

revolving ↻
doors

**Police and Crime
Commissioner's Guide to
Tackling the Revolving Door
of Crisis and Crime**



revolving doors

About Revolving Doors

Revolving Doors is a national charity that aims to change systems and improve services for people 'in the revolving door' – people who come into repeat contact with the criminal justice system due to multiple unmet needs such as mental ill-health, substance misuse, homelessness, poverty and other traumatic life events.

We work to create a smarter criminal justice system that makes the revolving door avoidable and escapable. We do this by working alongside national and local decision-makers. We combine lived experience insight, robust research and system knowledge to drive effective policy solutions

Please note

This guide draws on insights from our members, people with experience of being in the revolving door of crisis and crime. All anonymous quotes are from our members. We thank them for their time and support in developing this guide.

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Definition of the revolving door group

The revolving door group are those who have repeat contact with the criminal justice system for **low-level, non-violent offending** due to **unmet health and social needs**. These are a combination of poverty, trauma, racial inequalities, mental health issues, problematic substance use, and homelessness. This group is over-represented by those who are neurodiverse, care-experienced and excluded from school.

Barriers to support and systemic failures exacerbate the problem. Around 300,000 individuals are in this **cycle of crisis and crime** nationally, contributing significantly to the

£18.1 billion annual economic cost of reoffending and the immeasurable human cost in wasted opportunity, talent, and family breakdown.

“ People turn to crime due to past trauma. People don't relate past trauma to their actions. It's an inside cry. People maybe go on drugs to dampen the pain. They need help. ”

“ People in the revolving door are resilient and resourceful but also traumatised, and often misunderstood. ”

Why PCCs should target support for the revolving doors group

We believe the strategic role of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is ideally placed to ensure the multiple and intersecting issues impacting this cohort are addressed and in doing so, prevent and cut crime in their area. The revolving door group are often categorised as people who carry out persistent and prolific offending, often responsible for 'volume crime', such as burglary, theft and other acquisitive offences, causing harm to victims and communities. If their needs were better met, they could contribute positively to communities instead.

“ People in the revolving door, can give great input to societies [...] with the right support and services. These people can be valuable members of community with great insight that helps services be better. They're not bad people. There are lots of extreme circumstances that have led them down a path that can be changed if the help is there. ”

Ways to reduce offending amongst the revolving door group

Prevention

People **excluded from school** are significantly overrepresented in the revolving door group. Targeted interventions can make a huge difference to the trajectory they take.

“The school-to-prison pipeline should be the number one priority for any Police and Crime Commissioner when it comes to crime. Early intervention – prevention is better than cure.”

“It's all about early intervention, the more that we invest and spend time and put resources into our youth, the less we're going to have to spend in the future on the criminal justice system. It's as simple as that.”

“I'd want to explain to PCCs that being trapped in a revolving door is a crisis and crime [...] means that they've got unmet needs. More than likely they were failed going through the education system and then have been let down for many years.”

Trauma-informed approaches

People caught in the cycle of crisis and crime often have **histories of trauma**. Those working and commissioning services in the criminal justice system need a better understanding of trauma to ensure services do not **re-traumatise** people. A trauma-informed approach begins with the question ‘What happened to you?’ not ‘What's wrong with you?’

“They should invest more in training for staff members. So that they educate staff about trauma and its impact, so they understand more and have more of an empathy and understanding the possible impact on those with bad past experiences.”

“Better training for police officers to make sure they have a trauma-informed approach. Dedicated female support officer to visit women after contact from police whether they're victims or perpetrators and ability to refer to appropriate services.”

Diversion (Out-of-Court approaches)

Prosecution and court-imposed sanctions are neither effective nor cost-effective for many crimes and those who commit them. Out-of-court approaches offer victims an opportunity to get an apology and assurance that the person who committed the crime will get support to turn their life around. A deferred prosecution pilot in Birmingham reported **43% greater victim satisfaction**, compared to victims whose cases went to court.

Contact with the justice system is traumatic, so a diversionary, out-of-court response to low-level crimes is a **common-sense** way of contributing to a trauma-informed justice system. Diversion provides a **cost-effective and swift** approach providing pathways away from the justice system, which can be a **catalyst for change** for those caught in the revolving door.

Evidence also shows that diversion and out-of-court disposals are usually more effective than court disposals in **reducing offending**. Out-of-court approaches also don't entail a long criminal record which can be a barrier to employment, housing and education, which can keep people trapped in the cycle of crisis and crime for years. Diversion can set people up for success and help them to **achieve their potential**.

Case Study 1: Diversion for young adults in North Yorkshire

New Generation Policing was a focused project running between 2019-22 aimed at improving policing approaches to better meet young adults' needs. As part of the project, Revolving Doors worked with the PFCC for North Yorkshire (now superseded by a Mayor).

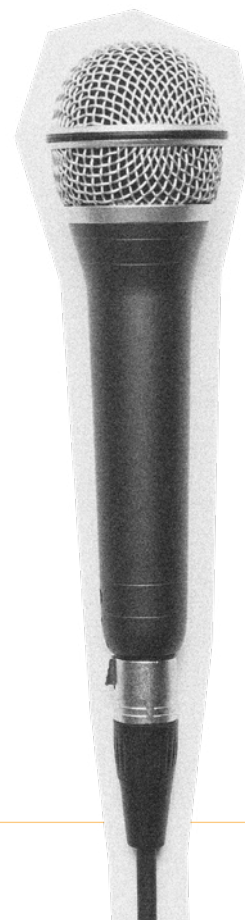
Revolving Doors' involvement ensured that people with lived experience were involved in designing the new support services. The service includes a lead practitioner, six criminal justice workers, and a peer support apprentice with lived experience. Operating without a traditional office, they meet clients in homes or cafes, emphasising a client-centric approach. They have proved adaptable to meet individual needs creating interventions to address issues such as gambling problems and eating disorders.

The scheme accepts referrals from North Yorkshire Police and self-referrals from individuals or other agencies. The scheme for young adults was so successful, it was re-developed to accept referrals for anyone over 18. They work closely with the police, helping train and upskill officers, and have established data collection processes to understand their impact. The scheme has a 100% satisfaction rate and 83% of people using the diversion services report improvement in four or more problem areas.

Case study 2: Drug-diversion programme in the West Midlands

Revolving Doors liaised with the OPCC in the West Midlands whilst an Out of Court Disposals strategy was being developed, after they had estimated that drug-use and drug-related crime was costing the region £1.4 billion each year. The PCC subsequently invested in a new drug diversion service pilot, known as DIVERT, delivered by a local substance misuse charity.

Further support was provided by Revolving Doors during the transition to the newly elected PCC in 2021 including signposting to resources to inform their integrated care and diversion agenda, highlighting examples of successful multi-agency interventions, and informing the OPCCs plans for a local diversion hub. As a result, the PCCs West Midlands Policing and Crime Plan 2021-2025 committed to increase the use of Out of Court Disposals and other diversionary opportunities, including Restorative Justice programmes, peer courts and community disposals.



“I believe diversion needs to be the first step process, rather than prison. Putting them through diversion and support services needs to be there. Charging these people and putting them through the system does not help. Diversion needs to be the first port of call. The police need a different mindset to stop the cycle.”

Peer support

Employing people with **lived experience** as peer support workers in services is essential to enable a trauma-informed approach and promote positive engagement. Having support workers who've had similar experiences, helps people **believe change is possible**. Often people who have experienced social exclusion find it hard to advocate for themselves and can feel intimidated accessing services. Empathetic peer support can help people attend appointments and navigate complex systems and services through 'hand holding' and **building trust**.

“I think we need to stress the handholding thing as well because I think people imagine people in the criminal justice system as quite brassy, quite outspoken – but often that's a cover for anxiety. I think we need to kind of educate people on what confidence looks like and feels like and how hard it is for people to go into the GP and say this is what's wrong with me, I think or go to the job centre and say this is what I need.”

“I suppose the question to ask is: what is the PCC doing to build on and expand the successes of peer support and general lived experience involvement in the system?”

Gender-specific responses

Women in the criminal justice system have distinct needs and experiences that require a different approach. By adopting a gender-responsive approach that **addresses the root causes** of women's offending,

Police and Crime Commissioners can work towards fostering safer and more inclusive communities for everyone.

Women frequently have unique pathways into crime, often stemming from complex backgrounds of trauma, poverty, mental health, substance use, and experiences of abuse, victimisation, and coercion. **Community-based programmes** that foster social support networks and address the relational aspects of women's lives can be particularly effective, such as **Women's Centres**. PCCs can help by commissioning services that take a gender-specific approach and prioritise the safety and well-being of women.

“I'm a recovering drug addict and now in recovery there aren't many other women there. Meetings are majority male. [...] Shame and guilt are so much harder, especially if a woman has children [...] We get strength from other women and when you go to places where you've been told to go and recover and it's a room full of men and we may have suffered abuse from men since childhood it's hard. You need an intrinsic strength to grit your teeth and go into that room.”

“Police and Crime Commissioners should become more actively involved in local communities – women's groups and things like that. They should hold regular consultations and forums focusing on women's issues; and help fund women's centres – I was thinking that there wasn't one where I am where I can go and talk to other women in a safe environment.”

Case Study 3

Revolving Doors supported South Wales and Gwent OPCC and police services to develop and deliver an 18-month diversion scheme for people in the 'revolving door'. This included supporting the development of the service specification and appropriate eligibility criteria, and supported wider systems change by delivering harm reduction training to the police.

The police forces were keen to expand on the women's pathfinder whole systems approach and 18-25 early intervention deferred prosecutions service, which were delivered by a consortium, Future 4, made up of G4S, Safer Wales, Include and Llamau.

The project was a joint initiative between South Wales Police, South Wales OPCC, Gwent Police, Gwent OPCC, HMPPS and Future4. The service adopted the approach used by Future4 to people committing repeat, low level offences. It intended to target those who may have missed out on accessing early intervention initiatives to support them and address their offending behaviour.

Young adult-specific responses

Young adults (18 to 25 year olds) need a **distinct approach** so that their experiences do not lead to a lifetime spent in the revolving door of crisis and crime. Evidence supports the notion that young adulthood constitutes a unique phase in life, distinct from adolescence and adulthood.

Young adults are in a **crucial phase of their brain development**, transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. Their cognitive and emotional processes are still maturing, which can influence their decision-making and behaviour, yet many services suitable for young people have an arbitrary cut-off as soon as someone reaches their 18th birthday. Research indicates that young adults are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour, but they also have a **higher capacity for change** than older people with more entrenched behaviours.

By commissioning targeted interventions addressing the root causes of offending behaviour, such as lack of education, employment opportunities, or social support, PCCs can help reduce re-offending among young adults and steer them away from a life of crime towards a more positive future where they can thrive. This can have a long-term impact by **breaking the cycle of inter-generational crime** and creating safer communities.

“ I feel like you don't become an adult until you are 25. Crimes they commit are because they have not grown up yet. Also, you are very easily led at those ages. Crimes committed before that need to be understood in the context that your brain is not fully formed yet. You don't understand life. Young people can get very stuck easily. Some are very vulnerable to targeting by people like drug dealers, and other criminals and they need help to avoid this. ”

Case Study 4: The Newham Young Adults Hub

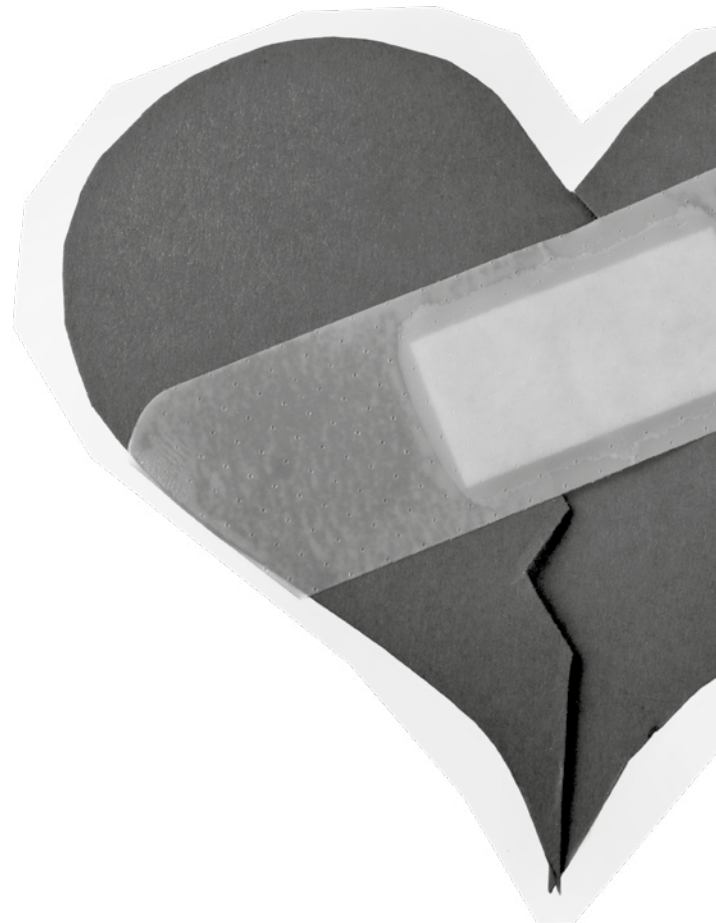
Revolving Doors, in collaboration with Leaders Unlocked, helped MOPAC design their new £3 million young adult hub in Newham through co-facilitating discussions with young adults on probation to get their views and experiences of the service, and ideas for the hub. This informed MOPAC's thinking on the pilot, as well as the services they subsequently commissioned.

During the consultation phase, young adults told us they do not always understand the conditions of their licence and could therefore breach their licence in error. This highlighted the need to expand a Speech and Language Therapy role and to develop a license conditions 'glossary of terms' to give to young adults. Young adults also wanted more positive activities to fill their time productively, so MOPAC responded by commissioning a service to provide 'meaningful activities' aimed at building skills and confidence.

The hub is now home to a multidisciplinary team, comprised of various services co-located with probation under one roof, including emotional wellbeing, speech and language therapy, mentoring, coaching and restorative justice. The hub serves all 18-25-year-olds on probation and 17-year-olds transitioning from the Youth Justice Service to adult probation, including both young men and women, regardless of offence type. The upper age limit is somewhat flexible, so the hub occasionally works with 26-year-olds, particularly when it aligns with the duration and timing of their orders. To ensure a safe and trauma-informed environment, young women receive hub support from the local women's centre.

MOPAC have commented that the partnership with Revolving Doors 'definitely shaped our thinking on the pilot and what services we wanted to commission and how we could centre young adults' voices throughout that experience.'

Young adults are often sceptical and **mistrusting of the police**, resulting in a **wall of silence** where they do not come forward to the police as victims or witnesses. A distinct approach from PCCs emphasising community policing, outreach programmes and youth engagement initiatives can help bridge this gap and foster more **positive and trusted relationships** between the police and young adults. When young people feel respected and heard by authorities, and where there are services available that meet their distinct needs, they are more likely to cooperate and seek help when needed.



Case Study 5: Durham and Darlington OPPC

Revolving Doors used research interviews and workshops to support Durham and Darlington OPPC and local strategic partners to develop an approach towards the treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system, as well as children approaching transition from the youth to the adult system. The scope included considering opportunities to work with their families and siblings in recognition of the intergenerational effects of crime.

The interviews helped explore existing local practice for young adults and identify future priority areas. We compared this with the wider evidence base and worked with a steering group (convened by the OPPC) to agree a strategic blueprint.

The subsequent recommendations were presented to Durham and Darlington's Reducing Reoffending Group. As a result, they made young adults a priority cohort on their strategic agenda and planned to take the identified actions forward. This included plans for adopting specific approaches towards young adults within the Integrated Offender Management scheme, and for adapting the delivery of an existing peer mentoring service to provide 1:1 support to late adolescents and young adults.

Reducing stigma

As vocal communicators about crime and justice, PCCs can play a crucial role in helping to **reduce stigma and labelling**, which can act as a barrier preventing people who have been stuck in the cycle of crisis and crime from moving on with their lives. For example, PCCs can help encourage local employers to **'ban the box'** and recruit people leaving prison or with convictions, helping them contribute to the community and provide for their families. However, efforts to do this can be thwarted by the using stigmatising and labelling language.

Research carried out by Frameworks UK gives a useful steer on how to reduce stigmatisation, for example by using **people-first language** such as 'people with convictions' or 'people who have left prison', rather than terms such as 'offender' or 'ex-offender'.

“The stigma, on a woman who has committed an offence, is huge.”



Ways of working to plan, design and commission services

Engaging people with lived experience

When developing police and crime plans and commissioning services, PCCs can obtain **valuable insights and ideas** from people who have lived experience of being in the cycle of crisis and crime.

As the organisation Just Leadership USA says, **'Those closest to the problem are those closest to the solution**, but furthest away from power and resources.'

“ I would say like we're the voices that nobody hears. I always come from a place where I'm misunderstood. I'm just a statistic really – it could be due to my race, due to my due to my mental health, due to my drug use. For so long, nobody gave me a chance to be heard. And now I've got that opportunity to have a voice with the Revolving Doors team I want to stop others being unheard. ”

Engaging with the public

PCCs will want to **engage with their communities** in developing their police and crime plans, and beyond. There is often a lack of understanding by the public of the nuances of how the policing and criminal justice systems work.

Apart from voting for their PCC, many members of the public will not have any opportunity to learn more about crime and justice in their area and **contribute meaningfully to developing local solutions**. This is especially the case for people from marginalised groups, including those with multiple disadvantages.

One way to do this can be through **participatory democracy approaches**, such as citizens' juries.

Case Study 6: Integrated Offender Management Training

Revolving Doors has delivered lived experience-led training for Integrated Offender Management (IOM) officers to help them better understand the cohort they work with. So far, we have delivered it to all officers in the West Midlands, West Mercia and Greater Manchester forces.

- 100% of respondents rated the session as “good” or “very good”.
- 100% reported it increased their understanding of root causes that lead people into contact with the justice system.
- 88% of respondents said it would change the way they work.
- 100% said they would recommend lived experience involvement in IOM training to other forces.

Focus group participants identified changes they have made to their practice because of the training. This included taking time to listen to the people on their caseload and build rapport.

Supporting a socio-economic equality duty

Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 introduced a socio-economic duty on public bodies that requires them 'when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions' to 'have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from **socio-economic disadvantage**.' However, this section is yet to be implemented into law.

In April 2018 the Scottish Parliament enacted the Fairer Scotland Duty – their name for the socio-economic duty. Wales also has had a socio-economic duty in place since April 2021. Several councils and PCCs in England have decided to treat the socio-economic duty as if it were in force.

When carrying out **equality impact assessments**, PCCs can therefore add socio-economic disadvantage to the protected characteristics they will consider when making strategic decisions to give due regard to this factor which drives inequality and contributes to people being trapped in the cycle of crisis and crime.

Case Study – Socio-economic duty

In 2023, Revolving Doors formed a working group with Welsh PCCs, the Scottish Police authority, and Northumbria's PCC (as they had voluntarily enacted the duty) to aid the process. A learning event under Chatham House rules was held to explore the challenges and opportunities in enacting the duty and share experiences to enhance learning. As a result, Revolving Doors has built extensive knowledge for sharing with other OPCCs and police authorities.



What PCCs can include in Police and Crime Plans for the revolving door group

Theme/Action	Suggested text for Police and Crime Plan
Prevention	<p>We will improve responses and programmes for young people at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system, in particular those who have been excluded from school or who are at risk of exclusion.</p> <p>We will foster an understanding of the needs of young adults and the implications of maturational development, designing and commissioning services to ensure that a developmentally appropriate approach is taken which is 'distinct by default'.</p>
Trauma-Informed Approaches	<p>We will design and commission services that embed a trauma-informed approach to working with people coming into contact with the criminal justice system to avoid causing harm or re-traumatisation.</p> <p>We will promote training and professional development to grow understanding of the underlying causes of offending behaviour and how to effectively support people to break the cycle of crisis and crime.</p>
Diversion (Out-of-Court approaches)	<p>We will work with our partners to develop a tailored approach to working with those who commit low-level offences – including young adults and women – who can be safely and more effectively diverted from the criminal justice system using Out-of-Court approaches.</p> <p>We will provide grant funding for small organisations able to meet the diversity of needs and aspirations of people being diverted from the criminal justice system in creative ways.</p>
Peer Support	<p>We will design and commission services that ensure peer support is available for those seeking to move away from crime. We will provide grant funding for organisations able to undertake this work on a grassroots level, including organisations led by people with lived experience of the criminal justice system.</p>
Gender-Specific Approaches	<p>We advocate a women-specific approach and will improve responses to women involved in, and at risk of being involved in, the criminal justice system. This will include providing grant funding for specialist, women-led organisations to undertake this work including Women's Centres.</p> <p>We will ensure that women's and girls' perspectives are reflected in our consultation plans. This includes providing meaningful opportunities for women with lived experience of having multiple, unmet needs to engage in discussions about priorities and the design and commissioning of services, where appropriate.</p>

Theme/Action	Suggested text for Police and Crime Plan
Young-adult specific approaches	<p>We will work with our partners to develop a tailored approach to working with young adults who commit low-level offences who can be safely and more effectively diverted from the criminal justice system. This will include providing grant funding for small organisations able to meet the diversity of young adults' needs and aspirations in creative ways.</p> <p>We will ensure the police and local partner agencies have access to training on developmental maturity, as well as associated issues such as mental health, and learn how to engage effectively with young adults.</p> <p>We will ensure that young adults' perspectives are reflected in our consultation plans. This includes providing opportunities for those with lived experience to engage in local discussions about criminal justice priorities and co-design services, where appropriate.</p>
Reducing stigma	<p>We will lead by example by being a 'Ban the Box' employer and promoting this to other employers. We will collaborate with colleges, universities, employers, the New Futures Network and the National Probation Service to maximise opportunities for people with convictions to move into education, training and employment.</p> <p>We will use non-labelling and non-stigmatising language in our communications.</p>
Engaging people with lived experience	<p>We will meaningfully work with people with lived experience of the criminal justice system to develop plans and policies and to design and commission services. This will ensure they are informed by real experiences, increasing their likelihood of success.</p> <p>We will value the expertise and insights people with lived experience bring.</p>
Engaging the public	<p>We will explore and trial ways to meaningfully engage with the public on issues of crime and justice using participatory democracy approaches.</p>
Supporting a socio-economic duty	<p>We will consider socio-economic disadvantage when carrying out equality impact assessments and making strategic decisions.</p>

What Revolving Doors can offer Police and Crime Commissioners

Lived Experience Forums

Our lived experience forums are places where honesty, inspiration and co-production meet to fuel the work Revolving Doors does. The forums are for people who have had repeat contact with the criminal justice system for low-level, non-violent offences. This group face multiple disadvantages such as mental-ill health, problematic substance misuse, domestic abuse, homelessness and severe deprivation. They are a creative environment where people with lived experience can influence decision-makers and collaborate as partners. We want decision-makers to understand the reality of how the criminal justice system affects people's lives and advise on how it can work better, so that more people can leave offending behind.

Our forums have collaborated with HM Inspectorate of Probation, helping to them to involve lived experience in their inspections. We have influenced Greater Manchester Combined Authority's health strategies and the development of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements (CSTRs) in the West Midlands. We have attended Parliamentary round tables and select committees and worked with the Sentencing Council on their recent consultations.

We run a National Forum, regional forums and specialist women's, neurodiversity and race forums. We can do meetings online or in person. Our Forums can offer a valuable platform for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to gain insights and perspectives directly from individuals who have been through the criminal justice system.

Bespoke Research

We design and deliver user-centred research with input from academics and other specialists. This includes people with first-hand experience of the criminal justice system. We design solutions that have a deep evidence base and enable clients to deliver effective services. We produce bold, workable, evidence-based recommendations. Where appropriate, our work incorporates peer research. Revolving Doors has a team of peer researchers, who have received OCN-accredited peer research training. We also work with partners to train existing or previous clients in Level 2 Peer Research so they can bring their unique insights to our research. Peer research opportunities offer individuals a meaningful role with broad benefits, including self-development, confidence and recovery.

Service Design

We support people with lived experience and professionals to collaborate effectively to design services so that they work well and achieve their desired aims. By involving people with experience of services, organisations can make informed, insightful decisions that lead to better outcomes.

Bespoke Training

We offer customised in-house training sessions, workshops, and information sessions for service providers and practitioners who directly engage with the 'revolving door' group. Our lived experience members have delivered powerful, inspirational sessions to police officers and magistrates throughout the UK, supporting professionals to better understand the root causes that lead people into the revolving door of crisis and crime, and how they can engage with them for better outcomes.

Get in touch

If you would like to discuss working with Revolving Doors please email our Policy Manager at kelly.grehan@revolving-doors.org.uk

Useful resources

Diversion

Divert and deflect: common sense approaches to dealing with low level crime

Young adult specific approaches

Broke but not broken: how the issues of poverty, trauma and policing interact for young adults

Diverting young adults away from the crisis and crime cycle

Engaging people with lived experience

National Expert Citizens Group:
2023-2025 Strategic Priorities

Reducing stigma

Pathways into training, volunteering and employment for people with personal experience of multiple disadvantage

Bridges from prison: a communications toolkit

Supporting a socio-economic duty

Socio-economic duty toolkit

Peer Support

Peers who volunteer: a best practice document

Engaging the public

Building Bridges, Safer Communities:
Citizens' Panel report on community safety and policing

Building Bridges, Safer Communities:
Peer Research report



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Revolving Doors Agency,
South Bank Technopark,
90 London Road,
London SE1 6LN

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