MAYOR OF LONDON

Bassam Mahfouz AM
Chair of the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee
C/o Saleha.Fazal@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA130126-1857

Date: 20 October 2026

Dear Bassam,

Thank you for the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's report: Employment in London after Prison. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

My response to each of the Committee's recommendations is set out in the annex below.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Lord Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

Annex

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's report into Employment in London after Prison

Recommendation 1

Additional funding is required to improve education and training for people in prison to help them prepare for future employment opportunities. To achieve this:

a) The Government should commit to a long-term increase in funding for prison education. We ask that the Ministry of Justice respond to the Committee setting out any plans it has for this by the end of 2025-26.

b) As part of discussions with the Government on the Integrated Settlement for the GLA in 2026-27, the Mayor should seek the Government's agreement that adult skills funding can be used to increase skills among people in prison and, should this be the case, consider allocating funds for this purpose. Plans should be set out in the final draft of the budget considered in February 2026.

a) This Recommendation has been noted; however, it is for the Ministry of Justice to provide a response.

b) The Mayor will continue to engage with the Government on the scope and use of adult skills funding within the Integrated Settlement. However, education provision for people in custody remains the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice, and the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) cannot currently be used to fund learning delivered in prisons.

The ASF can be used to support individuals released on a temporary licence, and the Mayor will continue to ensure that this flexibility is used where appropriate to support transitions into learning and work. In addition, eligibility rules for programmes such as Skills Bootcamps have been designed to support a wide range of Londoners facing barriers to employment, including those with experience of the criminal justice system, and the Mayor will continue to promote inclusive participation within these frameworks.

Negotiations on the funding streams included within the 2026-27 Integrated Settlement concluded in autumn 2025. As a result, it was not possible to amend eligibility or introduce new provisions in the February 2026 draft budget.

The Mayor remains open to exploring whether changes to the scope of adult skills funding, including the potential to support people in custody, could be considered as part of future Integrated Settlement negotiations from 2029-30 onwards, subject to a strong strategic and financial case and agreement from the Government.

Recommendation 2

The GLA should ensure that Heads of Education at London's prisons are included in the new Sector Talent Boards and hubs, to ensure alignment between the needs of London's employers and education within prisons. We ask that the GLA write to the Committee with an update by the end of 2025/26.

The Mayor agrees that stronger alignment between employer demand, skills provision and pathways for people with experience of the criminal justice system is important to improving employment outcomes.

The new Sector Talent Boards will act as strategic forums for employers and industry representatives to identify priority skills gaps, refine sector career pathways and shape the wider talent system. These Boards will be supported by sector-focused Pan-London Hubs, which will work with training providers, referral organisations and other partners to deliver responsive and inclusive training aligned to employer needs.

Heads of Education at London's prisons will be engaged through existing partnership structures, including the London Employment Collective, ensuring that prison education is connected to wider sector priorities and employer demand where appropriate. This approach supports collaboration without duplicating statutory responsibilities for prison education.

The Pan-London Hubs are currently being commissioned or in mobilisation phase. The Mayor will provide an update to the Committee on progress in early 2026/27 financial year.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should convene London's prison governors to discuss the potential and challenges of the use of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) in London prisons, with the aim of re-establishing access to ROTL in at least two London prisons by the end of 2027.

The Mayor will continue to engage with the Government and officers across HMPPS to understand the barriers facing the use of ROTL in London prisons.

London prisons typically hold a significantly higher proportion of remand prisoners and prisoners serving short sentences than the national average, meaning that ROTLs from London prisons are not always feasible or an effective tool to support rehabilitation. Discussions have taken place with HMPPS regarding how we can provide better support to prisoners who are being released on temporary licence back to London in order to improve their rehabilitation opportunities, and the Mayor will continue to work with the London Prison Group and HMPPS to promote this pathway and encourage the re-establishment of ROTL within London prisons.

Recommendation 4

By the end of 2026-27, the Government should review the impact of the funding increase for the Probation Service set out in the 2025 Spending Review. It should assess whether the funding increase has enabled the service to address staff shortages and excess workloads, so that it is able to provide further rehabilitative support and help people leaving prison to secure employment. Further funding increases should be introduced if the review indicates this is not the case.

The Mayor will continue to strongly advocate for the Probation Service to be properly resourced, alongside all agencies working across the Criminal Justice System. Staffing vacancies are widespread in a number of key roles within the Criminal Justice System, negatively impacting these agencies. For frontline roles within HMPPS in London, it is also vital that the right levels of pay and benefits are offered to be able to attract and retain staff. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Mayor will continue to work with the Government to secure a fair funding settlement to address these vacancies and continue delivering for London.

Recommendation 5

MOPAC should hold at least one meeting with the Probation Service in London as soon as possible and assign a liaison to regularly update the Probation Service on initiatives commissioned by MOPAC. MOPAC should confirm to the Committee by the end of 2025-26 that these arrangements are in place.

The Mayor and officers within MOPAC are in frequent communication with the Probation Service at various levels of seniority. Examples of these meetings are the London Criminal Justice Board, chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime; the Reducing Reoffending Board; the Reducing Robbery Board; the Violence Against Women and Girls Board; and monthly MOPAC/Probation catch-ups and other operational and strategic meetings. These meetings also include regular discussion of commissioned and co-commissioned services where MOPAC and the Probation Service work in partnership to support the rehabilitation of those within the Criminal Justice System.

The Mayor and MOPAC will continue to work closely with London Probation across these levels.

Recommendation 6

The Government should introduce a London weighting for the discharge grant as soon as possible to reflect the higher cost of living in London. The Mayor should lobby the Government to do this. We ask that the Ministry of Justice responds to this report confirming plans to introduce a London weighting by the end of 2025-26.

It is a matter for HMPPS to decide on the appropriate discharge grants for prisoners, based on the areas of release and their home addresses. The Mayor will continue to advocate for measures to improve the release arrangements for prisoners returning to London.

Recommendation 7

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) should produce an estimate of the cost of providing every Londoner under 30 who has been to prison with access to a mentor. We ask that the VRU write to the Committee with an estimate by the end of 2025-26.

The VRU firmly believes in the transformative impact that a trusted adult can have on a young person through support, guidance and providing access to education, training, and employment. In the last seven years, the VRU has funded and delivered interventions and positive opportunities for more than 550,000 young people, predominantly delivered by mentors, youth workers, or frontline practitioners.

It would be useful to better understand the scope of this recommendation, as building a fully accurate picture would be a significant undertaking. The VRU specifically focuses on violence, and it would therefore be important to understand whether a mentor would be made available to every Londoner who has completed a sentence for a violent offence. There are also significant data issues, as while national-level data is published on both prison releases and probation caseloads, regional data is not broken down by age group. It would therefore require a specific request to the Ministry of Justice to provide bespoke data for London, which is currently not available to any region across the country.

In relation to mentoring itself, the type, needs related to the specific offence type, and intensity would all need to be determined in order to provide a clearer picture of estimated costs. Exploring estimations on mentoring costs highlights significant variance. For example, mentoring costs varied

through the New Deal for Young People delivery, and a Youth Justice Board scheme of 80 mentoring programmes delivered in England and Wales between 2001 and 2004 found that, on average, each mentee received two or more sessions costing around £12,000. The cost varied greatly based on duration and the number of mentors and mentees involved. The Youth Endowment Fund has published costs of mentoring programmes in the US and Australia, but no UK evaluations provide costs for mentoring at this scale. This underlines the significant undertaking and resourcing required to establish estimates for this work.

Recommendation 8

MOPAC and the Violence Reduction Unit should set up a working group between London prisons, local authorities, probation services and the voluntary sector within the next 12 months. This group should meet at least once a quarter to encourage better joined up working to provide holistic resettlement support with a focus on accessing and sustaining employment.

Officers from across MOPAC and the Greater London Authority (GLA) currently attend the London Employment Council meetings, which bring together partners from across the London Prison Group, the Probation Service and the Voluntary Sector to work on strengthening employment opportunities for prison leavers in London and providing holistic resettlement support. Officers from MOPAC have discussed the idea of a working group with the Chair of the London Employment Council, and it was agreed that an additional working group would duplicate the existing work of the Council. MOPAC will continue to attend and contribute to the London Employment Council and work to strengthen and support its work.

Recommendation 9

MOPAC should engage with counterparts at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to further understand the devolved arrangements in Greater Manchester for commissioning probation services. MOPAC and the Mayor should examine whether this can deliver benefits and help Londoners leaving prison to gain secure employment. If this is the case, it should inform the Mayor's future priorities for requesting devolved powers from the Government. We ask that MOPAC updates the Committee by the end of 2025-26 on the results so far of this engagement.

The Mayor is aware of the differing devolved powers in place in Greater Manchester and how they support the work of the Combined Authority. Officers from MOPAC working in commissioning and criminal justice have previously developed relationships with their counterparts in Manchester, and this has included a shared presentation on commissioning and partnership in 2023.

This event included sharing how MOPAC has co-commissioned with London Probation in new and innovative ways since the launch of the unified Probation Service in 2021 and examples of best practice from Manchester.

A new meeting to discuss developments in co-commissioning, devolution and the use of shared budgets took place on 23 March 2026. This included specific discussion on how local commissioning arrangements support employment outcomes and how this is supported in Manchester by certain devolved powers. The results of this meeting will be shared with MOPAC senior leaders to consider as part of future discussions on co-commissioning or any future devolution options.

Recommendation 10

The Mayor should convene leading organisations within the voluntary sector and members of the London Employment Council for prison leavers within the next 12 months to develop training and guidance for employers that want to employ people leaving prison. The Mayor should promote this to employers and set up an online portal to connect them to voluntary sector partners.

The GLA has already produced training and guidance for employers who wish to employ prison leavers, which has been shared with the London Employment Council. The Mayor and MOPAC will continue to promote this through the work of the Council.

Recommendation 11

The GLA should launch a small-scale scheme to attract and recruit people who have been to prison within the next 12 months. To do this, the GLA should partner with voluntary sector organisations working in this field to provide holistic support during the first year of employment. The GLA should evaluate the successes and key learnings of this programme after one year.

The Mayor recognises that stable work is one of the most effective ways to reduce reoffending and strengthen community safety, and he appreciates the Committee's focus on ensuring that people with lived experience of the criminal justice system have access to meaningful opportunities.

The Mayor acknowledges the significant barriers that individuals often face upon release from prison, particularly in securing employment that offers stability and growth. He also recognises the valuable contribution that people with criminal convictions can make when provided with the right support and a fair chance to succeed.

In line with the Committee's recommendation, the GLA will explore the development of a small-scale pilot scheme within the next 12 months to attract and recruit people who have been to prison. The Mayor is committed to ensuring that this initiative is delivered in partnership with specialist voluntary and community organisations that have deep expertise in supporting people during the critical period following release.

By working collaboratively, the GLA aims not only to provide employment opportunities within the organisation but also to ensure that participants receive holistic, wrap-around support during their first year in work. This approach is intended to maximise the likelihood of positive, long-term outcomes. The Mayor has also asked that the programme be evaluated after its first year to assess its impact, identify key successes and lessons learned, and determine how the approach might be developed or expanded in the future. As with all recruitment to the GLA, participants would be subject to appropriate fit and proper checks. The Mayor is clear that any new programme must uphold the organisation's established standards of safety, integrity and public trust while ensuring that checks are applied in a fair and proportionate way that does not create unnecessary barriers to employment.