

## Part A - General Information

### Organisation/Individual Name

Release Mates CIC

### Organisation Type/Structure

Community Interest Company (CIC)

### Theme/Nature of Project

Human Services

### Company/CIC Registration Number (if applicable)

14458363

### Name of Lead Contact

David Dunn

### Email

[david@releasemates.org](mailto:david@releasemates.org)

### Phone / Mobile

07821619316

### Website

<http://www.releasemates.org>

### Social Media Handles (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc):

Twitter @releasemates

## Part B - Project Proposal

### Project Mission: A snapshot of the project's intention (50 words max)

To provide current prison leavers with the best possible start upon their release from custody, offered by former prison leavers who have successfully navigated their way to a pro-social lifestyle

### Situation (250 words)

Prison leavers are often involved in cycle of crime. Irrespective of their best intentions when released from prison, around 66% either reoffend or are recalled to prison within 6 months of their release, although 97% said they did not wish to reoffend. The expectations for a person leaving prison are high on the day of release. They must attend probation appointments, are often released with no accommodation to go to, need to travel unreasonable distances to access medication, have no food, no clothes and little money. As prison leavers ourselves, we recognise the need for support on the day of release. Albeit a cliché, "setting them up to fail" is the most accurate terminology for most people leaving prison. It is impossible to describe the conflicting emotions leaving prison; joy, excitement, fear, anxiety, frustration. The UK has one of the highest reoffending rates in Europe. Once engulfed in the Criminal Justice System, most find it difficult to escape despite having admirable intentions to do so.

### Complication (250 words)

Many prisoners suffer with mental ill-health, addiction, and more often than not, other complex issues. Most are ill-equipped to cope with the tasks required of them when they are released from prison. Most have no hope. They feel that society has given up on them, brought upon by low self-esteem and confidence. Each prison leaver has spent time incarcerated and will naturally have an excitement for being released. This excitement is tempered by anxiety and fear. Prison leavers become overwhelmed when they are released. No thought is given to such issues by the probation service, accommodation and healthcare providers, or police. The immediate hours post-release are pivotal to a prison leaver's future. Many immediately return to a life of drugs and ultimately crime, because that is an easier option.

The problem affects society at large as anyone can be a victim of crime. The offender is also negatively

affected.

The problem remains unsolved because those releasing people from prison do not understand how it feels to be released. The transition from offender management in custody to the community is convoluted by ever changing policies, frameworks and protocols which serve only to further complicate situations.

### **Solution (250 words)**

When a toddler falls over, we do not leave them or punish them for doing so. We take "baby steps" with them to show them the way. Release Mates takes the same approach with released prisoners. Society has given up on these people, we do not. People being released are referred to Release Mates by the prison. Where possible, we visit them prior to release to introduce ourselves and briefly share our own stories. Each person within the Release Mates project has had experience of the criminal justice system and is now in recovery from addiction, living a purposeful life. We explain how we changed and share our lived experience. We work with the prison leaver and other services to plan the day of release.

On the day of release, we meet each prison leaver at the prison gate and immediately begin to diffuse day of release anxiety. We take each person for a good meal before we set about accompanying them to day of release appointments. Frequently, we are required to advocate for the person with housing providers, the DWP and other agencies. In the time we spend with each person, we are repeatedly offering encouragement and hope from our own experiences for positive change. We continue this work post-release by staying in contact with each person and helping to signpost to other services for longer term support. Should people who use the project remain free of drugs and crime, they are offered the opportunity to return as a volunteer with us.

### **Part C - Wider Support**

#### **How would the Stephen Lloyd Award network of partners' support be beneficial to your project? (250 words max)**

It is impossible to mention all of the partners who could benefit Release Mates. We are in our infancy. In terms of the service we provide, we know from our data that the project works. In the complex field of social enterprises, we are admittedly naive. Governance, safeguarding, risk management, financial matters, and promotion are all areas where we must improve and learn more, if we are to make the project widely available. The project needs help with leadership and would benefit greatly from the wisdom and experience of the partners.

### **Part D - Financial Justification**

#### **In general terms, please explain how the winning funds would be used to carry out your project. (50 words max)**

The winning funds would allow us to incorporate the Release Mates project to a number of prisons across the North-West of England, and possibly North Wales.

### **Part E - Supporting Information**

#### **Governing Documents: Where relevant, please upload any recent charity accounts and governing documents as attachments.**

- [Certificate-of-Incorporation1.pdf](#)

#### **Team: We would like to learn a little more about the individual or team invested into the project. What are your individual credentials? Is there a story behind how you or your team all came together to support the project? (75 words max)**

When David Dunn was released from HMP Preston in March 2022, he volunteered as a painter of an outbuilding of the prison to keep him busy and "out of trouble". In this time, he noticed prison leavers sought his help ahead of that of professional services located in the building. Prison leavers could relate to him. From this, Release Mates was born. David met co-director, Neil Stubbs who helped establish the project. Volunteers were recruited from the drug and alcohol recovery network across the North-West. The team is a close-knit group of prison leavers in recovery from addiction, helping each other, to help others achieve a better life.

### **YouTube Video**

<https://youtu.be/ql0rki7HcLU>

**Additional References: You are welcome to provide a list of up to 5 links with any relevant supporting material or visuals, as further reference**

<https://www.lep.co.uk/news/crime/we-know-what-its-like-meet-the-former-prisoners-helping-people-released-from-jail-transition-back-to-normal-life-in-lancashire-3840269>

<https://1drv.ms/b/s!Av3lkP2Ml8inil4qW9TE1q0JqLky?e=7W93fF>