping the ‘Google effect’ for people with spent convictions**

Although the ROA is designed to enable people with convictions to move on with their lives once they have become ‘rehabilitated’, the reporting of their convictions online, and the lack of regulation in this area, means that many people find that they face judgement and discrimination long after their convictions legally become spent. Employers regularly use internet search engines to search for job applicants’ online profile and personal information. Although only a small percentage of cases receive media coverage, where they do, the effect can be long-lasting – the so-called ‘Google effect’.

Google (and other search engines) operate a system whereby individuals can request a removal of search results. However, this isn’t always accepted even when the conviction is spent. Furthermore, even if search results are removed, the actual content isn’t – this is reliant on the host organisation, and many news outlets (including the BBC) regularly refuse to edit reports that contain spent convictions.

The ROA itself doesn’t provide a remedy by which to take action against an employer who unlawfully takes account of a spent conviction, nor does it enable individuals to take action against newspapers and websites that continue to publish details of convictions after they become spent. Unlock has continued to refer individual cases to the Information Commissioner’s Office to challenge online disclosure, but we have been met with a reluctance to issue broader guidance on the balance of the right to privacy and the benefit of some information being in the public domain. We have experienced broadly the same lack of interest from government in addressing these concerns.

However, we are now raising this issue with the Law Commission as part of its consultation for the 14<sup>th</sup> Program of Law Reform (launched March 2021) on the theme of privacy in the online space. As this is an issue which clearly meets the Information Commission’s requirements of updating laws to meet modern needs, we hope that they will address the Google effect and recommend that the government addresses this when it reports.

## Ensuring fair treatment by insurance companies

People with unspent convictions face difficulties in getting house, motor and other types of insurance. Most companies will not offer home insurance where an occupant of the house (not necessarily the policy holder) has an unspent conviction. Companies regularly take into account convictions that have no relevance to the insurance being sought and many fail to follow industry good-practice and are often misleading in the questions or assumptions included in application forms (suggesting that people need to disclose spent convictions, which under the law, they do not).

Over many years Unlock has built up a list of insurers who will provide cover to overcome this exclusion and also challenged insurers in their approach; and, in particular, their recognition of the law as it relates to insurance policy applicants. This year the Association of British Insurers published updated guidance for insurance providers, citing Unlock's research – whilst welcoming the guidance, we question its effectiveness in driving good practice based on the calls on the issue which our helpline has continued to receive.

A major driver of our work with motoring convictions is that a disproportionate criminal record regime was created in large part to simplify the work of car insurers. We believe that this function needs to be removed from the criminal record regime and have begun discussions with the Department for Transport to consider the long-term future of criminal record checks for car insurance.

## FUTURE PLANS

### Strategic Plan 2021-26 – *Tackling Injustice, Changing Lives*

Effective from April 2021, our new five-year strategic plan sets out two overarching aims, that:

- 1) **People should have knowledge, skills, confidence and support to overcome the disadvantages related to their criminal record.** We will reach more people by helping them to self-serve digitally, and we will strengthen our capacity to support people more. Together, this will enable people with criminal records to be aware of their rights, know where to turn for advice, and be able to challenge the stigma and discrimination they are facing.
- 2) **People with criminal records should be free from stigma, prejudice and discrimination as a result of government, employers and others having policies, practices and attitudes that support their fair treatment.** We will be a powerful voice in pushing for change to legislation, policies and practices, using strategic litigation to bring about change, and increasing the research and evidence base to support us to achieve change at a policy and systemic level.

In order to achieve these, we aim to be effective, efficient and professional in our work and operations, ensuring we have systems to achieve maximum impact. Developing sustainability, resilience and good governance is essential – so we will continue to:

- 1) **Invest in our people** – this includes the development of our board, staff and volunteers. We will make sure that the organisation has sufficient capacity to deliver this strategy. We will work effectively as a team to embed and demonstrate our values and our approach across the organisation.
- 2) **Increase our visibility** – this includes growing our media presence, where it is useful for delivering this strategy. We will build on our successful social media presence, developing our strategy further. We will strengthen and align our brand to our values and key messages.

Future plans for ongoing activities and projects have been referenced throughout this report. In addition, we are undertaking some particular projects, as follows:

- **Unlocking students with criminal records – funded by the Bruno Schroder Trust**  
Despite education being widely recognised as a key factor in successful rehabilitation, current admission policies present serious psychological and practical challenges to accessing higher education. Although there is no evidence

that enrolling students with convictions makes campuses more dangerous or that they are more likely to commit crimes on campus, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) continue to ask about convictions as part of their admissions policies.

University policies can also be a significant deterrent from applying. With often complex and differing policies and procedures they often fail to follow good practice. Policies requiring the disclosure of convictions during the application process contribute towards the higher application attrition rate seen amongst those who ask questions about criminal convictions which cause many to drop out before the end of the application process.

Building on our learning from our pilot project in 2019, our new project aims to increase the number of HEIs that operate policies and practices that are fair and inclusive, from the point that prospective students apply to study and throughout their university stay, so that more people with criminal records are able to access and benefit from, higher education. We shall do this by:

- Building a comprehensive understanding of the policies relating to students with criminal records at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);
  - Ensuring more students with criminal records can gain admission to university with half of all HEIs signed up to Unlock's 'fair chance pledge';
  - Ensuring HEIs have appropriate support policies and plans for students with criminal records and the wider student body.
- **Access to Employment project – phase 3**  
With our current phase 2 project ending in June 2021, we are seeking further funds to continue this vital work through the next stage.

Building on the successes and learning gained through phases 1 and 2, we now aim to elevate the work to a strategic level. This includes reframing the fair recruitment of people with criminal records as the standard for all recruitment, underpinned by legal, practical and cultural frameworks to enable and enforce best practice. Developing these frameworks will require building on our existing evidence base and communicating the need to a wider audience, including employers and the public. It will also require further work to influence government policy on improving access to employment for people with criminal records. The project plan includes four key outcomes:

1. Employers include people with criminal records as part of diversity and inclusion initiatives;
  2. Government has innovative policies to increase recruitment of people with criminal records;
  3. Unlock is the go-to source of guidance and support for employers across multiple sectors;
  4. Job applicants and employees turn to Unlock to challenge employer bad practice.
- **Website development**  
Working with a website development company, we shall build a new website to reflect the growing use of digital resources and to better meet the needs of our users and stakeholders especially those self-serving through our information hub. Scheduled to be launched in November 2021, the website will complement our helpline which will continue to support individuals seeking one-to-one advice and support.

## COVID-19 – IMPACT

As required by national lockdown measures imposed by the government in response to the Covid-19 global pandemic, Unlock's office closed temporarily on 17 March 2020 and our contingency plan was put into effect. Unlock uses a cloud-based system to store its records and for day-to-day working and a Covid-19 grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation helped us quickly pivot to remote working. This provided the necessary technical and telecoms equipment needed, including a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone system that came on stream in July. Because of this we were able to sustain our public-facing helpline service, sustain our online resources and continue with our funded projects and policy work with no staff being furloughed as part of the government's dedicated scheme.

The most significant negative impact was on our volunteer scheme. Remote working meant many of our volunteers

could no longer answer calls and the scheme was, of course, not available to prisoners who would otherwise be released on temporary licence as helpline advisors. The helpline office re-opened in August with safe-working practices put into place. This allowed some volunteers to return to work as advisors once more and for the team to work more effectively. A total of four volunteers were able to work across the year, down from 14 the year before.

Delivery of face-to-face training planned for the year was negatively affected, with no physical sessions being possible resulting in a loss of earned income. However, we have adapted our approach and moved to an online delivery model that will mitigate against this loss and we are grateful to the National Lottery for their support in meeting some of the remaining income shortfall. With the majority of our grant income for 2021-22 now in place, we are on target to meet our income budget and remain in a strong and stable position going into 2022-23.

Board meetings continued as scheduled by video link.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

The statement of Financial Activities is shown on page 28. The surplus for the year was £69,245 (2020: £92,412) and net assets amounted to £438,293 (2020: £369,048).

### Reserves policy

Unlock is dependent on grants to sustain its activities. The charity's reserves policy is to maintain enough unrestricted reserves to enable normal operating activities to continue over a period of up to six months should a shortfall in income occur, and to take account of potential risks and contingencies that may arise from time to time. Trustees have therefore agreed to hold reserves on the unrestricted general fund equivalent to six months expected operating expenditure for the year 2021-22, amounting to £201,660. This will allow the charity to continue working and to meet its commitments to staff and other obligations if future income could not be secured.

Any reserves on restricted funds are set aside to fund the specific project or programmes for which the funds were granted. It is common for income to be received in one year, yet programme expenditure straddle one or two years. Reserves for restricted funds therefore represent monies for programmes that are currently ongoing. Unrestricted funds amounted to £329,293 at the year-end (2020: £253,453). Restricted funds amounted to £109,000 at the year-end (2020: £115,595).

Although work began to scope for a new website this year, £25,000 of budgeted expenditure was delayed and is therefore being set aside as designated funds in our accounts to be spent in the next financial year. A further £9,800 of unrestricted funds will also be spent on completing the new website during 2021-22.

### Future funding

To preserve our ability to respond to user needs and advocate fully on their behalf, Unlock will remain independent of statutory funding to deliver services. Where possible, income is earned by delivering services to other organisations such as training, advertising, and speaker engagements. However, it is envisaged that the charity will continue to rely in the most part on charitable grants and donations.

### Fundraising report

Donors to Unlock can be assured that we follow the regulatory standards for fundraising. We are registered with the Fundraising Regulator and are committed to the Fundraising Promise and adherence to the Code of Fundraising Practice. This report covers the requirements which charities must follow as set out in the Charities Act 2016.

We do not employ agencies or external workers or suppliers to fundraise for us. Our website outlines our complaints policy for the public and clearly explains how an individual can complain. We received no complaints in the 2020-21 financial year.

### Principal funding sources

Our total income for the year was £378,151, which was received from the following sources:

- Grants 89%
- Donations 5%
- Earned 6%
- Investment 0.4%

Our grateful thanks to the following trusts and foundations for their generous support during the year:

1772 Charity; 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust; 3Ts Charitable Trust; A B Charitable Trust; Baring Foundation; Barrow Cadbury Trust; Drapers' Fund; Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; Fairness Foundation (formerly Persula Foundation); Garfield Weston Foundation; Highway One Trust; J G Hogg Charitable Trust; J Leon Philanthropy; Kent Community Foundation; National Lottery Community Fund; National Lottery Covid-19 Fund; Noel Buxton Trust; Porticus UK; Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust (Ann Rylands); and Whitehead Monckton Charitable Trust.

Our thanks also to the many individual donors who kindly supported our work.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M K Rowe', written in a cursive style.

M K Rowe, Chair of Trustees

**Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Unlock National Association of Ex-Offenders ('the Company')**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31 March 2021.

**Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

**Independent examiner's statement**

Since your charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a listed body. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a registered member of Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Rosanna Turner ACA DChA  
Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales  
Calcutt Matthews WBZ Ltd  
Chartered Accountants  
19 North Street  
Ashford  
Kent  
TN24 8LF

Date: .....03.11.2021.....

UNLOCK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EX-OFFENDERS LIMITED

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
(INCORPORATING AN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)  
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.3.21 Total funds £	31.3.20 Total funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>					
Donations and legacies	2	103,865	274,129	377,994	352,706
Investment income	3	<u>157</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>157</u>	<u>587</u>
<b>Total</b>		104,022	274,129	378,151	353,293
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>					
<b>Charitable activities</b>	4				
Service to Clients		200	160,806	161,006	136,252
Policy and Practices		2,982	144,918	147,900	124,629
<b>Total</b>		<u>3,182</u>	<u>305,724</u>	<u>308,906</u>	<u>260,881</u>
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>		100,840	(31,595)	69,245	92,412
<b>Transfers between funds</b>	12	<u>(25,000)</u>	<u>25,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		75,840	(6,595)	69,245	92,412
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>					
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>		253,453	115,595	369,048	276,636
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<u>329,293</u>	<u>109,000</u>	<u>438,293</u>	<u>369,048</u>

UNLOCK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EX-OFFENDERS LIMITED

BALANCE SHEET  
31 March 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.3.21 Total funds £	31.3.20 Total funds £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible assets	9	3,924	-	3,924	3,648
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	10	1,564	-	1,564	1,495
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>326,028</u>	<u>109,000</u>	<u>435,028</u>	<u>376,522</u>
		327,592	109,000	436,592	378,017
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due within one year	11	(2,223)	-	(2,223)	(12,617)
		<u>325,369</u>	<u>109,000</u>	<u>434,369</u>	<u>365,400</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
		329,293	109,000	438,293	369,048
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>					
		<u>329,293</u>	<u>109,000</u>	<u>438,293</u>	<u>369,048</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>					

BALANCE SHEET - continued  
31 March 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	31.3.21 Total funds	31.3.20 Total funds
	12	£	£	£	£
<b>FUNDS</b>					
Unrestricted funds:					
General fund				329,293	253,453
Restricted funds:					
Fairness Foundation				3,000	1,500
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation				30,000	27,610
Kent Community Foundation				-	4,800
The 1772 Charity				-	167
Porticus UK				40,000	40,000
Fidelity UK				-	18
Drapers Charitable Fund				-	10,000
The Noel Buxton Trust				-	1,250
Highway One Trust				-	7,500
Garfield Weston Foundation				7,500	-
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust				1,000	250
29 <sup>th</sup> May 1961 Charitable Trust				1,000	-
The Baring Foundation				-	21,000
Designated Fund				<u>25,000</u>	<u>-</u>
				<u>109,000</u>	<u>115,595</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>				<u><u>438,293</u></u>	<u><u>369,048</u></u>

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 March 2021.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for

- (a) ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- (b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

BALANCE SHEET - continued  
31 March 2021

---

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and were signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M K Rowe', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

M K Rowe, Chair of Trustees

## 1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

### **Basis of preparing the financial statements**

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

### **Income**

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

### **Expenditure**

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

### **Allocation and apportionment of costs**

Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they all have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Support costs are allocated to charitable activities on the following bases:

Staff, communication and office costs - Staff time

Premises costs and depreciation - Staff time

### **Tangible fixed assets**

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Fixtures and fittings	- 25% on cost
Computer equipment	- 25% on cost

### **Taxation**

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

### **Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees. Unrestricted funds include a revaluation reserve representing the restatement of investment assets at market values.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

**1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued****Hire purchase and leasing commitments**

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

**Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits**

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

**2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES**

	31.3.21	31.3.20
	£	£
Donations	19,332	10,838
Grants	336,545	299,810
Earned income	<u>22,117</u>	<u>42,058</u>
	<u>377,994</u>	<u>352,706</u>

**2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES - continued**

Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:

	31.3.21	31.3.20
	£	£
Persula Foundation	3,000	2,000
The Noel Buxton Trust	-	2,500
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation Access to Employment	84,590	82,830
Sir James Roll Charitable Trust	1,000	-
The 1772 Charitable Trust	-	2,000
Porticus UK	59,998	60,000
J Leon Philanthropy	10,000	10,000
Drapers Charitable Fund	-	15,000
AB Charitable Trust	-	20,000
Barrow Cadbury Trust (St Sarkis)	-	11,250
Highway One Trust	-	10,000
3Ts Charitable Fund	10,000	10,000
Garfield Weston Foundation	10,000	-
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust	1,250	750
29 <sup>th</sup> May 1961 Charitable Trust	3,000	3,000
UPP Foundation	-	9,830
Barrow Cadbury Trust – EU Nationals	10,200	-
Kent Community Foundation Core Costs	7,800	10,800
Prison Reform Trust	-	9,200
Transform Justice	-	2,650
The J G Hogg Charitable Trust	10,000	10,000
The Baring Foundation	-	28,000
Barrow Cadbury Trust – Criminal records	31,500	-
National Lottery Community Fund	46,462	-
National Lottery COVID-19 Grant	5,330	-
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation COVID19	<u>41,415</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>336,545</u>	<u>299,810</u>

**3. INVESTMENT INCOME**

	31.3.21	31.3.20
	£	£
Deposit account interest	<u>157</u>	<u>587</u>

**4. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS**

	Direct Costs £	Support costs (see note 5) £	Totals £
Service to Clients	101,645	59,361	161,006
Policy and Practices	<u>83,363</u>	<u>64,537</u>	<u>147,900</u>
	<u>185,008</u>	<u>123,898</u>	<u>308,906</u>

**5. SUPPORT COSTS**

	Management £	Finance £	Information technology £
Service to Clients	46,711	3,377	1,984
Policy and Practices	<u>50,096</u>	<u>10,160</u>	<u>391</u>
	<u>96,807</u>	<u>13,537</u>	<u>2,375</u>
	Human resources £	Governance costs £	Totals £
Service to Clients	6,263	1,026	59,361
Policy and Practices	<u>1,512</u>	<u>2,378</u>	<u>64,537</u>
	<u>7,775</u>	<u>3,404</u>	<u>123,898</u>

**6. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)**

Net income/(expenditure) is stated after charging/(crediting):

	31.3.21	31.3.20
	£	£
Depreciation - owned assets	2,002	1,606
Other operating leases	<u>11,613</u>	<u>10,827</u>

**7. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS**

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 March 2021 nor for the year ended 31 March 2020.

**Trustees' expenses**

	31.3.21	31.3.20
	£	£
Trustees' expenses	<u>162</u>	<u>600</u>

**8. STAFF COSTS**

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	31.3.21	31.3.20
Staff	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>

No employees received emoluments in excess of £60,000.

Staff numbers above represent the FTE of 9 employees.

**9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS**

	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Totals £
<b>COST</b>			
At 1 April 2020	19,128	19,135	38,263
Additions	<u>-</u>	<u>2,278</u>	<u>2,278</u>
At 31 March 2021	<u>19,128</u>	<u>21,413</u>	<u>40,541</u>
<b>DEPRECIATION</b>			
At 1 April 2020	19,128	15,487	34,615
Charge for year	<u>-</u>	<u>2,002</u>	<u>2,002</u>
At 31 March 2021	<u>19,128</u>	<u>17,489</u>	<u>36,617</u>
<b>NET BOOK VALUE</b>			
At 31 March 2021	<u>-</u>	<u>3,924</u>	<u>3,924</u>
At 31 March 2020	<u>-</u>	<u>3,648</u>	<u>3,648</u>

**10. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

	31.3.21	31.3.20
	£	£
Trade debtors	<u>1,564</u>	<u>1,495</u>

**11. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

	31.3.21	31.3.20
	£	£
Accruals and deferred income	-	10,500
Accrued expenses	<u>2,223</u>	<u>2,117</u>
	<u>2,223</u>	<u>12,617</u>

**12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS**

	At 1.4.20	Net movement in funds	Transfers between funds	At 31.3.21
	£	£	£	£
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>				
General fund	253,453	100,840	(25,000)	329,293
<b>Restricted funds</b>				
Fairness Foundation (formerly Persula)	1,500	1,500	-	3,000
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	27,610	2,390	-	30,000
Kent Community Foundation	4,800	(4,800)	-	-
The 1772 Charity	167	(167)	-	-
Porticus UK	40,000	-	-	40,000
Fidelity UK	18	(18)	-	-
Drapers' Charitable Fund	10,000	(10,000)	-	-
The Noel Buxton Trust	1,250	(1,250)	-	-
Highway One Trust	7,500	(7,500)	-	-
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	7,500	-	7,500
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust	250	750	-	1,000
29 <sup>th</sup> May 1961 Charitable Trust	1,500	-	-	1,500
Whitehead Monckton Charitable Trust	-	1,000	-	1,000
The Baring Foundation	21,000	(21,000)	-	-
Designated Fund	-	-	<u>25,000</u>	<u>25,000</u>
	<u>115,595</u>	<u>(31,595)</u>	<u>25,000</u>	<u>109,000</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>369,048</u>	<u>69,245</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>438,293</u>

**12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued**

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	104,022	(3,182)	100,840
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Fairness Foundation (formerly Persula)	3,000	(1,500)	1,500
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	84,590	(82,200)	2,390
Kent Community Foundation	7,800	(12,600)	(4,800)
The 1772 Charity	-	(167)	(167)
Porticus UK	59,998	(59,998)	-
Fidelity UK	-	(18)	(18)
Drapers Charitable Fund	-	(10,000)	(10,000)
The Noel Buxton Trust	-	(1,250)	(1,250)
Highway One Trust	1	(7,501)	(7,500)
Garfield Weston Foundation	10,000	(2,500)	7,500
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust	1,250	(500)	750
29 <sup>th</sup> May 1961 Charitable Trust	3,000	(3,000)	-
Whitehead Monckton Charitable Trust	1,000	-	1,000
Barrow Cadbury Trust – EU Nationals	10,200	(10,200)	-
Barrow Cadbury Trust (Criminal Records)	31,500	(31,500)	-
The J G Hogg Charitable Trust	9,999	(9,999)	-
The Baring Foundation	-	(21,000)	(21,000)
National Lottery Community Fund	<u>51,791</u>	<u>(51,791)</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>274,129</u>	<u>(305,724)</u>	<u>(31,595)</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u><u>378,151</u></u>	<u><u>(308,906)</u></u>	<u><u>69,245</u></u>

**12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued****Comparatives for movement in funds**

	At 1.4.19 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.3.20 £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	216,628	36,825	253,453
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Fairness Foundation (formerly Persula)	1,500	-	1,500
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	20,728	6,882	27,610
Kent Community Foundation	6,000	(1,200)	4,800
The 1772 Charity	350	(183)	167
Porticus UK	-	40,000	40,000
Barrow Cadbury Trust	1,625	(1,625)	-
Fidelity UK	1,249	(1,231)	18
Drapers Charitable Fund	-	10,000	10,000
The Noel Buxton Trust	1,250	-	1,250
Highway One Trust	-	7,500	7,500
Garfield Weston Foundation	6,250	(6,250)	-
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust	188	62	250
W F Southall Trust	1,000	(1,000)	-
29 <sup>th</sup> May 1961 Charitable Trust	1,250	250	1,500
Whitehead Monckton Charitable Trust	1,000	(1,000)	-
UPP Foundation	4,915	(4,915)	-
The Society Foundation	120	(120)	-
The Law Society Charity	3,750	(3,750)	-
Barrow Cadbury Trust – EU Nationals	8,833	(8,833)	-
The Baring Foundation	-	21,000	21,000
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>60,008</u>	<u>55,587</u>	<u>115,595</u>
	<u>276,636</u>	<u>92,412</u>	<u>369,048</u>

**12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued**

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	93,484	(56,659)	36,825
<b>Restricted funds</b>			
Fairness Foundation (formerly Persula)	2,000	(2,000)	-
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	82,830	(75,948)	6,882
Kent Community Foundation	10,799	(11,999)	(1,200)
The 1772 Charity	2,000	(2,183)	(183)
Porticus UK	60,000	(20,000)	40,000
Barrow Cadbury Trust	11,250	(12,875)	(1,625)
Fidelity UK	-	(1,231)	(1,231)
Drapers Charitable Fund	15,000	(5,000)	10,000
The Noel Buxton Trust	2,500	(2,500)	-
Highway One Trust	10,000	(2,500)	7,500
Garfield Weston	-	(6,250)	(6,250)
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust	750	(688)	62
W F Southall Trust	-	(1,000)	(1,000)
29 <sup>th</sup> May 1961 Charitable Trust	3,000	(2,750)	250
Whitehead Monckton Charitable Trust	-	(1,000)	(1,000)
UPP Foundation	9,830	(14,745)	(4,915)
The Society Foundation	-	(120)	(120)
The Law Society Charity	-	(3,750)	(3,750)
Barrow Cadbury Trust – EU Nationals	-	(8,833)	(8,833)
Prison Reform Trust	9,200	(9,200)	-
Transform Justice	2,650	(2,650)	-
The J G Hogg Charitable Trust	10,000	(10,000)	-
The Baring Foundation	28,000	(7,000)	21,000
	<u>259,809</u>	<u>(204,222)</u>	<u>55,587</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>353,293</u>	<u>(260,881)</u>	<u>92,412</u>

**Transfers between funds**

A Designated Fund was set up from General Funds during the year to ring fence funds for a redesign project of the UNLOCK website.

**13. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES**

There were no related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2021.

DETAILED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	31.3.21 £	31.3.20 £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS</b>		
<b>Donations and legacies</b>		
Donations	19,332	10,838
Grants	336,545	299,810
Earned income	<u>22,117</u>	<u>42,058</u>
	377,994	352,706
<b>Investment income</b>		
Deposit account interest	<u>157</u>	<u>587</u>
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	378,151	353,293
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Wages	156,982	132,687
Social security	14,452	12,470
Pensions	9,897	8,160
Training	345	6,584
Travel	1,557	4,685
Publications	1,775	-
Subsistence	<u>-</u>	<u>3,039</u>
	185,008	167,625
<b>Support costs</b>		
<b>Management</b>		
Wages	70,529	60,796
Social security	3,520	3,037
Pensions	2,593	2,138
Recruitment	<u>20,165</u>	<u>-</u>
	96,807	65,971
<b>Finance</b>		
Other operating leases - rent	11,613	10,827
Insurance	1,320	956
Repairs & renewals	404	2,599
Conference fees and room hire	<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>
	13,537	14,582

UNLOCK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EX-OFFENDERS LIMITED

DETAILED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	31.3.21 £	31.3.20 £
<b>Finance</b>		
<b>Information technology</b>		
Software	373	152
Computer equipment	<u>2,002</u>	<u>1,606</u>
	2,375	1,758
<b>Human resources</b>		
Subscriptions	2,478	2,411
Websites	1,106	659
Telephone	2,927	3,181
Postage and stationery	941	1,016
Bank charges	<u>323</u>	<u>287</u>
	7,775	7,554
<b>Governance costs</b>		
Trustees' expenses	162	600
Accountancy and legal fees	<u>3,242</u>	<u>2,791</u>
	<u>3,404</u>	<u>3,391</u>
Total resources expended	<u>308,906</u>	<u>260,881</u>
<b>Net income</b>	<u><u>69,245</u></u>	<u><u>92,412</u></u>