

Jobs Pathway: Community Recruitment Agency

Katerina Sauerova | BSocSc (Hons) Politics and International Relations

Overview of the Data Fellowship

Jobs Pathway (JP) is a pilot project run by **Community Development Action Hertfordshire (CDA Herts)**. Its goal is to support people from marginalised communities —namely ex-offenders, the formerly homeless, or people with disabilities— in finding suitable, permanent employment. CDA Herts works with numerous referring partners, e.g. HACRO, the Probation Service, or the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire (OPCC), in order to connect job-ready candidates with a network of employers.

During my 8-week fellowship, I worked alongside the Project Manager to produce substantial data analysis used to further support the running of the project, e.g. when applying for funding opportunities. Although the project itself does not cater to prison leavers only, most of my analysis was focused on this group, as they make up the vast majority of JP candidates. Moreover, I also assisted the OPCC with their bid for the Local Leadership and Integration Fund, as the work for both projects largely overlapped.

Data Analysis

The main aim of my fellowship was to find data that will help us tell a story of why the proposed services are needed. For that, I first reviewed existing literature and analysed national and local data such as proven reoffending statistics, expected vs. actual prison releases (as seen in Figure 1), the volume of breaches and recalls in the past

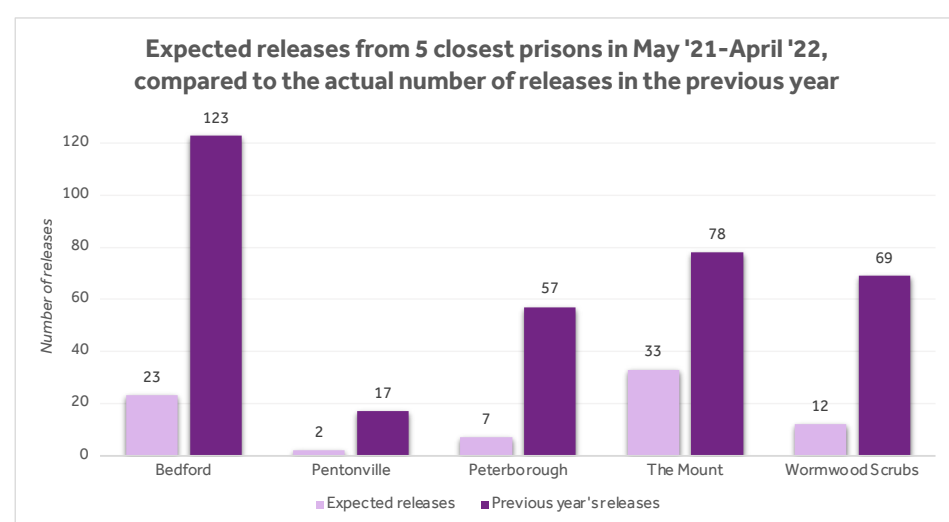


Figure 1. Source: own analysis, using data provided by the Probation Service.

three years, or unemployment data — all of these were either taken from a publicly available dataset or were forwarded to me by my supervisor. During this stage, I mostly worked with Microsoft Excel. However, for the purpose of the two projects, we found qualitative data to be more significant as we got a great insight into the prison leavers' minds, which quantitative data could not offer.

Regarding that, I transcribed recordings of interviews and focus group discussions with service users, as well as examined over 100 insight questionnaires with professionals and prison leavers (both

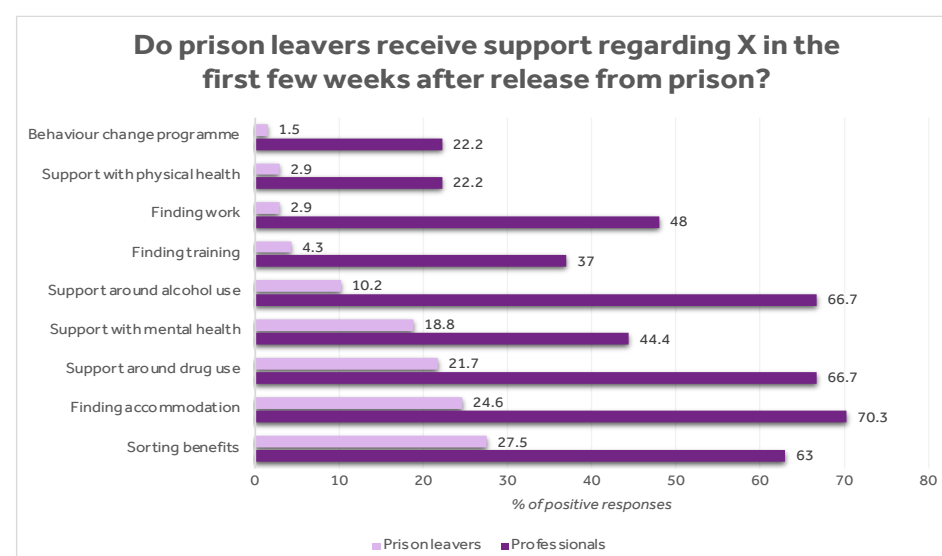


Figure 2. Source: own analysis, using data collected by the OPCC, N = 69 & 27.

those back in prison and those currently in the community). Among other things, they were asked about the level of support they had received, what they found most challenging after release, and what they would change, if they could. I identified common themes and popular responses and used them to write a summary of the information that had been assessed and an overall picture of challenges and suggestions moving forward.

Findings

Many of the findings confirmed several of our hypotheses, e.g. that housing is the number one issue for prison leavers after release, which ties to the inability to secure stable employment, or that there is a general distrust in the system. On the other hand, some of the things we were surprised by included the large disparity between responses from professionals and prison leavers regarding the level of support offered after release — this can be seen in Figure 2.

One of the most important findings, one that informed a new point of focus for Jobs Pathway, is the lack of cooperation between multiple actors operating in the area of offender rehabilitation — many of the services prison leavers expressed they would like there to be already exist, the lack of communication between various departments simply makes it impossible to know about their existence.

Key Skills Learnt

Overall, I mostly utilised skills I have learned at University —such as coding qualitative interview data, visualising data by creating tables and graphs, or writing reports— rather than learning new analytical and research skills during the fellowship. What I have greatly developed, however, are my professional skills — namely collaboration and team working, communication, time management, and adaptability. I am also definitely more confident when it comes to finding a job after graduation, both in terms of the job search process (like undertaking interviews) and navigating the workspace itself.