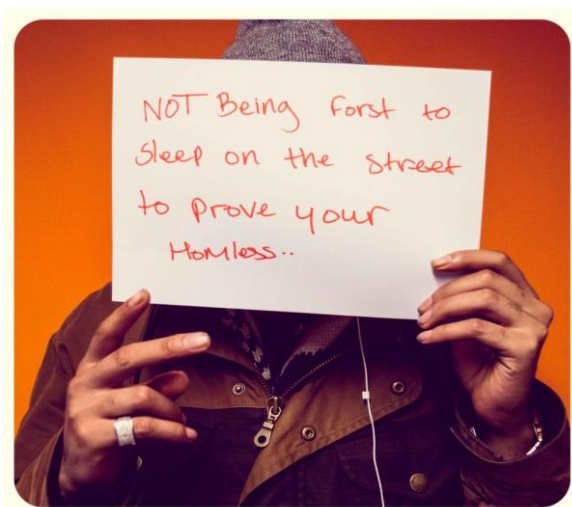
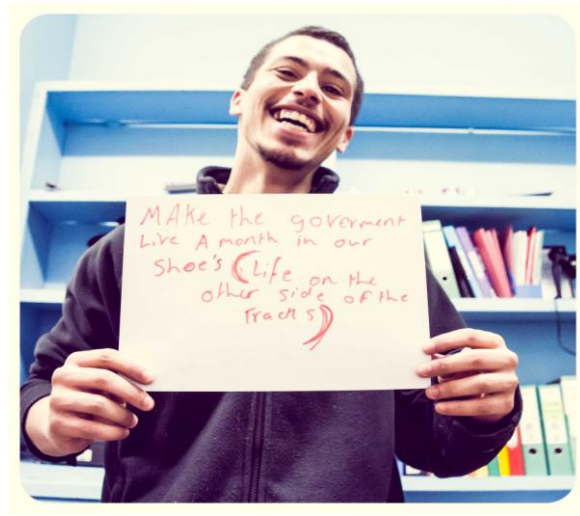


A MANIFESTO FROM THE STREETS

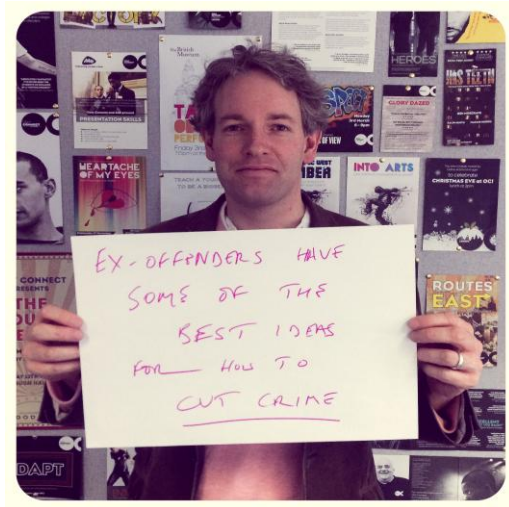
**Innovative policies to
reduce crime and
re-offending, created
by ex-offenders**



**ONLY
CONNECT**



FOREWORD



Only Connect is a criminal justice charity rooted in community. Our assets are our Members - ex-offenders and young people at risk of offending - who work together to solve each other's problems and design innovative solutions to the challenges they face.

I am very proud that Only Connect is today issuing its first ever Members' Manifesto. As the political parties fight for votes from homeowners, savers, business owners and employees, our Members represent a

different side of Britain: people without the financial assets or the social status to attract attention from the politicians. But as this Manifesto shows, they have different assets: passion and intelligence, compassion and experience, which give them a unique and compelling perspective on the social issues that lead to crime.

The Members' Manifesto project was designed to give our Members a voice. The ideas presented here are their ideas, not mine or my colleagues'. But they reflect a principle which is central to Only Connect's vision - that ex-offenders or youth at risk who try to put the past behind them and do the right thing need the rest of us to meet them half way.

Having a job and a home, most of all, are basic conditions for living a crime-free life; our Members argue that ex-offenders who can prove they are on the right track should be helped to overcome the obstacles that ex-offenders face in seeking work or accommodation. They also have intelligent, practical and sensitive ideas around drug addiction and domestic violence which are worthy of consideration.

If politicians are serious about cutting crime, they should listen to those who have committed crime and want to change. The people the politicians call the problem might, in fact, be the answer.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Danny'.

Danny Kruger,
CEO, Only Connect
April 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Only Connect's Members today announce new proposals that they believe could have a significant impact on the UK's crime and re-offending rates.

Re-offending currently costs the UK between £9.5 billion and £13 billion a year¹, with 58% of prisoners released from short term sentences² and almost 70% of young offenders going on to reoffend within a year³. The cost to the economy of re-offending by ex-prisoners can be compared to putting on an Olympics every year. Clearly, there needs to be put in place some immediate and imaginative interventions to ensure that reoffending rates drop dramatically.

We have turned to ex-offenders for practical solutions to fix crime. Working with over 50 male and female ex-offenders and youth at risk of crime (our Members), Only Connect has created four distinct and imaginative policy proposals to directly drive down levels of crime. This research has drawn a clear picture of the prompts for reoffending. Through surveys, one on one interviews and qualitative discussions, it became clear that the three key triggers for re-offending are a lack of available and suitable **jobs**, an inability to secure sustainable and suitable **housing**, and the prevalence of **drug issues**. The Members' proposals are as follows:



1. Creating sustainable career paths to get and keep ex-offenders into work

Businesses within the government's supply chain should:

- Give guaranteed interviews to ex-offender applicants
- Receive National Insurance tax breaks for each ex-offender employed

2. Ensuring a pathway into stable long term private rented housing

Following suitability and affordability testing, local authorities should:

- Provide ex-offenders with an official 'reference' for use with private rented landlords

¹ [Reducing Reoffending, Ministry of Justice, 2013](#)

² [Open Justice, 2015](#)

³ The proven re-offending rate for juvenile offenders released from custody between April 2012 and March 2013 was 67.9% [Proven Re-offending Statistics, Ministry of Justice, April 2012 to March 2013](#).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Loan the cost of the deposit and first month's rent, recoupable through monthly council tax

3. Providing drug addicts with a pathway to mainstream support – and away from crime

We propose the creation of a pilot UK Drug Consumption Room – a supervised health care facility which reduces long term drug use and anti social street behaviour. The facilities allow drug users to use in safe hygienic conditions, be monitored and move onto long term rehabilitative programmes.

4. Providing support against domestic violence at critical points in a woman's life

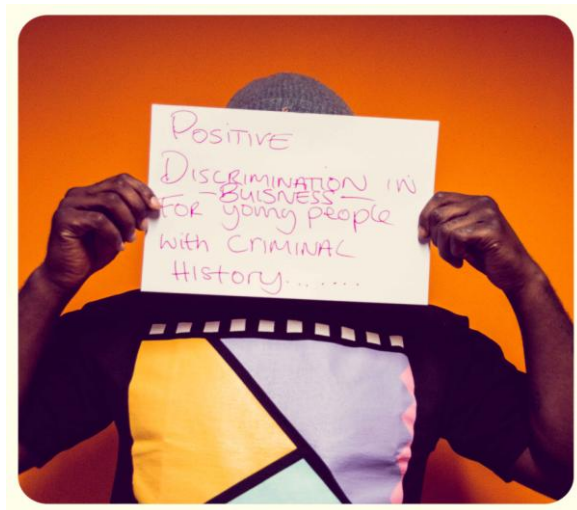
30% of domestic violence starts in pregnancy. We propose mandatory domestic violence training for midwives and pregnancy healthcare professionals.

We urge the Government and local authorities to consider implementation of our Members' four proposals, which we believe could truly have an impact on local and national levels of crime and re-offending. **By cutting re-offending rates by just one quarter, they could save the UK up to £3.25bn per year.**

Creating sustainable career paths to get and keep ex-offenders into work

Our Members are clear about one thing; it is incredibly difficult to find suitable and stable work for an ex-offender. Re-offending rates are substantially higher for offenders who do not enter P45 employment after release from custody than for those who do, and the re-offending rate is more than twice as high for offenders without a P45 employment spell after release compared to those who do enter P45 employment.⁴

41% of prisoners are under 30 years old, with potentially many decades left of productive employment in front of them.⁵ Finding employment after being released from prison is an integral part of successful rehabilitation. Job applicants do not have to disclose 'spent' convictions, so these reforms would primarily help vulnerable recently released offenders into work.



Local authorities and central government are best placed to put pressure on businesses to improve the pathway to employment for ex-offenders. For them, any costs incurred in getting ex-offenders into work would be more than outweighed by the cost savings coming from criminal justice expenditure and the cost of re-offending programmes.

We believe that discrimination against ex-offenders must be overcome by both stick and carrot measures. For instance, in the US, businesses are incentivised to hire ex-felons through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit scheme⁶.

We propose that any organisation that takes a government or council contract or subsidy should:

- Give guaranteed interviews to ex-offender applicants

⁴ [Analysis of the impact of employment on re-offending following release from custody, 2013](#)

⁵ [Prison Population Statistics, Ministry of Justice, 2013](#)

⁶ [Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program \(WOTC\)](#)

JOBS

- Receive National Insurance tax breaks for the first three years of employment of each ex-offender employed, in line with the US programme



Although we believe that these should be mandatory policies for all government supply chain organisations, we would like to see all employers promoting these policies. We would recommend that the most effective way to implement this would be similar to the current 'Two Ticks' programme for disabled people. Under this programme, all employers with a disability positive recruitment programme are able to display this information to promote their inclusive and community focused approach.

DRUGS

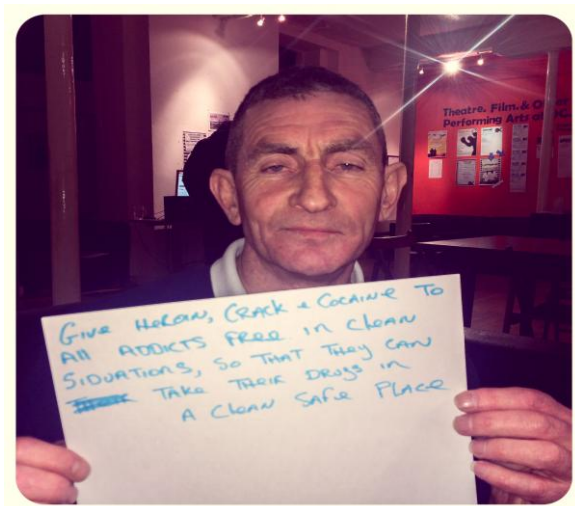
Providing drug addicts with a pathway to mainstream support – and away from crime

Drugs and drug related problems remain highly prevalent amongst those released from prison. 55% of prisoners commit offences connected to drug taking, with the majority stealing for money to fund their habits. 70% of offenders report drug misuse prior to prison and 51% report drug dependency.

What's more, the prevalence of drugs in prison means that many come out with habits formed inside: a survey by the Prison Reform Trust has found that 19% of prisoners who had ever used heroin reported first using it in prison⁷. Reports on HMP Durham by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons found that as many as one in three prisoners tested positive in random tests, and 13% told inspectors that they had developed a drug problem while in prison.⁸ Too many people come out of prison and move directly back into their previous cycles of drug abuse and crime.

In order to ensure that we are able to continue to support ex-offenders with drug addictions to get clean, remain in mainstream society and enter into long term rehabilitative programmes, **we propose the pilot of a UK drug consumption room (DCR)**. DCRs are professionally supervised healthcare facilities where drug users can use drugs in safer and more hygienic conditions.

Since 1986, more than ninety DCRs have been set up worldwide in countries including Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Spain, Luxembourg, Norway, Canada and Australia. They have been proven to establish and maintain contact with difficult-to-reach populations of drug users, provide an environment for more hygienic drug use, reducing deaths associated with injecting and promoting access to further health and social treatment. Statistics show that they are effective at reducing public drug use (reducing needles in parks, for instance) and do not create further social nuisance issues⁹.



⁷ [Drugs: Breaking the Cycle - Home Affairs Committee, 2012](#)

⁸ [Drugs: Breaking the Cycle - Home Affairs Committee, 2012](#)

⁹ [Harm reduction: evidence, impacts and challenges, EMCDDA, Lisbon, April 2010](#)

DRUGS

Drugscope's Independent Working Group wrote in 2004 "DCRs are a rational and overdue extension to the harm reduction policy that has produced substantial individual and public benefits in the UK over the last two decades."¹⁰ The idea of a pilot has been backed by one police commissioner¹¹ and in 2013 Brighton Council actively considered installation, but judged it the wrong time¹².

For many potential criminals and the ex-offenders who come out of prison with drug habits, the creation of a DCR could be the route they need into mainstream help, and ultimately rehabilitation. We urge London's Boris Johnson to consider the creation of a DCR to stem the flow of anti social drug crime.

¹⁰ [Drug Consumption Rooms, Summary report of the Independent Working Group, 2004](#)

¹¹ ['Consumption rooms' for drug addicts could reduce crime, says police commissioner, Metro, October 30 2013](#)

¹² [Brighton plans safe rooms for addicts to inject drugs, Guardian, October 30 2013](#)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Intervening at points of vulnerability to drive down the female offender population

Female offenders make up just 4.7% of the prison estate.¹³ This means that too often they are forgotten by policy makers. Importantly, 61% of all female prisoners are themselves victims of domestic abuse¹⁴. The link between female crime and their relationships is very strong; for instance nearly half of women prisoners (48%) report having committed offences to support someone else's drug use. Research by the Prison Reform Trust cites the links between women's offending and their experiences of domestic and sexual violence, stating that their offending "was more likely than men's to be linked to their relationships".¹⁵ Domestic violence cost the UK £15.7bn in 2008, with more than £3.9bn spent on the criminal justice system, social services and refuges¹⁶.



The need for support to move away from domestic abuse, particularly during vulnerable periods, is very important for our female Members. 30% of domestic violence starts in pregnancy¹⁷, with between 4-9% of all women abused during their pregnancies¹⁸. Research shows that despite this, healthcare professionals do not feel equipped to spot the signs and have difficult conversations with their patients.

Midwives approve in theory of routine questioning about domestic violence, and also broadly agree (81%) that it is their responsibility; but in practice, only about 60% are happy to do it¹⁹. Midwives usually do not raise the subject of domestic violence, and women often feel "silenced" and unable to talk about it with their midwife²⁰. Women's Aid states that "Practical and personal difficulties - including lack of time, staff shortages, and difficulty in obtaining sufficient privacy

¹³ [Latest prison population figures, Howard League, Week ending Friday 27 March 2015](#)

¹⁴ [Ministry of Justice written question – answered on 25th March 2015](#)

¹⁵ [Brighter Futures, Working together to reduce women's offending, Prison Reform Trust, 2014](#)

¹⁶ [National Institute For Health And Clinical Excellence, Preventing and reducing domestic violence, 2013](#)

¹⁷ Lewis and Drife, 2001

¹⁸ Taft, 2002

¹⁹ [Domestic violence against women in pregnancy, Women's Aid, 2015](#)

²⁰ Aston, Gill, 2004

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

were frequently cited. Training is essential in order to sustain routine questioning and ensure midwives are aware of how to respond to disclosure.”²¹

We propose that:

- All midwives receive mandatory training on domestic violence, as part of their initial training.
- All healthcare providers that deal with midwifery and mother and baby issues have available literature to train and engage both midwives and mothers to have the sensitive discussions around dealing with domestic violence.

²¹ [Domestic violence against women in pregnancy, Women's Aid, 2015](#)

HOUSING

Ensuring a pathway into stable long term private rented housing

Member research told us that housing instability has a direct bearing on recidivism. Living from couch to couch and sometimes having to move away from support networks makes it very difficult for ex-offenders to find work.



A scarcity of social housing across the UK means that for most ex-offenders, the private rented sector is vital in addressing their housing needs and ensuring housing stability. Despite this, it remains closed off for many, with two key obstacles against 'admission' to the private rented sector; discrimination and affordability of a deposit. Many landlords will discriminate against those with a criminal record, and for many the financial implications of putting down a deposit and the first month's rent means that

even though a flat may be affordable, it remains out of reach.

Local authorities such as London's Islington already offer programmes which provide assistance to the homeless to help them into private rented accommodation. We would like to see these extended to ex-offenders.

We propose that local authorities develop a pilot programme which helps ex-offenders access accommodation. Post a rigorous assessment of each individual, which would include hurdles such as proof of regular income and affordability, local authorities could provide suitable ex-offenders with:

- An official 'reference' of good behaviour for use with private rented landlords, to mitigate discrimination.
- A loan for the cost of the deposit and first month's rent for suitable accommodation. We propose that in order to make the process efficient that this loan could be recouped over a period of two years, through monthly council tax bills.

METHODOLOGY

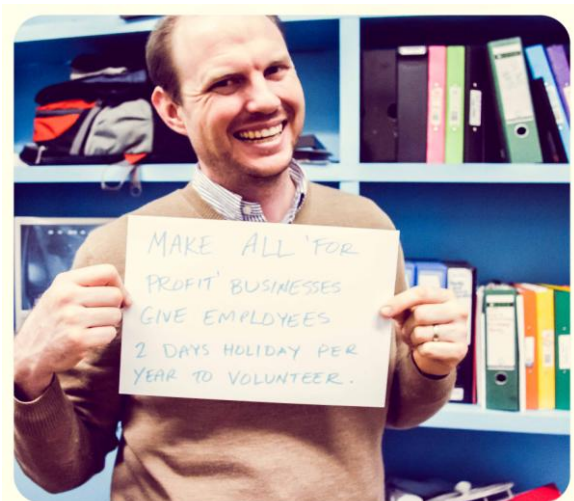
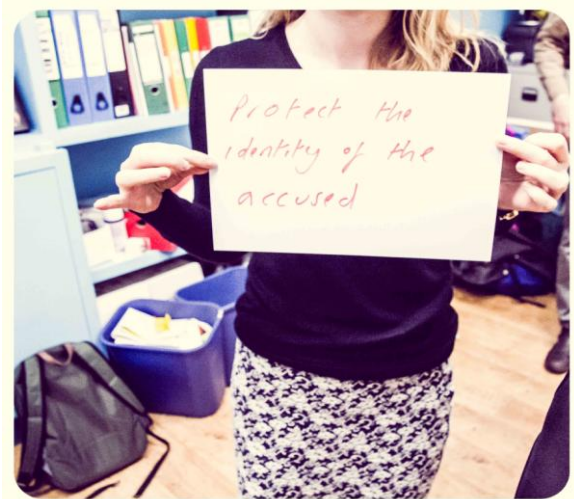
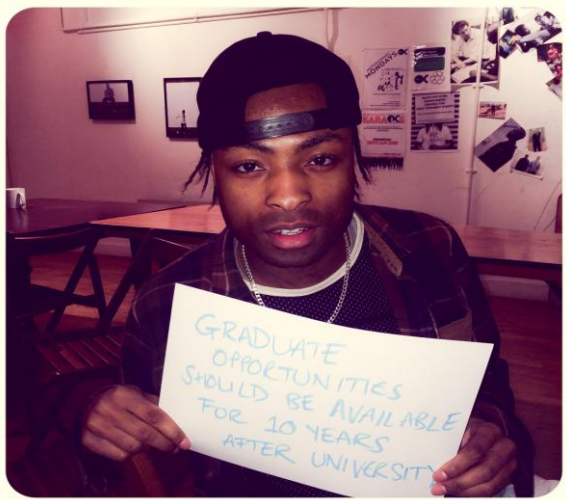
Fieldwork and research was carried out between 26th January 2015 – 4th March 2015, among Only Connect Members. The process included hosting discussion groups and debates to stimulate ideas, attendance at specific male and female focus groups to discuss related issues, recording and debate of ideas. A selection event for key ideas was held on February 11th 2015, where Members voted on the four key ideas that they felt would have the most impact on levels of crime in the community, and which ideas would be most effective against recidivism.

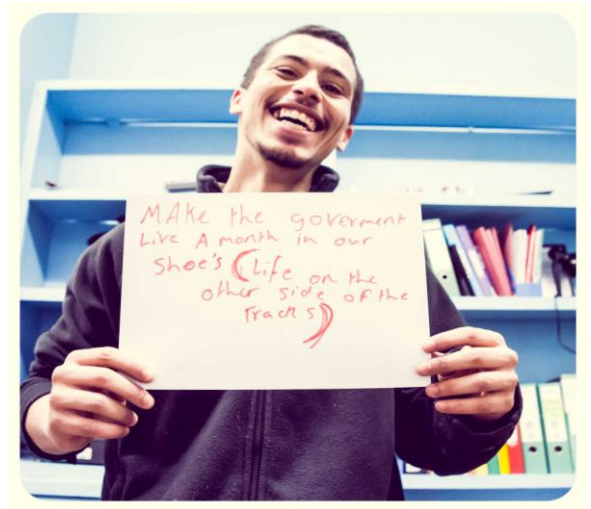


Only Connect's Members are London based ex-offenders or youth at risk of crime. Of our ex-offender Members, 82% are from Black and Asian backgrounds, 18% are white. 95% are male with 92% holding UK citizenship. The mean age across the Membership is 28, with members having first contact with the criminal justice system at an average age of 17. The most common offences of Members were violence offenses (31%), drugs (23%) and burglary (23%). A significant majority (62%) have served a custodial sentences of 12 months to 4 years compared to a minority of 3% who were serving community sentences. Members have an average of 22 previous criminal convictions, 3 previous custodial sentences, and 3 previous court orders.

About Only Connect

Founded in 2006, Only Connect is a creative criminal justice charity, rooted in community. The focus of our work is innovation to prevent first-time offending and reduce re-offending. We aim to equip a generation of people with the resilience and skills to address the challenges they face, and become positive agents for change in their communities – 'assets' not 'liabilities' for London. Every year we work with over 16,000 Londoners in schools, prisons and the community to deliver projects that build relationships, grow skills and cut crime. We employ 34 staff across three London sites, and have a turnover of £1.9 million. According to independent research from New Philanthropy Capital, every £1 given to Only Connect saves the taxpayer £3 in criminal justice costs.





With thanks to the Only Connect Members, without whose unerring enthusiasm, determination and passion this would not have happened.

Research by Laura Chinnery and Emmanuel Lee

Written and edited by Emmanuel Lee and Beth Murray.

Design by Ceri Stokes.

April 2015

