FRAME WORKS UK

Bridges from prison: working together to build the case for jobs and relationships

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Change the story, change the world.

FRAME WORKS UK

What we’re covering today

- What is framing and why does it matter?
- Insights from the research
- 5 communications principles
- Resources and support

Our research

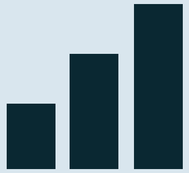
- Latest research: communicating about the importance of relationships and employment for people leaving prison.

- Previous 2014-16 research looked at communicating about criminal justice reform more broadly.

Our research

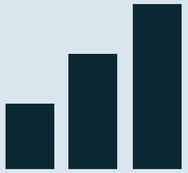
13

Expert Interviews



72

Peer Discourse Session Participants



24

Usability Trial Participants

6,783

Survey Experiments

What is framing and why does it matter to our work?

What is framing?

The choices we make about which ideas we share and how we share them.

These choices change how people think, feel and act.

Framing shapes how issues are seen and understood

Crime is a *wild beast preying* on the city of Addison. The crime rate in the once peaceful city has steadily increased over the past three years.

74% in favour of enforcement

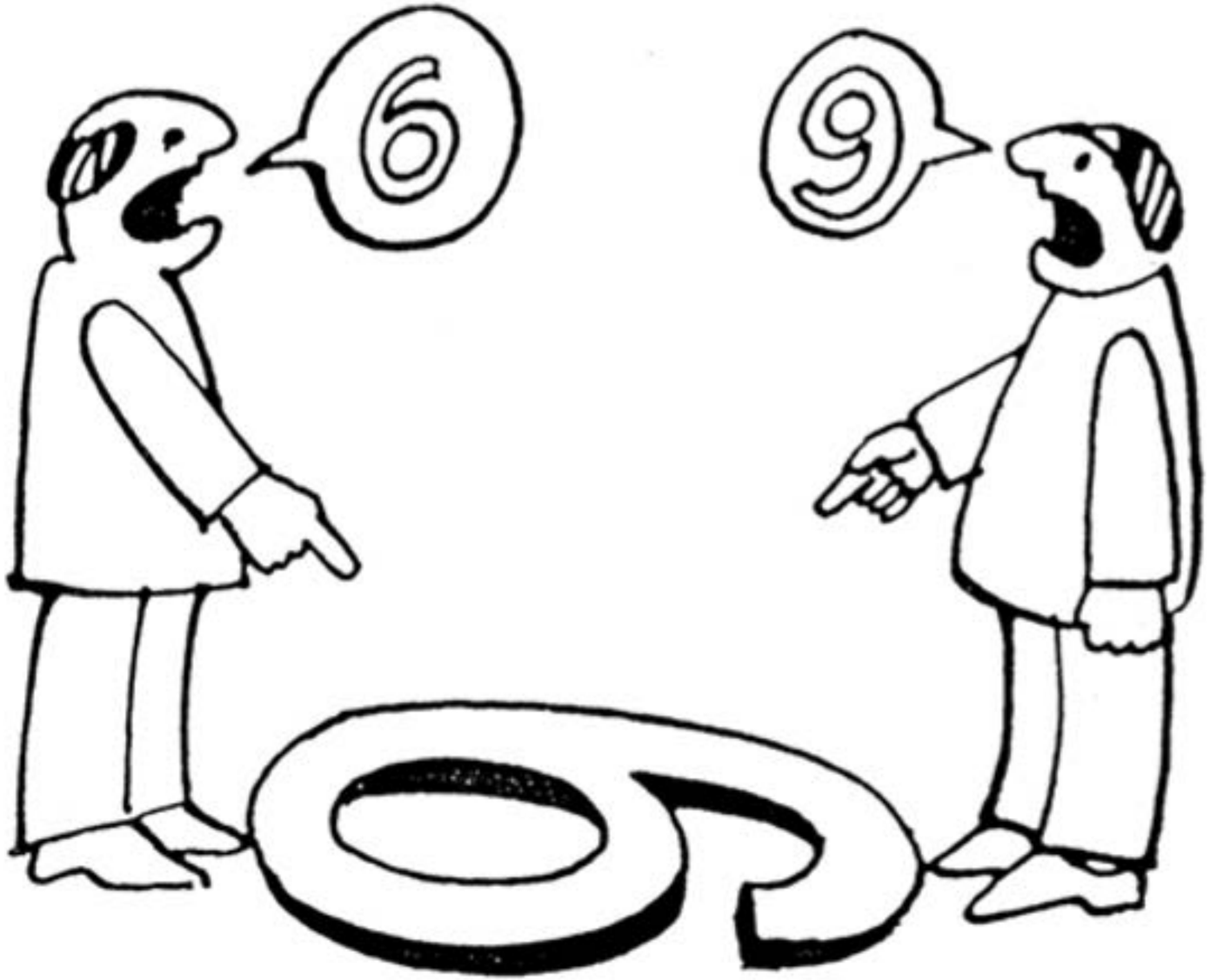
Crime is a *virus infecting* the city of Addison. The crime rate in the once peaceful city has steadily increased over the past three years.

56% in favour of enforcement

Thibodeau & Boroditsky 2011

Framing shifts understanding and support for policies and programmes

Framing happens anyway



Boekgaard et al. (2017). British Journal of Political Science

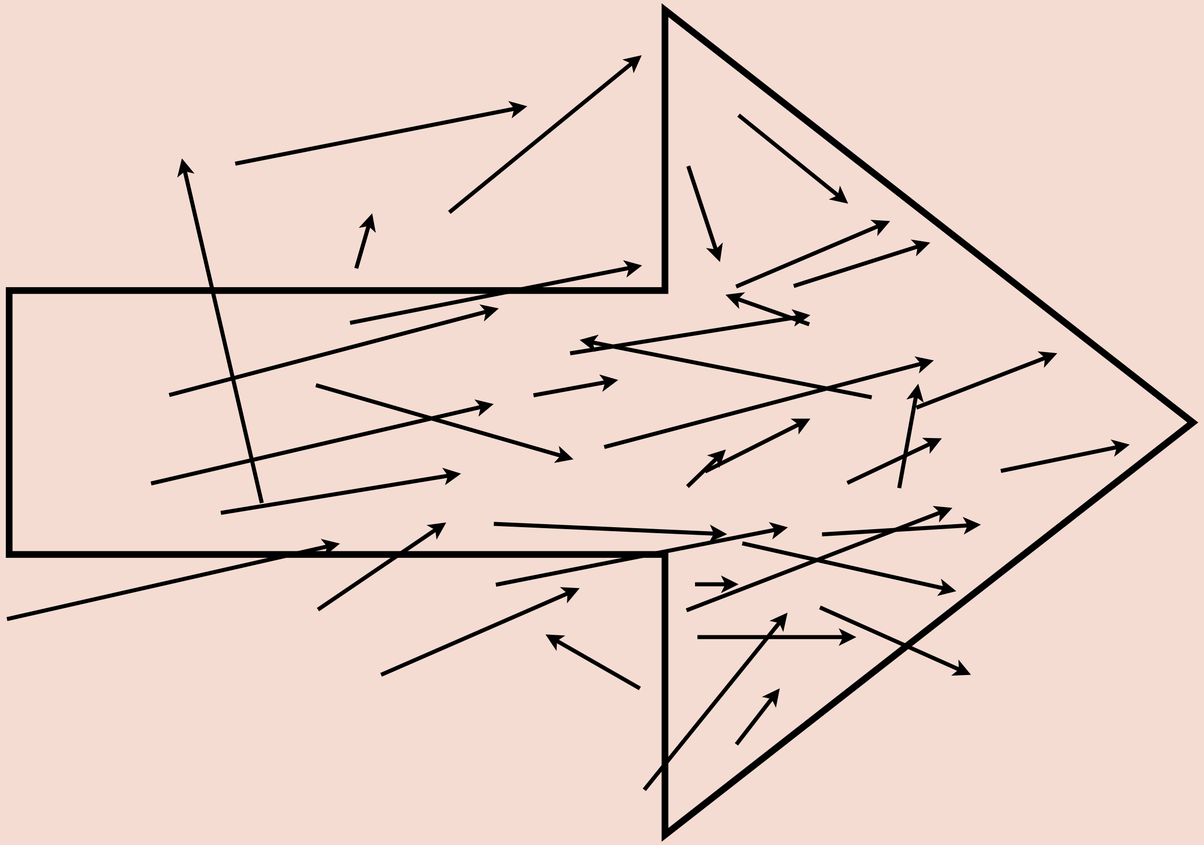
We all have power as communicators

LOVE IS
LOVE
green left
SAY
YES TO
EQUALITY
GREENLEFT.ORG.AU
POST YOUR
YES

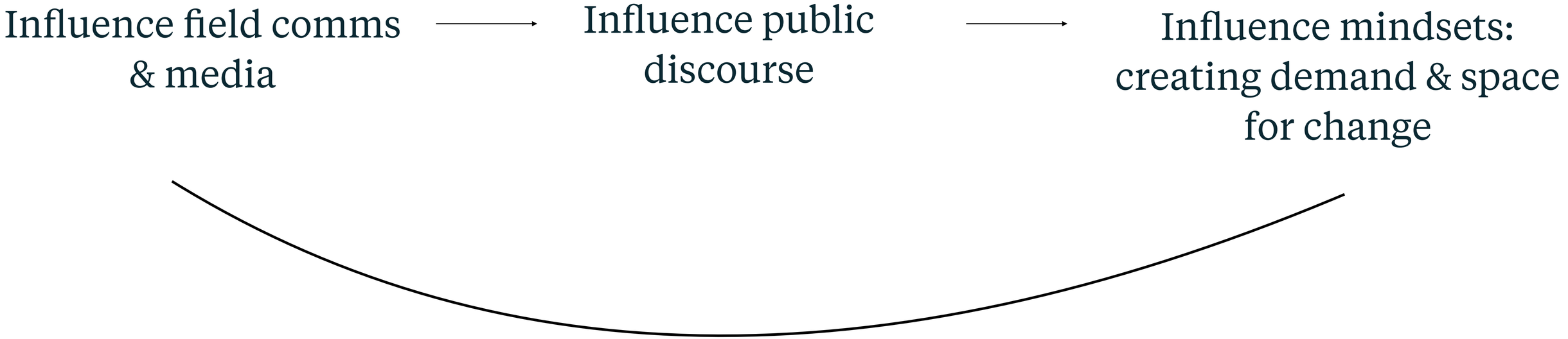
Your Choice
Secondhand
smoke kills
bar workers

#MeToo

#KeepTheLifeline
KEEP
the lifeline
KEEP
doing the right thing
KEEP
families afloat.



Theory of change



What the research told us

Mindsets guide our thinking

Mindsets

- Shape our understanding without realising it
- Shape how we think and act
- Shape our expectations about how the world should work
- Are activated by the things we see and hear

Obstacles to overcome

- While people do think prison should rehabilitate people, they tend to think of prison as being more about punishment.
- They tend to assume that how people do after they leave prison is solely up to the individual.
- Lack of understanding about the structural challenges and racism that affect people's life outcomes.

In a nutshell, we need to

- Shift focus from thinking about *individuals* to thinking about the *systems* that need to be improved.

- Build understanding of what support for people leaving prison could look like and why it's needed.

5 communications principles

#1 Talk about people leaving prison as *people* first

From this...

Prisoners

Ex-prisoners

Ex-offenders

Probationers

To this...

People in prison

People leaving prison

People who have <left/served time in> prison

People on probation

#2 Frame solutions as pragmatic and practical

Different voices, same frames

“It simply makes sense to open up more jobs to people leaving prison by doing away with blanket bans. By taking practical steps to improve recruitment processes, we can find solutions that work for everyone. ”

“It’s illogical that we expect people leaving prison to turn their lives around while also actively reducing their job opportunities through the blunt instrument of blanket bans. A more common-sense approach to recruitment is needed.”

#3 Focus on making progress as a society

As a society, it's important that we continue to **move forward and make progress**. But right now, our **outdated** criminal justice system is **holding our country back**, because it makes it hard for people leaving prison to get jobs and reconnect with their families.

Flexing the tone: societal progress

“As a society, we believe in new ideas to improve how things work. Making our prison system fit for the 21st century should be no different.”

“We are a country of innovators, but our prison system has been left in the past. We need to change this.”

Positive

Critical

Beware of economic arguments

- Progress vs prosperity
- We need to establish **why** our issue matters first
- Lead with progress or pragmatism to strengthen your argument

#4 Tell stories that show how solutions work

From individuals...

Michelle's story shows how anyone can overcome the odds against them. While Michelle was in prison, she worked hard and learned trade skills to prepare herself for work after prison.

Michelle secured an apprenticeship with a local carpenter when she left prison. She built her carpentry skills and kept on pushing herself to improve – leading to her finding a good job in construction. Today, Michelle is thriving in her work.

To systems

Michelle's story shows us how the justice system can help put people on a positive path. While Michelle was in prison, she was **given the opportunity** to take part in a programme that allowed her to take classes and learn trade skills that interested her.

Because of this programme, Michelle was able to apprentice with a local carpenter when she left prison. She built her carpentry skills and made connections with new people – leading to her finding a good job in construction. Today, Michelle is thriving in her work.

Positive

It's **good** for everyone if...

Michael's story shows us how the justice system **can help people**...

+ Description of the opportunities

+ Positive outcome

Negative

It's **bad** for everyone if...

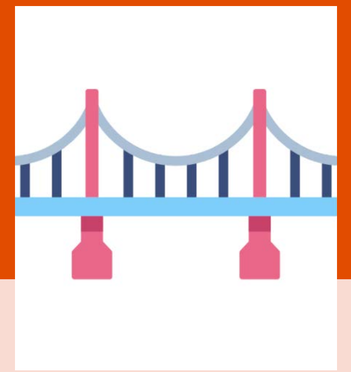
Jonathan's story shows us how the justice system **is failing to help people**...

+ Description of the lack of opportunities

+ Negative outcome

#5 Use the ‘bridges’ metaphor to unlock understanding

Why metaphor?



Metaphors give us new – yet familiar – ways to think about an issue

They:

- Provide a strong mental image
- Make abstract, complex concepts simple and concrete
- Can build understanding in a very immediate way

“

Leaving prison is like crossing over a wide river, and people leaving prison need bridges to make their way to stable ground.

”

Opportunities like education and training while in prison, and stable jobs to go to when they leave, **bridge the gap** for people leaving prison – allowing them to make a safe crossing to the rest of their lives.

1. Talk about people leaving prison as **people first to humanise** the conversation.
2. Focus on **making progress** as a society to show why this matters.
3. Expand understanding by talking about **pragmatic solutions**.
4. **Tell stories that show how solutions work** to explain how we can do better.
5. Use the **metaphor of 'bridges'** to explain what supports are needed.

Nina Champion, Director of the CJA, said:

> The Chief Inspector's Annual Report shows that, in too many cases, people are not supported to build employment skills and strengthen relationships while in prison, which holds them back from reaching their potential after release. Evidence shows having **purpose through work opportunities and connection through supportive relationships are two of the most significant things people leaving prison need to provide a strong and stable bridge to the rest of their lives**.
>
> The return to provide in-person education, relationships courses and family days has been too slow. **The lack of access to in-cell telephony and laptops in many prisons shows our system remains outdated, yet we expect people leaving prison to be able to turn their lives around and contribute to society**. In order to set people up for success, practical solutions are needed – the good practice identified in the report, like Father's Day activities and access to day release to gain work experience, need to be made more widely available.
>
> This concerning report comes at a time when the government is pushing ahead with plans to build more prisons. Instead, **efforts and resources should be focused on speeding up the recovery efforts in those prisons lagging behind and better supporting people in the prisons we currently have**. This would help make sure that once they leave prison, they don't reoffend and go back.

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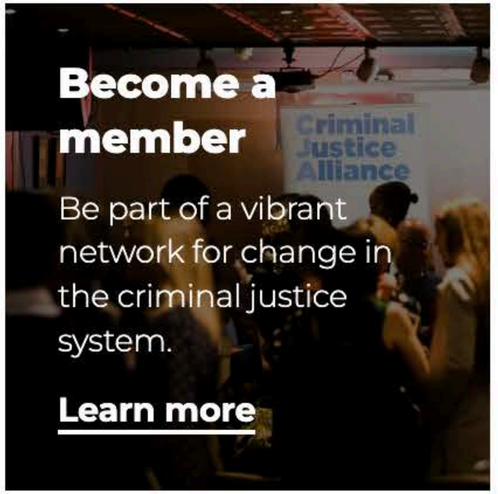


Get regular

Over to you

- In pairs or small groups, either…
- Think of something you're already working on, and discuss how you could apply any of these principles to that work.

  Or

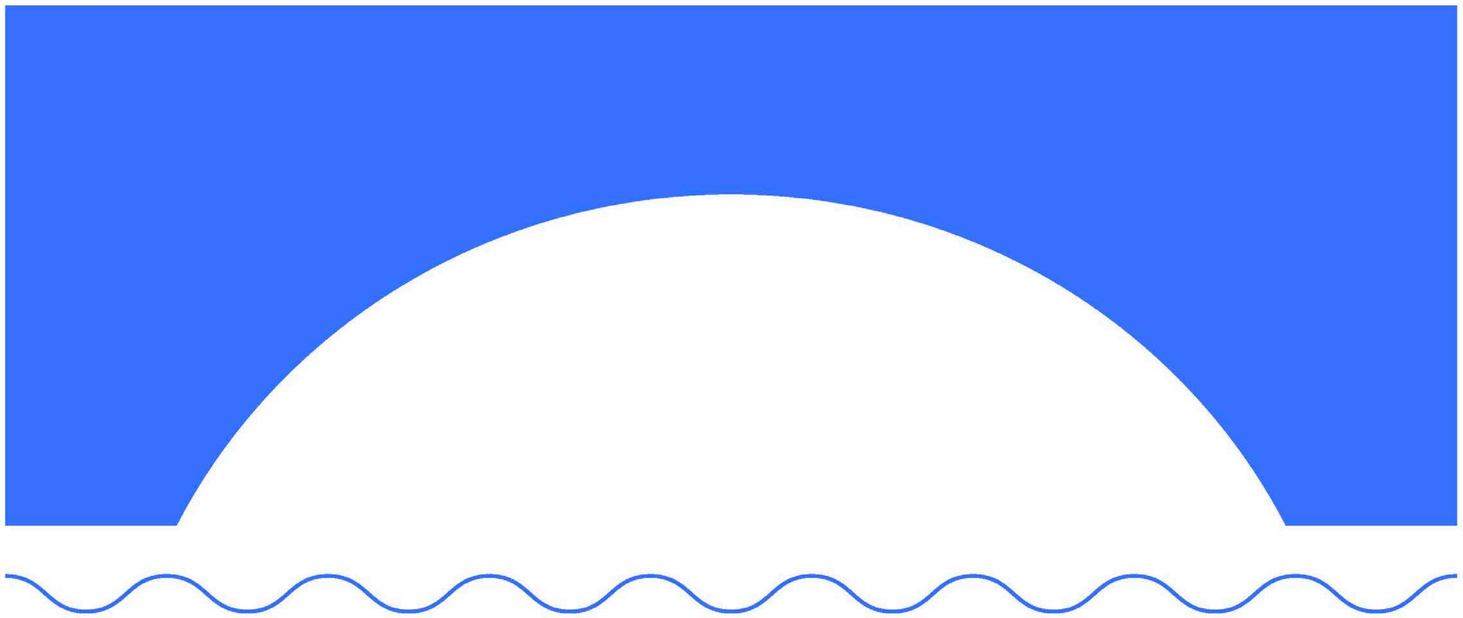
- Brainstorm an idea for a new campaign, content – or anything else – which uses any of the principles as the core idea. No limits – as rough an idea as you like!

Resources

- Research briefing (here)
- Toolkit of tips and practical guidance – launched today! (here)
- Webinar available on demand (email sgordon@frameworksuk.org for access)
- More workshops over coming months
- FrameCheck support and technical advice (email sgordon@frameworksuk.org for more info)

Bridges from prison

A communications toolkit for making
the case for jobs and relationships



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Communications principles at a glance

1. **Talk about people leaving prison as *people* first** to humanise the conversation

2. **Focus on making progress for our society** to show why supporting people leaving prison matters

3. **Use the metaphor of 'bridges'** to explain what supports are needed

4. **Appeal to pragmatism and emphasise practical solutions** to expand understanding

5. **Tell stories that show how solutions work** to explain how we can do better

Our communications challenges

When we want to communicate the importance of bridges from prison, there are particular obstacles in people's thinking which we need to overcome.

1.

An emphasis on punishment

People tend to think of prison as being *more* about punishment than rehabilitation. This leads to more focus on why people should *stay* in prison rather than thinking about what it takes to enable people to live a better life after they leave.

2.

Deservingness and fatalism

When people do think about rehabilitation, they tend to focus on who 'deserves' it and this depends on what type of crime they committed. They assume that how people do after they leave prison is up to the individual and believe fatalistically that some people will always go back to committing crimes.

3.

Prejudiced assumptions

There's a prejudiced tendency to assume that people from minoritised ethnic groups (such as people from Black and Asian backgrounds) and those from low-income backgrounds are more likely to return to a 'life of crime' because 'their communities' are more disposed to commit crimes – rather than seeing the structural challenges and racism that affect people's life outcomes.

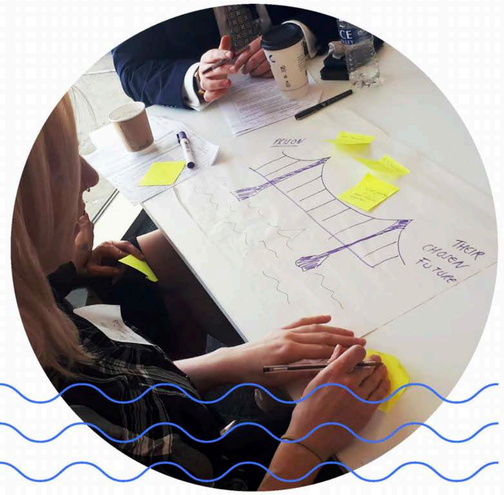
3. Use the metaphor of 'bridges'

What this could look like

Try it with your team

In pairs or small groups, think about applying this metaphor to jobs or relationships for people leaving prison.

- Draw a bridge
- Think about the different elements.
  What supports might need to be in place?
  Where are people crossing 'from' and 'to'?
  What hazards are under the bridge?
- Annotate your drawing with the different elements, and discuss.



4. Appeal to pragmatism and emphasise practical solutions

What this could look like

Flexing the frame

We can invoke this idea of pragmatism in different ways, using different language. And we can flex our tone for different audiences, channels and outputs.

"**It's illogical** that we expect people leaving prison to turn their lives around while also actively reducing their job opportunities through blanket bans. A **more common-sense approach** to recruitment is needed such as..."

- We can be critical of current processes by calling out what doesn't make sense and showing why that's the case.
- We can offer solutions to improve processes and explicitly frame these as practical, logical, and so on.

"**We know that** supportive relationships can make all the difference for people leaving prison, **but it can be hard** to stay connected while serving time. **Practical solutions** include making sure families are able to visit people in prison and spend meaningful time together."

- By setting out what supports people need, and showing how they are not always in place, we can show the need for a more practical approach.
- Presenting specific supports as practical helps to make the case for them.

"Poverty creates huge stress, so **it simply doesn't make sense** that we expect people to turn their lives around after prison, without support to find jobs that can lift them out of poverty. As well as opening up more job opportunities, we need **practical support** like mentorships to set people up for success."

- We can use pragmatism to help people better understand structural drivers of crime like poverty and inequality, and show how the right solutions can help to address them.

TIP

Talk explicitly about the solutions and support which would make our system work better. This helps to show people what change looks like, rather than just telling them, and is a good way to counter fatalism with a sense of efficacy and can-do.

Some useful words and phrases

Practical / Impractical | **Problem-solving** | **Pragmatic** | **Logical / Illogical** | **Common sense** | **Sensible** | **It makes sense / It doesn't make sense**

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Thank you.

Any questions?

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