



Steps to Freedom? – A report on stage 2 of the prisoner access to banking research project

A Victoria University Te Herenga Waka/
FinCap Research Project

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The Report

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Executive Summary

Context of the Research

The “Access to Banking for Prisoners” project, led by Victoria Stace of Victoria University of Wellington – Te Herenga Waka, was initiated in response to significant challenges that prisoners and persons recently released from prison face in accessing banking services in Aotearoa New Zealand. This project was undertaken in response to concerns raised by FinCap, the umbrella organisation for New Zealand’s free financial mentoring services and which advocates for systemic changes to alleviate financial hardship. FinCap observed that many prisoners struggled to maintain existing bank accounts or open new ones during incarceration and upon release, and that this can hamper their successful reintegration into society.

Financial exclusion leaves individuals exiting prison vulnerable, as they are unable to easily access basic services like social security benefits, secure housing, or obtain employment—factors crucial for reducing recidivism. This research project’s goal is to propose reforms and interventions that enhance the accessibility of banking services for incarcerated and just released individuals, thereby contributing to maximal financial inclusion, equitable financial well-being outcomes, and reducing reoffending.

Stage 1 of the Research

In mid-2022, FinCap commissioned Victoria University to explore the issues surrounding prisoners’ access to bank accounts. Stage 1, conducted between November 2022 and March 2023, involved consultations with financial mentors, major banks, the Department of Corrections Ara Poutama Aotearoa, and various rehabilitation services. The objective was to identify specific challenges prisoners in particular face in accessing and maintaining banking services and to develop recommendations to address these issues.

The findings, published in *Paying the Price – A Report into Issues Around Access to Banking*,¹ revealed that prisoners often face significant financial disadvantages due to incarceration, which extend beyond mere access to banking. Many prisoners lose access to their bank accounts during incarceration, and many others do not have any bank account before incarceration. Those attempting to open new accounts either while in prison or on release face substantial barriers, particularly in obtaining necessary identification documents. These challenges hinder financial inclusion and exacerbate the difficulties that released prisoners face in reintegrating into society.

A key finding from Stage 1 was the critical importance of ensuring that all prisoners are equipped with necessary identification documents—such as a birth certificate and a form of photo ID—before their release. These documents are required for opening a bank account, and a bank account is crucial for accessing social security benefits, securing accommodation, and finding employment. The research recommended that Corrections facilitate the acquisition of these documents for all prisoners and ensure that every prisoner has the opportunity to open a bank account while still incarcerated (which would be available on release). This approach, modelled after the United Kingdom’s ‘UNLOCKing Banking’ programme, would require collaboration between Corrections, banks, and other stakeholders for successful implementation.

The report also highlighted the need for Corrections to provide the necessary resources and staffing to support these initiatives. It noted that while some banks, particularly Westpac NZ, have expressed willingness to engage with this consumer group, broader commitment from the banking sector is required. These recommendations laid the groundwork for the ongoing research in Stage 2.

¹ Stace and Sibanda, *Paying the Price – A report into issues prisoners face around access to banking*, 23 June 2023, A Victoria University Te Herenga Waka/FinCap Research Project. The full report is available from fincap.org.nz

Note that Stage 1 focused on the issues faced by sentenced prisoners, and in particular prisoners who were facing a sentence of 6 months or longer in prison. Prisoners incarcerated for less than 6 months and remand prisoners were not included in our recommendations in the report on Stage 1. References to “prisoners” in this report therefore means prisoners who have been sentenced to a term of 6 months or more in prison (except where the context indicates otherwise). We note that the issues facing remand prisoners are the subject of a separate research project being conducted by the Centre for Justice Innovation New Zealand (based at Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka).²

Stage 2 of the Research

Building on Stage 1’s findings, Stage 2, conducted between May and December 2023, focused on refining and validating the proposed recommendations through a qualitative research method. This approach involved conducting structured interviews with a broad group of stakeholders, including representatives from the banking sector, financial mentoring organisations, community groups, and the Department of Corrections. The responses were then coded and subjected to thematic analysis to identify common patterns, areas of consensus, and divergent views. The aim was to assess the feasibility of the Stage 1 recommendations, identify potential implementation challenges, and explore any additional measures necessary to ensure their success. By analysing the data gathered through these interviews, the research sought to ensure that the recommendations were not only theoretically sound but also practically viable and capable of being effectively implemented to enable greater financial inclusion.

This Report

This report, being the report of Stage 2, presents the results of the interviews with stakeholders on the findings and recommendations from Stage 1. Each section in this report corresponds to a specific recommendation derived from the Stage 1 research, beginning with the exact question posed to the research participants during the interviews conducted in Stage 2. This is followed by an analysis that synthesises the feedback received, highlighting areas of consensus, concerns, and suggestions for improvement. Each section concludes with implications for the relevant recommendation.

Key Themes & Findings from Stage 2

The importance of financial inclusion for reintegration

Financial inclusion is essential for the successful reintegration of prisoners into society. Stakeholders consistently emphasised that access to a bank account is crucial for individuals leaving prison, as it enables them to receive benefits, and assists in securing housing and employment – all key factors in reducing the risk of reoffending. The findings underscore the necessity of ensuring that prisoners have (at a minimum) the required identification documents and ideally an open bank account upon release to facilitate their transition back into the community.

Challenges with current banking processes

The research identified significant challenges in the existing processes for prisoners to access banking services during and after incarceration. Many prisoners either lose access to their bank accounts upon entering prison or do not have any bank account, and those attempting to open new accounts face obstacles, particularly in meeting identification and proof of address requirements. The lack of standardisation in banking practices further complicates access, as some banks are more accommodating than others. The findings call for uniform procedures across the banking sector to improve access to banking for prisoners.

² For further information on the Centre for Justice Innovation New Zealand Custodial Remand project, see <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/law/news-and-events/news/new-law-reform-project-to-focus-on-bail-and-custodial-remand-practices-in-aotearoa>

Executive Summary CONT

The role of identification documents

Both stages of the research highlighted the critical importance of ensuring that all prisoners have the necessary identification documents—in particular a birth certificate and photo ID—before their release. These documents are vital for opening a bank account, which is essential (in particular) for accessing social services. The research emphasises the need for Corrections to proactively assist in obtaining these documents while prisoners are still incarcerated, as this is a crucial step in removing barriers to financial inclusion and ensuring smoother reintegration post-release.

Financial education and mentorship

The research underscored the vital role of financial education and mentorship in supporting prisoners' reintegration. Stakeholders stressed the importance of providing prisoners with access to financial literacy programmes and mentoring services both during incarceration and after release. These programmes are essential for equipping prisoners with the skills needed to manage their finances effectively and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. The findings support the expansion and standardisation of financial capability workshops in prisons and targeted financial mentoring services for released prisoners.

Collaboration between stakeholders

Effective collaboration between Corrections, banks, financial mentoring organisations, and community groups is crucial for the success of the proposed reforms. The research indicates broad support for a collaborative approach, recognising the need for coordinated efforts to address the complex challenges faced by prisoners. However, potential obstacles such as resource constraints within Corrections and varying levels of commitment from banks were also identified. Overcoming these challenges is essential for the successful implementation of the recommendations.

Concerns about stigmatisation and dignity

A significant concern raised during the research was the potential for stigmatisation and its impact on the dignity of prisoners and ex-prisoners. Stakeholders expressed apprehension about measures that could inadvertently reinforce negative stereotypes or create additional barriers to reintegration. For instance, the proposal to develop a bespoke form of ID specifically for prisoners was met with mixed reactions, with many stakeholders preferring generic IDs that do not single out individuals as having a criminal background. Additionally, concerns were raised about the practices of debt collectors, highlighting the need for a code of conduct that ensures prisoners and ex-prisoners are treated fairly and without discrimination. This underscores the importance of designing solutions that respect the dignity of those affected while addressing their specific needs.

Financial mentoring and support services

The research emphasised the critical role of financial mentoring and support services in helping prisoners and ex-prisoners navigate financial challenges. Stakeholders highlighted the need for increased funding and resources for organisations like Te Pā, the Salvation Army, Citizens Advice Bureaus, financial mentoring organisations and other community groups that provide these services. There was also strong support for reinstating Total Money Management (TMM) services, which have proven effective in assisting individuals with complex needs to manage their finances. These services should be integral to the broader strategy of enhancing financial inclusion for justice-impacted individuals.

The importance of practical and tailored solutions

Stakeholders consistently emphasised the need for practical, tailored solutions that address the specific circumstances and needs of prisoners and ex-prisoners. While there was general support for the recommendations proposed in Stage 1, stakeholders also pointed out the necessity of flexibility in implementation. For example, while pre-release preparation, including obtaining ID and setting up bank accounts, was broadly supported, some stakeholders suggested that the timing and approach should be adapted to individual circumstances. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective, and solutions should be adaptable to the diverse needs of this population.

Addressing systemic issues and barriers

The research highlighted systemic issues and barriers that must be addressed to achieve the desired outcomes. These include limitations within the Corrections system, such as staffing shortages and resource constraints, which hinder the ability to provide consistent support to prisoners in obtaining ID and setting up bank accounts. Additionally, broader challenges within the banking sector, such as regulatory requirements and risk management concerns—specifically, a conservative, risk-averse approach to Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism (AML-CFT) regulatory compliance—may limit banks' willingness to engage with this consumer group. Addressing these systemic issues is crucial for the successful implementation of the recommendations.

Consistency and nationwide standardisation

The findings also highlight a critical need for greater consistency and standardisation in the provision of financial services and support across the prison system. Stakeholders noted significant variations in the availability and quality of financial education workshops and access to financial mentoring between different prisons, leading to disparities in outcomes. The research suggests that a standardised, nationwide approach is essential to ensure all prisoners have equitable access to these vital resources, enabling them to effectively manage their finances and reintegrate successfully into society.

Conclusion

This report underscores that financial inclusion is an essential component of successful reintegration of prisoners into society. Access to banking services, particularly having a bank account, is crucial for securing social security benefits, and key to securing housing and employment – all major factors in reducing recidivism. The research identifies significant challenges, including inconsistencies in banking practices, barriers to obtaining identification, and systemic issues within Corrections.

There is broad consensus on the need for practical, tailored solutions that respect the dignity of prisoners while addressing their specific needs. Collaboration between Corrections, banks, financial mentoring organisations, and community groups is essential to overcoming these challenges. Ensuring nationwide consistency, addressing systemic barriers, and securing resources are critical for the successful implementation of the proposed recommendations.

In sum, this report offers an evidence base for a coordinated and flexible approach to enhance financial inclusion for prisoners and prison-experienced persons, which is key to supporting their reintegration, financial wellbeing, and reducing reoffending.

Table of Recommendations

Recommendation	Prioritise	Further consideration required	Should not be progressed
Recommendations aimed at Government recognition of the importance of providing access to banking by prisoners			
1. There should be commitment by the Government to such resourcing as is necessary to enable Corrections to deliver the services necessary to ensure that every prisoner is provided with ID documents prior to release (birth certificate and a form of photo ID), and every prisoner is given the opportunity to apply for a bank account prior to release, with all costs associated with the process met by Corrections.			
2. The Government should ask the New Zealand Banking Association to recommend to its major bank members that they participate in a programme that provides banking access to people in prison, with a focus on providing all prisoners due for release with the opportunity to apply for a bank account before release, but also to provide banking facilities for prisoners not due for release, where needed.			
Recommendations aimed at addressing the issues that arise on a person's entry into prison			
3. Financial Health Check shortly after incarceration: There is a need for a mandatory financial health check to be undertaken for every prisoner shortly after entry into prison, whether after sentencing or on remand. This should be undertaken by the person's case manager and would happen within one or two weeks of entry into prison.			
4. Printed resources to be available: Printed resources would be available to all prisoners and their whanau covering matters such as how to contact a financial mentor, and how to cancel debt and contact the bank. Case managers would prioritise providing access to such resources to prisoners in their care.			
5. Every prison should have a relationship with a financial mentoring service: Every prison should be serviced by at least one of financial mentoring service and mentoring services should be funded to enable this. Case managers should be provided with a list of the mentoring service(s) and individual mentors that are servicing the particular prison.			
6. Privacy waivers should be standardised: Corrections, the NZ Banking Association and Financial Services Federation should work together to develop a generic form of privacy waiver that is acceptable in relation to a prisoner so that mentors know what form of waiver has to be obtained from prisoner clients that will be acceptable to all major creditors including banks, with no requirement for any additional individual bank waiver.			
7. MoneyTalks phone line should be a free calling number for prisoners: The MoneyTalks phone number (0800 345 123) should be added to the free calling numbers for prisoners. MoneyTalks could provide a triage service that would direct prisoners to mentors.			
8. Creditors should have staff that are trained up to work with debtors that are in prison: All creditors should have a central contact point in their hardship departments specifically for prisoners and this contact must have the authority to make decisions. Frontline staff in hardship departments should be trained up so they are able to tackle cases that do not follow the usual pattern, such as when dealing with prisoners. Banks in particular should have a dedicated team that are trained up to work with applications and other interactions from people in prison and ex-prisoners. The NZ Banking Association should assist banks to develop standardised protocols that apply with dealing with customers and potential customers that are in prison or have been released from prison.			
9. Establish a database of insurance providers that will provide insurance to people who have been in prison: The Insurance Council should maintain a database showing which companies will provide insurance to people who have been in prison.			

Recommendation	Prioritise	Further consideration required	Should not be progressed
10. Code of Practice for debt collectors should be developed that covers treatment of debtors in prison: A code of practice should be developed for debt buyers and debt collectors, which includes guidance on how to deal fairly and compassionately with debtors in prison.	■		
11. MSD debt should be suspended: MSD will have been notified of the fact of incarceration of a person in receipt of a benefit and should suspend any MSD debt obligations of that person while they are incarcerated .	■		
Recommendations aimed at addressing the issues for a person who is in prison and not due to be released			
12. Financial capability workshops should be run in prisons: Financial capability workshops should be run regularly in every prison. Some prisons currently run financial capability workshops, but a nationwide programme would ensure all prisoners have access to this form of learning. There are existing resources available (such as the MoneyMates financial literacy curriculum that was developed by MSD). These could be developed for use in prisons with the assistance of financial mentors.	■		
13. All prisoners should be given the opportunity to set up a bank account while in prison: All prisoners (excluding those on remand or who are sentenced for less than 6 months in prison) who want one should be given the opportunity to set up a bank account. The account would be a basic account for depositing money into and transferring money out of. Restrictions might apply to persons who have been involved in fraud in the past. The account would not provide any access to credit or overdraft and would be fee free. It might be a specially designed 'basic bank account' like those offered in the UK and Australia, or it might be an account of a type already offered by the bank. Details of the type of account would be worked out with the banks who participate in the programme referred to in the next recommendation.	■		
14. All major banks should participate in a programme that offered prisoners' bank accounts. All major banks would agree to be part of a programme that offered accounts to persons in prison not due for release.		■	
15. Proof of address met by PIP documents: All banks would agree to use the prison PIP of a prisoner as the proof of address.	■		
16. Costs of getting ID documents to be met by Corrections: All the costs of getting the prisoner's ID documents (the birth certificate, a Kiwi Access card and any required photos) would be met by Corrections.	■		
17. Banks and Corrections to work together to develop a bespoke form of ID for prisoners: The major banks, the Reserve Bank, the NZ Banking Association and Corrections should work together to develop a tailored form of ID that would be acceptable by banks in relation to applications from prisoners. This would replace the birth certificate and Kiwi Access card. The UK UNLOCKing Banking programme ID provides a model that can be followed and adapted for NZ use. The Identity Verification Code of Practice could be amended to provide for the specific form of ID that was considered to be acceptable for persons in prison.			■
18. Certification of documents could be done by the prison officers: Any ID documents that have to be certified as true and correct should be able to be certified by a prison officer at an appropriate level of seniority (for example, a senior Corrections Officer). This practice could be recognised in the Identity Verification Code of Practice.		■	
19. Banks would have immunity in law from loss or damage caused by messaging between prisoners using their bank transactions, if all reasonable steps have been taken by the bank to prevent this occurring.		■	

Table of Recommendations CONT

Recommendation	Prioritise	Further consideration required	Should not be progressed
Recommendations aimed at addressing the issues for a person who is due for release or parole			
<p>20. Financial capability workshops should be run regularly in every prison. Some prisons currently run financial capability workshops, but a nationwide programme would ensure all prisoners have access to this form of learning. There are existing resources available (such as the MoneyMates financial literacy curriculum that was developed by MSD). These could be developed for use in prisons with the assistance of financial mentors.</p>			
<p>21. Pre-release obligation on case manager to assist every prisoner to get ID and a bank account set up. Case managers should be required to go through a pre-release checklist no later than 6 months prior to release or date of parole hearing. The checklist should include asking does the person have ID and a bank account, and if not, the case manager should assist the prisoner through all the steps required to get an account open before release/ parole. This would include getting the requisite ID documents and assisting with filling in all the forms required for the bank account application. The bank account number would be made available to the prisoner on their release.</p>			
<p>22. All major banks should participate in a programme that offered prisoners' bank accounts: All major banks would agree to be part of a programme that offered accounts to persons in prison due for release.</p>			
<p>23. Total Money Management to be reinstated. Total Money Management should be reinstated as a service offered by financial mentoring organisations and supported by MSD.</p>			
<p>24. MSD should review the practice of payment of a benefit to an agent. MSD should review the current system of allowing a benefit to be paid to a 'mate' or other nominated person to ensure there are robust checks in the system that will enable the beneficiary to ultimately benefit from the payment.</p>			
<p>25. Corrections to review the process by which photo ID is facilitated. Corrections should review the current system by which a photo is obtained for photo ID and liaise with Hospitality NZ to ensure that the system works effectively for obtaining photos for persons who are incarcerated.</p>			
Recommendations aimed at addressing the issues for persons who have been released into the community			
<p>26. On release from prison, all prisoners should be given information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The services available to assist with managing financial matters, including the contact details for a financial mentoring service that offers these services to prisoners and ex-prisoners. • Organisations that work with ex-prisoners such as mentoring services, Te Pā and the Salvation Army should be given additional funding to ensure that they can assist prisoners to get their financial affairs sorted out to the best extent possible to enable reintegration into the community 			

Government recognition of the importance of providing access to banking by prisoners

In *“Paying the Price – A report into issues prisoners face around access to banking,”*³ we proposed that the Government officially recognise the importance of facilitating access to a bank account for all prisoners upon release.

Recommendation 1

There should be commitment by the Government to such resourcing as is necessary to enable Corrections to deliver the services necessary to ensure that every prisoner is provided with ID documents prior to release (birth certificate and a form of photo ID), and every prisoner is given the opportunity to apply for a bank account prior to release, with all costs associated with the process met by Corrections.

What we asked

Do you think it's important for the Government to help prisoners access bank accounts when they are released from prison?

What we heard

Interviews with stakeholders revealed widespread support for government assistance in helping prisoners access bank accounts upon release from prison. However, while there is broad agreement on the critical role of government support to help prison-experienced people access accounts, perspectives differ on the necessary extent of government involvement and the specific challenges encountered in the process.

Bank accounts are essential for successful reintegration post-release

Stakeholders consistently emphasised the crucial role of bank account access in successful reintegration efforts. They underscored that access to a bank account is essential for promoting financial inclusion, enabling individuals leaving prison to secure employment, manage finances, and access social security benefits effectively. Financial stability was deemed vital for reducing recidivism rates, as financial hardships often contribute to reoffending. Hannah Kim, an Auckland Barrister and member of the Law Association's Criminal Law Committee, highlighted the significance of financial assistance, particularly in accessing bank accounts upon release, to mitigate the risk of immediate reoffending. She emphasised that financial hardships often contribute to driving individuals' reoffending, particularly for those who are released without reintegration plans due to heavy Corrections case manager workloads and under-resourced out-of-gate support services. *“They are pretty much sped out to the streets, and they have no other option but to reoffend”*. This sentiment was supported by interviewees from the Banking Ombudsman scheme who stated that *“having a bank account in New Zealand is essential for daily life and should be considered a human right”*, essential for belonging and participating in the community. Overall, interviewees identified facilitated access to bank accounts as crucial for providing stability and support for individuals with prison experience upon their release, thereby reducing the risk of reoffending and supporting sustainable reintegration and financial inclusion. In this regard, banking access was perceived as a meaningful intervention to contribute to long-term cost savings in the justice sector.

³ Stace and Sibanda, *Paying the Price – A report into issues prisoners face around access to banking*, 23 June 2023, A Victoria University Te Herenga Waka/FinCap Research Project. The full report is available from fincap.org.nz

Government recognition of the importance of providing access to banking by prisoners CONT

While all stakeholders agreed on the importance of government assistance in helping prisoners access bank accounts upon release, some also emphasised the importance of respecting prisoners' autonomy. Prisoners should be provided with the choice, rather than mandated, to open a bank account before release, balancing support with individual agency.

Government has an important role to play in facilitating access to bank accounts

There was unanimous agreement among respondents regarding the central role of the Government in facilitating access to bank accounts for prisoners. Juan Kinnear from the Otago Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Society (PARS Otago) underlined the importance of government support for accessing bank accounts, stating that rehabilitation and reintegration for prisoners can be incredibly stressful. He highlighted the challenges of bank onboarding processes, especially the constant rejection experienced by some prison-experienced people seeking banking, and the difficulties arising from lacking necessary identification documents. Similarly, an interviewee from PARS Manawatu highlighted that prisoners typically lack foresight to arrange financial matters before their incarceration, as imprisonment is not a planned life event. This, we were told, leaves individuals unprepared for the financial implications. Relatedly, financial mentors from the Wellington City Mission (WCM) emphasised the importance of government assistance in accessing bank accounts upon release, particularly for individuals who did not have accounts previously. They noted that while some prisoners may have accounts, maintaining them during the term of their imprisonment can be challenging. From their experience, WCM financial mentors observed a roughly equal split between those coming out of prison with accounts and those without, indicating a significant need for support among prison-experienced individuals without existing banking relationships, who are at risk

of financial exclusion. WCM financial mentors identified government support, both during incarceration and upon release, as crucial to minimising challenges with reintegration and in establishing or re-establishing a relationship with a bank post-release.

Overall, respondents supported the proposal for the Government to acknowledge and actively participate in addressing barriers to reintegration such as ID documentation and stable accommodation. Collaboration between the Government, Corrections, and banks was seen as essential for streamlining the process of obtaining a bank account and ensuring equitable access.

Government recognition and facilitation is important for reducing barriers to banking access

ASB, ANZ, Kiwibank, and Westpac all agreed that government recognition of the importance of providing access to banking for prisoners and prison-experienced individuals would be a major contributor to change. All these major banks highlighted the challenges related to verifying customer identification and address, particularly emphasising the cost and complexity of obtaining identification documents, and some banks noting the difficulty in providing a valid address, for AML-CFT purposes. (Westpac NZ accepts the PIP form as a proof of address so did not see the proof of address requirement as a major challenge.) A conservative approach to enforcing AML-CFT ID requirements was commonly identified as a barrier to a flexible approach to onboarding prisoners or prison-experienced people without two forms of ID and an address. We heard from some banks that regulatory support to make it easier for banks to onboard prison-experienced customers would give the bank confidence that they would not risk their licenses in taking onboard customers who may not satisfy all the anti-money laundering ID requirements in the usual way.

Without government recognition and facilitation of access to banking for prisoners, some respondents raised concerns that banks would be selective about whether they choose to onboard prisoners or prison-experienced people. One respondent believed that leaving the choice to bank prisoners and ex-prisoners solely to banks may result in uneven access, limiting choice for prisoners and ex-prisoners, and leaving some banks to service a vulnerable customer segment in which high and complex behavioural challenges are disproportionately prevalent.

Westpac NZ noted that Corrections and Westpac NZ worked together to launch the New Start programme in 2019. Through this programme, Corrections supports prisoners to obtain identification while they are still in prison. The prisoners are then able to use their identification to apply for a Westpac NZ transactional bank account, which they will be able to access upon their release. Westpac noted that at the time of this report, no other banks have adopted this process.

Conclusion

Stakeholders emphasised the potential long-term benefits of government assistance in this area in reducing reoffending rates and associated social costs. They argued that investing in financial inclusion for released prisoners could yield significant returns by promoting successful reintegration and in the long term, reducing reliance on welfare services.

Implication:

The Government should officially recognise the importance of facilitating access to a bank account for all prisoners upon release and prioritise committing to such resourcing as is necessary to enable Corrections to deliver the services necessary to ensure that every prisoner is provided with ID documents prior to release (birth certificate and a form of photo ID), and every prisoner is given the opportunity to apply for a bank account prior to release.

Recommendation 2

The Government should ask the New Zealand Banking Association to recommend to its major bank members that they participate in a programme that provides banking access to people in prison, with a focus on primarily providing all prisoners due for release with the opportunity to apply for a bank account before release, but also to provide banking facilities for prisoners not due for release, where needed.

What we asked

Should the Government ask major banks to participate in a programme that provides banking access to prisoners, focusing on helping those who are due for release to apply for a bank account before leaving prison?

What we heard

There is broad stakeholder consensus on major banks involvement in a government-supported prisoner banking access programme

Most stakeholders strongly supported involving major banks in a programme aimed at providing banking access to prisoners before their release. Those in favour highlighted the necessity of collaboration between banks and the Government to establish protocols addressing the common needs and vulnerabilities of prisoners, along with associated risks. Respondents supporting the programme also recognised the potential benefits of having a variety of banks participating to share risks and offer prisoners a sense of empowerment through choice. One respondent noted that some prisoners may already have accounts with different banks, suggesting the practical advantage of involving multiple banks in banking prisoners and prison-experienced people.

Government recognition of the importance of providing access to banking by prisoners CONT

Officials from the Department of Corrections emphasised the importance of major banks, beyond just Westpac, acting as default providers (similar to default providers of KiwiSaver) of banking services to prisoners. This approach would aim to ensure prisoners had the freedom to choose their banking provider. Encouraging participation in such a programme was seen as an opportunity for banks to demonstrate corporate social responsibility. While acknowledging that some of the most vulnerable prison-experienced individuals might not be profitable customers, some stakeholders pointed out that major banks could absorb the associated costs or cross-subsidise the proportion of vulnerable prisoners requiring basic transaction services. This approach would prevent financial exclusion and enable them to participate in daily life.

Interviewees from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme also emphasised the importance of involving major banks in a programme to provide banking access to prisoners before their release. One interviewee shared an example of a currently serving prisoner who had been reaching out to the Banking Ombudsman Scheme for advice on his struggles with obtaining a bank account. Despite his persistent efforts, he faced rejection from every New Zealand bank he approached. These interviewees underscored the responsibility of banks to offer basic services to everyone, including prisoners. While acknowledging the commercial discretion each bank holds, instead of the Government merely “asking” major banks to participate in such a programme, the interviewee from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme suggested leveraging existing frameworks, such as the Banking Code of Practice or legislation, to encourage banks to take part.

Another interviewee, knowledgeable about prisoner banking in New Zealand, proposed that while banks should not face coercive regulation, the Government could encourage their participation in such a programme. Noting that some banks, like Westpac, have already initiated efforts in this direction, she recommended encouragement and inducement to

motivate others. She emphasised the importance of facilitating banks’ contribution without imposing mandates, underlining the necessity for banks to act as responsible corporate citizens.

Opposition to a specific programme for prisoners

Two respondents, both financial mentors who work with prison-experienced clients, opposed the proposal of a specialised programme for granting banking access to prisoners before their release. They argued that ex-prisoners should be treated no differently from other individuals, emphasising the ethical imperative for banks to offer banking services universally, regardless of profitability. They advocated for a broader approach that upholds the basic human right of financial independence for all individuals, regardless of their past circumstances. Moreover, they pointed out the profit-driven nature of banks and stressed the importance of recognising access to a bank account as a fundamental human right. They urged banks to fulfil their social responsibility by assisting vulnerable communities more generally, suggesting that in relation to all vulnerable members of society, banks should prioritise societal welfare over maximising profits.

Concerns and challenges associated with providing banking access to prisoners

Several stakeholders raised concerns about the logistical and practical challenges involved in providing banking access to prisoners. A representative from one bank highlighted the hurdles prisoners face in obtaining necessary documentation, especially concerning identification and proof of address. She mentioned ongoing discussions about potentially removing certain AML-CFT requirements for banks, to ease account opening for prisoners but noted the practical difficulties of verifying the identity of incarcerated individuals within prison facilities. Additionally, she mentioned efforts within the banking sector to develop digital onboarding solutions but expressed doubtful concerns about prisoners’ access to the necessary technology to take advantage of such remote onboarding procedures.

In contrast, the responses of interviewees from another bank, while varied, generally focused on the underlying issues contributing to the difficulties prisoners encounter in accessing banking services. Unlike representatives from the first bank, they did not categorise prisoners or prison-experienced individuals as a distinct group with unique needs but viewed them as part of the broader population of vulnerable customers noting that “[prisoners] represent... a group of vulnerable customers... with some challenges with the banking process.” The bank representative added: “We’re not focusing on a particular group.” This bank’s emphasis, we were told, was on implementing changes that would benefit multiple customer segments rather than focusing on the unique vulnerabilities and stressors that affect different groups. They acknowledged the challenges faced by prisoners and stressed the importance of identifying and addressing the root causes of these challenges. Regarding whether the Government should involve major banks in a programme for providing banking access to prisoners, they favoured customised solutions tailored to address the underlying issues faced by incarcerated individuals.

Differing opinions emerged regarding the role and responsibility of banks in providing banking access to prisoners. A representative of another bank expressed support for involving banks in such a programme but emphasised the importance of the Government focusing on improving existing processes already in place, for example, modernising the *Steps to Freedom* grant scheme which has not been reviewed or updated since 1983. While she favourably mentioned the UK’s UNLOCKing Banking model, she raised concerns about its effectiveness, suggesting that relaxed AML-CFT criteria and legislation may be necessary for meaningful change in prisoner banking access.

Conclusion

Stakeholders widely agree on major banks’ role in a government-backed programme for banking access to prisoners, pre-release. They stressed the need for collaboration between banks and the Government to address prisoners’ needs. There is a view that prisoners should not be singled out for special treatment, rather the focus should be on ensuring banking is available to all, based on financial inclusion considerations. Concerns about logistical challenges and practical hurdles regarding ID verification and proof of address requirements were raised, suggesting the need for tailored solutions for incarcerated individuals. Despite differing views on what banks’ roles should be in a government-facilitated prisoner access to banking scheme, we found that overall support exists for the Government to engage major banks in the programme.

Implication:

Despite varying opinions on the roles of banks in the proposed programme, overall support exists for the Government to engage major banks in facilitating access to banking services for prisoners. Therefore, it is recommended that the Government should prioritise asking the New Zealand Banking Association to encourage its major bank members to participate in the programme that would ensure all prisoners due for release have the opportunity to apply for a bank account before their release, as well as providing banking facilities for prisoners not due for release where needed.

Addressing the issues that arise on a person's entry into prison

Proposed recommendations

Several recommendations from Stage 1 of this research centred on the need to minimise deterioration in financial affairs during the period of incarceration. To achieve this, we recommended that case managers should have, and must go through with each prisoner shortly after entry into prison, a checklist of financial matters relating to that prisoner. This would apply to all prisoners, whether on remand or sentenced.

Recommendation 3

Financial Health Check shortly after

incarceration: There is a need for a mandatory financial health check to be undertaken for every prisoner shortly after entry into prison, whether after sentencing or on remand. This should be undertaken by the person's case manager and would happen within one or two weeks of entry into prison. This would include a checklist of matters such as:

- Do utilities (power, phone, etc) need to be stopped?
- Are child support payments going out?
- What is the prisoner's family's financial situation?
- Who does the prisoner bank with?
- Does the prisoner have any automatic payments that are still going out and need to be stopped?
- Who are the prisoner's creditors (for example, car financing credit)?
- What other financial obligations does the prisoner have?
- Where was the prisoner living, and does the landlord need to be notified?
- Does the prisoner have a birth certificate or any other form of identification (e.g. driver's licence or Kiwi Access card)?

The case manager would then inform the person's bank, major creditors and the IRD of the fact of incarceration.

The case manager would give the prisoner information about how to contact a financial mentor. The case manager would assist in setting up an introduction to a mentor if requested by the prisoner.

What we asked

Do you think there should be a mandatory financial health check for every prisoner shortly after they enter prison? This check would include assessing their financial obligations, stopping utility payments, child support, and informing their bank and creditors about their incarceration.

What we heard

The majority of responses emphasised the importance of early intervention and prevention in addressing financial issues for prisoners. They highlighted the need to identify and address financial vulnerabilities promptly to prevent further complications and distress upon release. These responses underscored the proactive approach needed to safeguard prisoners' financial stability and facilitate their successful reintegration into society.

The ability to manage financial affairs while incarcerated is important

Across the responses, there was a consensus on the importance of addressing financial matters for prisoners upon entry into prison. Stakeholders emphasised the need to promptly assess financial obligations and provide support to prevent issues such as unpaid debts and financial abuse from escalating during incarceration. Interviewees from the Department of Corrections explained that while there are existing processes in place for outstanding financial obligations within the department, such as contacting a bank to advise them of a customer's imprisonment, this approach is not consistently implemented across the Corrections system. Additionally, ongoing efforts are being made to address financial concerns during the initial assessment, with pilot programmes in partnership with a Kaupapa Māori NGO agency. Stakeholders from Corrections agreed that a financial health check as part of the prison onboarding process would be beneficial, particularly for self-employed individuals within the prison system. However, they suggested that such a procedure should be voluntary rather than mandatory, cautioning against imposing mandatory interventions for prisoners without applying the same standards to other members of the community who are not imprisoned.

Early opportunities to organise one's financial affairs upon incarceration can make a big difference

ASB, ANZ, Westpac, and Kiwibank were all supportive of a financial health check, where a bank would be informed of a customer's incarceration. Improved communication would ensure that banks are fully informed and can make decisions based on a complete understanding of the customer's circumstances, rather than relying on a lack of information that may lead to inconsistent outcomes. We also heard from ASB of a situation where a customer entered prison while still having a joint bank account with a previous partner. During their incarceration, they experienced financial abuse because the other person with access to the account misused it. This example highlights the importance of banks being aware of an imprisoned customer to protect individuals from financial exploitation. Overall, the banks supported the introduction of financial health checks as part of the prison onboarding process. We were consistently told that financial health checks, provided the questions were well-designed, could benefit the imprisoned

individual by addressing issues like cancelled accounts, unauthorized use, and a deterioration in a prisoner's financial affairs during their incarceration. However, all the banks agree that such checks should align with the customer's preferences, giving customer the choice to cancel payments or make arrangements based on their situation.

Financial mentors and budget advisors we spoke to highlighted how, in their experiences, prisoners' unresolved financial issues not only create significant financial problems for individuals post-release but also that failing to sort out these issues can lead to the accumulation of debts, creating further difficulties for both prisoners and their families. A financial mentor from Bay Financial Mentors told us that the ripple effects of unresolved financial obligations include partners being left with debts they cannot manage, and vehicles being repossessed. *"It's not just them that suffers, it's the family, the partners... suddenly stopping incomes [due to incarceration] has a huge impact on families and homes... we must ensure we look after those left behind and give prisoners the best chance of success upon release."* A similar concern was echoed by an interviewee from Wellington PARS Wellington. This interviewee recounted a recent example where a client, upon release from prison, faced significant financial challenges due to deductions from his benefit payments. Initially, \$112 was deducted for child support, leaving him with only \$30 a week after deducting accommodation costs from a \$350-per-week benefit. The interviewee highlighted that if the IRD had been advised to suspend the client's child support obligation at the time he was incarcerated, he wouldn't have faced these deductions. After reaching out to IRD, the child support payment was reduced to \$15. The interviewee has had to support this ex-prisoner to apply for financial hardship withdrawals from his KiwiSaver scheme because after servicing his child support debt, the gentleman was only left with only \$60 a week, from his benefit, to live on. Such a situation could have been avoided if IRD had been informed of the client's incarceration and had suspended his obligations.

Another interviewee suggested that it would be very helpful if the banks had a process whereby a person who was incarcerated could apply for suspension of bank fees for the period of incarceration. This person also raised the issue of bank account balances being potentially declared dormant and the money being

Addressing the issues that arise on a person's entry into prison CONT

transferred to the IRD's unclaimed money account. This person suggested that prisoners should be able to apply to their banks to treat their accounts as active to avoid this happening.

There are practical challenges associated with implementing "financial health checks"

Several respondents raised concerns about the feasibility of implementing mandatory financial health checks given existing resource constraints and workload pressures on case managers. They highlighted practical challenges such as staffing shortages and limited resources within Corrections, and the need for realistic expectations. One interviewee reported:

"So, what we observe day-to-day is that the case managers are pretty much absent. They are not even fulfilling their own obligations right now because they are either extremely short-staffed or just underequipped to handle the many needs of prisoners. Adding this obligation on case managers, I don't know how realistic it would be in practice. I would love to have that because I think it is extremely beneficial for prisoners to have a financial health check, and if they can have a choice of seeking assistance, there should be a facility available in prison so they can have easier access to get assistance. But, in practice, I don't know how that can be implemented because they're not even managing with basic minimum entitlements."

Relatedly, financial mentors raised concerns about the feasibility of implementing a mandatory financial mentoring service for every prisoner, citing existing resource constraints, noting, "financial mentors are under the pump and underfunded already." However, one financial mentor supported the idea of providing prisoners with information on how to access financial mentorship services remotely, suggesting that scheduled phone appointments could alleviate stress for financial mentors as well as prisoners.

Privacy and ethical considerations should be weighed in the design of prisoner financial health checks

Prisoner privacy and autonomy emerged as significant concerns in several responses. One interviewee cautioned against implementing mandatory financial health checks for prisoners upon entry into prison. While acknowledging the importance of assisting prisoners with financial responsibilities, they raised

concerns about automatically disclosing incarceration to banks and creditors. They highlighted the potential for banks to make moral judgments about their customers based on their crimes, leading to financial repercussions. Drawing from personal experience and research, they reported how banks may reject customers for morally reprehensible conduct, such as drug and sexual offending, regardless of the person's financial status. This respondent argued that automatically disclosing incarceration to banks could result in unfair financial consequences for prisoners. Overall, they advocated for a balanced approach that addressed prisoners' financial needs without subjecting them to punitive actions from banks based solely on their offending history and incarceration status.

Citizen's Advice Bureau has developed a pilot scheme for triaging new prisoner's financial affairs

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) had been preparing to launch a project in collaboration with the Family Financial Services Trust in Upper Hutt. This pilot initiative, which was intended to be trialled at Remutaka Prison, was aimed at addressing the significant financial difficulties that prisoners commonly faced upon their release. These challenges typically arose from overlooked financial commitments, for example a forgotten subscription for a Netflix account, which often led to depleted bank balances upon release. Additionally, as already noted, issues with child support payments were frequently encountered, sometimes resulting in substantial increases in debt. An example reported to us involved a prisoner whose child support arrears had escalated from \$9,000 to \$350,000 simply because they had failed to notify the IRD. To mitigate these issues, CAB proposed early intervention by establishing contact with prisons at the beginning of an individual's incarceration. Their approach involved implementing a basic checklist-style triage form to assess a prisoner's immediate financial needs and to connect the prisoner with the assistance they may need and then these individuals would then be connected with either the Family Financial Services Trust or CAB for further assistance at the onset of their imprisonment.

CAB's immediate financial needs assessment pilot, for which the designed questionnaire is set out in an appendix at the end of this report, is still awaiting to be trialled.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis highlights that there is a consensus regarding the importance of early intervention to address financial issues among prisoners, emphasising the need for proactive measures to safeguard their financial stability and successful reintegration into society. Stakeholders stressed the significance of managing financial affairs upon incarceration to prevent complications upon release. All major banks we spoke to supported the introduction of financial health checks during prison onboarding, provided they aligned with prisoners' preferences. However, concerns were raised regarding the feasibility of implementing mandatory financial health checks due to resource constraints within Corrections and workload pressures on case managers. Additionally, privacy and ethical considerations regarding automatic disclosure of incarceration to banks were raised, with concerns about potential unfair financial consequences for prisoners.

Implications:

1. Stakeholders strongly support the implementation of the recommendation for a financial health check as part of a prisoner's immediate needs assessment shortly after incarceration. However, the consultation feedback suggests that such a procedure should be made available to all inmates (and taken up as a matter of choice) rather than being mandatory.
2. Inmates should retain autonomy and control over how their financial information is used, and any outreach to creditors or banks should only occur with the prisoner's affirmative consent.
3. We also recommend supporting the Citizen's Advice Bureau's "financial health check" pilot scheme at Remutaka Prison. This pilot would offer valuable evidence on the effectiveness of such an intervention and provide insight on how to best design the financial health check procedure and questionnaire.

Recommendation 4

Printed resources to be available: Printed resources to be available at the point of entering incarceration: These resources would be provided to all prisoners and their whānau upon entering incarceration, covering topics such as how to contact a financial mentor, how to cancel debt, and how to communicate with the bank. Case managers would prioritise ensuring that prisoners in their care have access to these resources from the start of their sentence.

What we asked

Should printed resources be made available to prisoners and their families, providing information on how to contact a financial mentor, cancel debts, and contact the bank?

What we heard

There was a near-unanimous agreement among respondents on the importance of providing printed resources to prisoners and their families.

Printed resources are practical, low-cost resources for prisoners, their whanau, and case managers

Most respondents recognised the value of printed financial resources as an effective means of providing information to individuals who may lack digital access. Distributing printed materials to prisoners and their families was viewed as a practical and cost-effective method to assist them in navigating financial challenges during and after incarceration. These resources were perceived as helpful tools for facilitating communication with financial mentors and empowering prisoners and their families to explore solutions to financial issues and reduce unnecessary stress. Many financial mentors and budget advisors supported the idea of making printed resources readily available to prisoners and their families and recommended prompt implementation of this initiative. Respondents including David Verry (North Harbour Budgeting Services) and an interviewee from PARS Wellington highlighted the importance of raising awareness and

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providing training to prison staff and stakeholders about financial assistance for prisoners. They stressed the need to incorporate information on accessing financial support into training programmes for Corrections case managers, probation officers and reintegration support workers in out-of-gate community services. Additionally, participants in the reintegration sector suggested that providing printed information resources to Corrections case managers could enhance communication and engagement with financial mentors, debt counsellors, and banks during interactions with prisoners.

However, simply distributing printed resources may not be effective or efficient

However, simply distributing printed resources may not be effective or efficient. While printed materials containing guidance on reaching out to a financial mentor, debt management, and communication with banks could be useful, concerns were raised regarding the practicality and efficiency of this approach, especially considering the significant mental and literacy challenges disproportionately prevalent among the Aotearoa New Zealand prison population. Mondy Jera (formerly of ThinkPlace and one of the authors of the report “Westpac NZ Access to Banking in Aoteroa”⁴), highlighted the potential limitations of relying solely on printed materials. She questioned the assumption that individuals, grappling with various mental and emotional burdens, can effectively advocate for themselves (noting that this was in the context of providing material on release from prison). Mondy stated:

“Imagine all the things that are taxing someone mentally when they come out of prison. And then they've got this piece of paper, and they're supposed to be able to advocate for themselves in the early days of re-entering into non-custodial life?”

Mondy emphasised the need for a more proactive and interventionist approach, suggesting that the mere provision of printed resources may not adequately address the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals re-entering society after incarceration. She observed, “I think that this is a group of people who already have challenges advocating for themselves. It's probably really low down on their priority list.” Kylie Ewing, from PARS Taranaki, similarly suggested a proactive approach, where individuals are supported and guided by their case managers, being asked, “Have you completed these tasks? Do you require this information?” This proactive approach could enhance engagement and utilisation of the provided information.

Consent should be sought before prisoner's whanau are contacted

Auckland barrister Hannah Kim raised concerns about privacy and consent if prisoners' families were to receive printed financial education resources and potentially access confidential financial information about the prisoners. Hannah anticipated situations where a prisoner's family might be asked to handle the person's financial affairs 'outside the wire', which could require them to be given confidential banking details. Stressing the importance of privacy, Hannah emphasised the need for strict conditions and explicit consent from the prisoner before family members can access certain financial information. She highlighted the risks associated with unauthorised access, citing instances where individuals gained unauthorised authority over someone else's accounts, resulting in financial misuse and loss of funds. Hannah underscored the significance of authorisation in preventing such issues and emphasised the importance of managing privacy concerns while ensuring access to necessary financial information.

4 This was a report produced in April 2023, commissioned by Westpac, that looked into the issues around “unbanked” in New Zealand. Available at <https://www.westpac.co.nz/assets/Personal/life-money/documents/Westpac-NZ-Access-to-Banking-in-Aotearoa-Report.pdf>

Conclusion

The responses demonstrated a strong consensus among respondents regarding the importance of providing printed resources to prisoners and their families at the point of incarceration. Printed financial resources are viewed as practical and cost-effective tools for helping individuals navigate financial challenges upon entering incarceration, facilitating communication with financial mentors, and empowering prisoners and their families to address financial issues from the outset. While there is widespread support for making printed resources available, concerns have been raised about the effectiveness and efficiency of this approach, particularly considering the mental health and literacy challenges prevalent among the prison population. This indicates that a proactive and interventionist approach may be necessary to effectively assist newly onboarded prisoners in addressing and organising their financial matters upon entering prison. Additionally, there is a need to prioritise privacy and to obtain consent before contacting prisoners' families or, if necessary, providing them with access to financial information.

Implication:

The findings show strong stakeholder support for printed resources to be made available to prisoners and their families at the point of incarceration. However, the consultation feedback suggests that while printed resources can be valuable, they should be part of a broader, more holistic strategy to support prisoners and their families in addressing their financial affairs effectively. This indicates a need for a more proactive approach to address the challenges faced by individuals at the point of entering incarceration, ensuring that resources are effectively utilised and privacy considerations are prioritised, with consent sought before prisoners' families are contacted.

Recommendation 5

Every prison should have a relationship with a financial mentoring service:

Every prison should be serviced by at least one of financial mentoring service and mentoring services should be funded to enable this. Case managers should be provided with a list of the mentoring service(s) and individual mentors that are servicing the particular prison.

Financial mentors should work with each prisoner (where the prisoner requests a meeting with a mentor) and their whanau to help them manage their finances as well as preparing them for release.

Corrections should proactively assist financial mentors working with prisoners. This would include providing the prisoner's PIP photo ID to the mentor to enable the mentor access to credit reporting services and other financial information on behalf of their client

What we asked

Should every prison have a financial mentoring service available, funded to assist prisoners in managing their finances and preparing for release? Should case managers provide prisoners with information on how to contact a financial mentor?

What we heard

Most of the respondents expressed support for the implementation of financial mentoring services in prisons. They acknowledge the importance of providing inmates with access to financial education and support to help them manage their finances effectively during and after incarceration.

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Stakeholders strongly supported the provision of financial mentoring services in prison

There was widespread agreement among stakeholders that every prison should have a relationship with a funded financial mentoring service, emphasising the importance of this in supporting and promoting prisoners' financial wellbeing regardless of their financial status. Dr Pushpa Wood, Director of the Financial Education and Research Centre at Massey University, highlighted the significance of offering prisoners access to financial education and support services, suggesting that individuals, both inside and outside of prison, have the right to such information and support. She advocated for the availability of financial mentoring services for prisoners, akin to other forms of education and support already provided. Pushpa emphasised the importance of prisoners acquiring effective financial management skills that assist them upon release, as well as understanding potential pitfalls. This underscores the significance of including financial education as a crucial component of the reintegration process into society.

Related to the foregoing, a reintegration support worker interviewee noted that many inmates lack "essential adulting skills," rendering them ill-equipped to manage their finances effectively post-release. Financial instability was repeatedly identified as a major contributing factor to criminal offending, and dedicated financial services support was recognised as crucial for rehabilitation. Providing prisoners access to life skills education can enable them to navigate periods of financial instability, potentially reducing recidivism, and preventing further entrenchment in cycles of criminality.

David Verry, a financial mentor from North Harbour Budgeting Services who frequently assists prisoners in Paremoremo prison with their financial matters, highlighted a concerning gap in awareness within Corrections regarding the comprehensive support available from financial mentors at no cost. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that Corrections is fully informed about the range of services provided by MSD-supported financial mentoring services. By addressing this knowledge gap, Corrections can better leverage the assistance available to support prisoners effectively.

Independent financial mentoring services were identified as essential to building trust and addressing financial issues effectively

Many stakeholders emphasised the necessity of prisoners having an independent financial mentor separate from Corrections to build trust and address financial issues effectively. Financial mentors from Wellington City Mission supported the idea of having a financial mentoring service available in every prison, funded to assist prisoners in managing their finances and preparing for release. They agreed that the better approach was to leverage existing financial and budgeting services already funded by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) to offer support within prisons, rather than establishing a new system. They emphasised two main reasons for this approach. Firstly, having someone outside of the Corrections system, such as a financial mentor, could help build trust with the prisoners. Secondly, it ensures continuity of care, allowing prisoners to work with the same financial mentor both during their incarceration and after their release. This approach could ensure that prisoners receive comprehensive support for their financial well-being throughout their time in prison and beyond, supporting journeys to financial wellbeing. Financial mentors from Bay Financial Mentors agreed. They highlighted the importance of building relationships and trust, suggesting that organisations with relevant experience should be involved. Similarly, Adie Transom from PARS Wellington highlighted the importance of continuity of care both during incarceration and post-release, which could be better ensured by engaging external budgeting services. Adie highlighted the benefits of external agencies in maintaining confidentiality and mitigating consent issues when communicating with creditors. She suggested that individuals are more likely to engage constructively with external agencies rather than with prison staff responsible for their day-to-day care.

Efficacy of financial mentoring services depends on strength of relationships with banks.

The effectiveness of financial mentoring services depends significantly on the quality of relationships with banks, a point emphasised by Mondy, who supported implementing such services in every prison. She highlighted the importance of positive and productive relationships between financial mentors

and banks. She noted a historical gap where financial mentors and case managers, despite their close relationships with the individuals they support, lacked healthy or positive relationship with banks. Mondy suggested that while financial mentoring services may have good intentions, successful outcomes for clients are best served where there are good relationships between mentors and banks.

Additional resourcing is needed to enable implementation

Most financial mentors we spoke to highlighted staffing shortages and the lack of capacity of mentors to provide financial mentoring services. Many stressed the importance of adequately resourcing financial mentors to effectively support inmates with their financial wellbeing.

Conclusion

There is a robust consensus among stakeholders on the importance of implementing financial mentoring services in prisons to support prisoners in managing their finances effectively during and after incarceration. Key points raised included the recognition of financial education as crucial for successful reintegration into society and the necessity of independent financial mentors to build trust and address prisoners' financial issues. We also heard that the effectiveness of financial mentoring programmes requires strong relationships with banks. However, additional resourcing is needed to address staffing shortages and other financial constraints within mentoring organisations and to ensure the successful implementation of these services. Overall, stakeholders support the proposal.

Implication:

The consultation feedback supports the implementation of financial mentoring services in prisons to support prisoners in managing their finances effectively both during and after incarceration. However, addressing staffing shortages and ensuring adequate resourcing are essential for the successful implementation of these services.

Recommendation 6

Privacy waivers should be standardised:

Corrections, the NZ Banking Association and Financial Services Federation should work together to develop a generic form of privacy waiver that is acceptable in relation to a prisoner so that mentors know what form of waiver has to be obtained from prisoner clients that will be acceptable to all major creditors including banks, with no requirement for any additional individual bank waiver.

What we asked

Should there be standardised privacy waivers developed, allowing financial mentors to access necessary information from banks and other creditors on behalf of prisoners?

What we heard

A standardised waiver exists. However, it is not uniformly recognised and accepted by customer-facing bank staff

Interviewees from ASB, ANZ and Kiwibank confirmed the existence of a standardised, generic privacy waiver that was collaboratively developed and agreed upon by those banks (and FinCap). Despite the existence of this standardised waiver, some respondents suggested that branch staff may not uniformly accept it due to unfamiliarity with the document. One bank was only aware of a standard privacy waiver provided by Corrections which was adapted for use as customer authorisation, to enable the bank to support the imprisoned customer.

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Financial mentors continue to encounter obstacles when accessing client information from banks

Financial mentors continue to encounter obstacles when accessing client information from banks, primarily due to challenges in obtaining valid privacy waivers. David Verry (North Harbour Budgeting Services) highlighted a discrepancy between finance companies and banks regarding privacy waivers, noting that while finance companies and Centrix accept a generic waiver, each bank requires its own specific version with detailed, bank-specific information requirements. This requirement poses difficulties for clients, as getting the necessary information for multiple banks may not be possible - or convenient - from prison. David emphasised the need for banks to adopt, and routinely recognise and accept, a standardised waiver to simplify the process.

Kylie Ewing from PARS Taranaki echoed these sentiments, highlighting the recurring issue of rewriting consents to meet different banks' requirements. She emphasised the need for unified wording to streamline the process, citing examples of minor differences in preferred wording causing significant complications. Kylie told us:

"Sometimes there might be challenges with Authorities to Act... A prisoner might sign one particular waiver which works in one bank, but other banks won't be able to use it which creates a problem. We have come across that time and time again. I don't know how many times we have rewritten our consent to meet [various bank requirements]."

She added,

"Getting them all to agree on that...the same wording, I think [would make a difference]. We have three different [variations of the same sentence] that essentially read the same thing, but they apply to different banks depending on where the comma is, for example, yeah, stupid things like that."

Respondents from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme reiterated the challenges posed by inconsistent privacy waiver acceptance by banks, hindering financial mentors in their assistance to prisoners.

Concerns were also raised regarding the difficulty of obtaining verifiable signatures from incarcerated individuals, as well as discrepancies between the prisoner's signature on the form and the signature the bank may have on file, which can hinder the process.

Conclusion

Despite the apparent existence of a standardised form agreed upon by banks, its universal application appears to be lacking. Anecdotal evidence from financial mentors suggests varying degrees of success with the existing form, indicating a pressing need for greater uniformity in practice to facilitate smoother interactions between financial mentors and banks.

Implication:

There is a pressing need for greater uniformity in practice to facilitate smoother interactions between financial mentors and banks. The consultation feedback highlights challenges in accessing client information from banks due to inconsistencies in the acceptance of privacy waivers. While a standardised waiver would seem to exist, it is not uniformly recognised and accepted by all banks, leading to obstacles for financial mentors. The discrepancy between finance companies and banks regarding privacy waivers further complicates the process for clients, as each bank, we have heard, continues to require its own specific version. This situation highlights a need for banks to universally adopt and recognise a standardised waiver to simplify the process for clients, particularly those in prison.

Recommendation 7

MoneyTalks phone line should be a free calling number for prisoners: The MoneyTalks phone number (0800 345 123) should be added to the free calling numbers for prisoners. MoneyTalks could provide a triage service that would direct prisoners to mentors.

What we asked

Should the helpline “MoneyTalks” be made free for prisoners to call? Could the MoneyTalks Helpline provide assistance in connecting prisoners with financial mentors?

What we heard

There is general support for making the MoneyTalks helpline available and accessible for prisoners

There was widespread support for making the MoneyTalks helpline available and accessible to prisoners. Many respondents expressed this support, believing that access to financial advice and assistance (which can be facilitated by MoneyTalks) should be available to everyone, regardless of their incarceration status. While acknowledging potential concerns about misuse, such as individuals calling for non-financial reasons or to simply “break up the monotony” in prison, most respondents believed that many callers would genuinely benefit from the service’s financial guidance. We were told that the MoneyTalks service does not give financial advice, rather it provides information and referrals. We were also told that the service cannot transfer calls from prisoners to any other services other than the Citizens Advice Bureaus or financial mentoring services, but it can give prisoners assistance on how to directly contact other organisations.

Heather Lange, a Budget Advisor at Family Finances Service in Upper Hutt, clarified that as of March 2023, phone calls from prison are no longer charged for, and prisoners can call any number free of charge, removing cost as a barrier. Additionally, she mentioned that MoneyTalks had been added to the prison schedule of approved global numbers. However, upon reviewing the Schedule of Global 0800 and 0508 numbers in the Prison Operations Manual, we found that the MoneyTalks helpline is not yet approved nationwide. This indicates either a discrepancy in approval status between prisons or a recent change that has not yet been updated in the manual.

But there are significant doubts and concerns about the effectiveness of relying on the Moneytalks helpline alone to offer financial advice and assistance to prisoners

One respondent from Corrections raised a critical concern about the potential risks associated with providing financial advice to prisoners, particularly those convicted of financial crimes. This interviewee proposed implementing a process for approving phone access, citing risks related to manipulation and deception. While she acknowledged the benefits for most prisoners, she stressed the importance of monitoring and the need for an approval process, based on their individual history and offences. Another respondent, a financial mentor, expressed uncertainty about the usefulness of making the MoneyTalks helpline available to prisoners. While not opposed to the proposal, she highlighted prisoners’ lack of awareness about available financial support services and emphasised the logistical challenges they face in accessing phones. This financial mentor suggested that personalised financial guidance, such as coaching or planning, with a financial mentor, might be more beneficial.

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Respondents from the Citizen's Advice Bureau were surprised that MoneyTalks is not currently a pre-approved global number for prisoners. They noted however that brief phone calls and limited access might not adequately resolve debt issues or complex financial issues with the IRD, for example. They too, also suggested that in-person assistance could be necessary. Similarly, David Verry (North Harbour Budgeting Service) emphasised the importance of having financial mentoring services near or in prisons to help inmates connect with mentors effectively. He suggested collaboration with organisations like FinCap to ensure every prisoner has access to effective financial assistance, noting the logistical challenges prisoners face in communicating with external services. While David acknowledged the potentially useful role of MoneyTalks, he emphasised the need for Corrections to engage MSD-funded financial mentoring services, and getting them into local prisons, to effectively support prisoners' financial wellbeing needs.

Andrew Henderson from Dunedin Budget Advisory Service highlighted the significance of enabling document exchange between prisoners and financial mentors. He noted a current obstacle caused by restrictions on email attachments to Corrections staff, which can hinder remote communication from financial mentors with prisoners. He expressed frustration with this limitation, particularly regarding the difficulty of obtaining signatures from incarcerated individuals.

Concerns about safety arise due to lack of privacy on prison payphones

Two interviewees highlighted safety concerns related to the helpline, particularly focusing on the limited time prisoners have for phone calls and the lack of privacy. They expressed worries about conversations being overheard by others, which could potentially lead to safety risks. Hannah Kim (Barrister) described the

challenging dynamics within prisons, such as limited phone call time, queues, and aggression, underscoring the difficulty prisoners face in managing tasks within their restricted schedule. She explained that with only an hour out of their cell per day, some prisoners have limited opportunities to contact family or lawyers, which complicates the management of their affairs. Due to these challenges, she expressed concern about the safety implications of conversations potentially being overheard, especially given the complex nature of prison environments.

Conclusion

There is widespread support for making the MoneyTalks helpline available and accessible to prisoners, with many respondents believing that access to financial advice and assistance should be universal. However, concerns were raised regarding the effectiveness and safety implications of relying solely on the helpline for financial support. These concerns included the potential risks associated with providing financial advice to prisoners, logistical challenges in accessing phones within Corrections facilities, and safety risks due to limited privacy and time constraints.

Implication:

To address these concerns and ensure effective support for prisoners' financial needs, greater collaboration with external organisations and in particular financial mentoring services operating near or within prisons was suggested as a potential solution. Additionally, while cost barriers have been removed for phone calls from prison, further steps are needed to ensure the MoneyTalks helpline is readily available and approved nationwide for prisoners seeking financial guidance and assistance.

Recommendation 8

Creditors should have staff that are trained up to work with debtors that are in prison: All creditors should have a central contact point in their hardship departments specifically for prisoners and this contact must have the authority to make decisions. Frontline staff in hardship departments should be trained up so they are able to tackle cases that do not follow the usual pattern, for example when dealing with prisoners. Banks in particular should have a dedicated team that are trained up to work with applications and other interactions from people in prison and ex-prisoners. The NZ Banking Association should assist banks to develop standardised protocols that apply with dealing with customers and potential customers that are in prison or have been released from prison.

What we asked

Should creditors have trained staff to work with debtors who are in prison, including a dedicated contact point for prisoners in their hardship departments?

What we heard

There is widespread agreement among respondents on the necessity for financial institutions to have trained staff and dedicated resources to assist debtors in prison.

Many expressed support for providing training materials and dedicated staff specifically trained to address issues arising from prisoners' financial situations.

The consensus among financial mentors, reintegration support workers, and others experienced in working with individuals who have been incarcerated underscored the necessity of bank and other creditors having staff who can understand the unique challenges faced by prisoners and can offer empathetic and effective support. There was support for the establishment of dedicated contact points within

hardship departments to streamline communications with and assistance for prisoners. Officials from Corrections whom we interviewed concurred with this need for training and suggested making it available to staff handling queries related to incarcerated individuals. They emphasised the importance of having personnel specifically trained (or resources available) to address issues arising from prisoners' financial situations. Similarly, respondents from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme suggested that while training may suffice for larger banks, having specialised officers could streamline services and prevent miscommunication with prison-experienced customers.

Juan Kinnear from PARS Otago supported the proposal for creditors to have trained staff to handle debtors in prison, suggesting that expertise in addressing such situations within an organisation, similar to dedicated MSD staff, can be highly beneficial. He highlighted the complexities of interactions between organisations like banks and prisons, emphasising the need for tailored expertise to navigate these complexities effectively. Juan's response emphasised the importance of specialised support to mitigate challenges faced by prisoners dealing with financial obligations. Juan told us:

"Our experience [working] with dedicated MSD staff demonstrates how important that kind of expertise is within an organisation. We quite often have complicated interactions with banks on behalf of our clients. And it is clear that banks have their own systems and expectations, and prison has its own systems and its own expectations, and the two of those do not necessarily match, and our clients quite often know the people in the middle who get harmed. So yes, training specific staff to deal with these situations would be a positive.

Interviewees from Salvation Army reintegration services made a similar observation, informing us that MSD staff trained to understand the needs of prisoners had led to enhanced customer experiences, improved issue resolution efficiency, and better outcomes for customers, who typically face complex behavioural and communication challenges.

Addressing the issues that arise on a person's entry into prison CONT

Additionally, Wellington City Mission endorsed the proposal of creditors having trained staff to assist debtors who are in prison, including a dedicated contact point for prisoners in their hardship departments. They emphasised the importance of grasping the unique challenges faced by prisoners and the necessity for tailored support. This involves recognising prisoner issues such as low literacy, behavioural problems, and communication difficulties. Such issues can lead to the trespassing of some prison-experienced people from bank premises. By offering specialised training for staff to tackle these challenges, creditors can better meet the needs of incarcerated individuals, treating them with respect and ensuring fair access to financial services.

Interviewees from Bay Financial Mentors in Tauranga, as well as Dr Pushpa Wood (Financial Education and Research Centre at Massey University), also supported the idea of creditors having trained staff to work with debtors who are in prison. They stressed the importance of empathy and non-judgmental attitudes in such interactions, emphasising the importance of breaking down preconceived judgments and stereotypes. They suggested that training could help staff approach these situations with sensitivity and understanding. Additionally, they recommended that such training should not be limited to the cases of prison-experienced people but extended to other vulnerable individuals with complex needs beyond the prison system, indicating that many individuals outside of the prison context also require specialised support.

Banks had mixed responses to offering specific training regarding prisoners or establishing dedicated contact points for prisoners within their hardship departments

The majority of the banks we engaged with demonstrated a tendency to perceive prisoners as part of a broader spectrum of vulnerable communities rather than as a distinct customer group requiring specialised support. These banks viewed dedicated assistance for individuals with prison experience as unnecessary, instead advocating for increased support

across diverse vulnerable customer segments. One bank manager, responsible for the care of vulnerable customers, told us in an interview: *"I don't think it's our responsibility to necessarily bank them as our customers" ... the interviewee later added "... Banks [should have] awareness of that as we do for any group of customers that's dealing with something."* This perspective suggests that, from some banks' standpoint, addressing the financial needs of prisoners falls within a larger, general framework of assisting vulnerable populations more broadly. They prioritise the provision of general vulnerability support that caters to the needs of various vulnerable groups, including those with prison experience, within the context of their existing customer service approach.

A similar sentiment was raised by two financial mentors we spoke to who expressed doubts about the practicality of creditors establishing dedicated contact points for prisoners within their hardship departments. They suggested that existing hardship teams are already equipped to assist incarcerated individuals with financial challenges, emphasising the need for robust processes to facilitate communication between prisoners and creditors.

An interviewee from another bank, however, did agree that having trained staff to assist debtors in prison, along with a dedicated contact point, would be beneficial. The importance of streamlining the process to prevent prisoners from repeatedly explaining their situation, which can feel disempowering, stigmatising, or re-traumatising, was emphasised. It was suggested that creditors could benefit from staff trained to understand the experiences of incarcerated individuals. Additionally, the need for efficient information recording within their systems to avoid requiring repetition was emphasised. Furthermore, there was acknowledgment of the challenge of providing adequate training to staff, and it was proposed that specialised teams within banks that were focused on vulnerability generally could be more effective.

Conclusion

The consultation suggests there is a consensus among stakeholders regarding the importance of creditor institutions offering specialised training and resources to effectively aid debtors in prison. Supporters of dedicated assistance for prisoners within creditors' hardship departments emphasised the importance of empathy and focused support, reflecting an increasing awareness of the complexities inherent in addressing the financial needs of incarcerated individuals. While most major banks view prisoners as part of a larger vulnerable population, there is some recognition of the need for tailored assistance, particularly in understanding the unique challenges faced by prisoners. However, concerns persist regarding the feasibility of establishing dedicated contact points, with some suggesting that existing hardship teams are capable of assisting incarcerated individuals adequately.

Implications:

- There are concerns regarding the practicality of creating dedicated contact points within creditors' hardship departments, with most banks suggesting that the existing hardship teams are sufficiently equipped to address the needs of prisoners.
- Although banks are hesitant to establish dedicated contact points, there is a consensus on the significance of streamlining processes to prevent prisoners from repeatedly explaining their situations, which can cause disempowerment and re-traumatisation.
- Consequently, providing specialised training and resources to the existing hardship and customer care departments of creditor institutions may be the most suitable approach at this time.

Recommendation 9

Establish a database of insurance providers that will provide insurance to people who have been in prison: The Insurance Council should maintain a database showing which companies will provide insurance to people who have been in prison.

What we asked

Should an insurance providers database be established to identify companies that provide insurance to people who have been in prison?

What we heard

There was a notable level of uncertainty and mixed opinions among respondents regarding the feasibility and necessity of establishing a database to identify insurance providers for individuals with a history of incarceration. While some respondents expressed support for such a database, citing the challenges faced by ex-prisoners in obtaining insurance, others were sceptical about the feasibility and effectiveness of such a database to address challenges of accessibility.

There is consensus that prison-experienced people face challenges obtaining basic insurance

Many respondents highlighted the significant challenges faced by individuals with criminal histories in obtaining insurance coverage. The types of insurance relevant for prison-impacted individuals would include vehicle insurance (at the very least third-party), insurance over belongings (e.g., renters' insurance), and dwelling insurance for those who own property. Medical insurance would also be desirable but is likely unaffordable for many. One reintegration support worker emphasised the rarity of insurance among the population she serves, noting that out of 236 active clients, only two had any form of insurance. Financial mentors also told us that accessibility and affordability of insurance is an issue that broadly affects financially vulnerable people, especially those with poor credit history. However, it was commonly agreed that such difficulties are particularly pronounced for individuals with multiple criminal history records.

Addressing the issues that arise on a person's entry into prison CONT

The absence of basic insurance can exacerbate the vulnerabilities and financial exclusion faced by ex-prisoners. For instance, Kylie Ewing, a reintegration support worker with PARS Taranaki recounted a recent case where an individual lost their home and belongings in a fire caused by faulty wiring. Despite the fire being accidental and not the ex-prisoner's fault, the individual suffered the loss of both their dwelling and its contents. Compounding the situation, they did not have insurance coverage. Kylie highlighted to us: *"insurance is just not heard of within this world that I work in."*

Three respondents emphasised the difficulties prisoners face in obtaining vehicle insurance. One respondent noted, *"It's impossible to get vehicle insurance with criminal histories, particularly multiple criminal histories."* David Verry (North Harbour Budgeting) shared an instance:

"I had a client yesterday, and I asked, 'Do you have any insurance?' They replied, 'No, I don't have insurance.' Then I asked, 'Do you have third party insurance?' Again, they said no. This raised concerns for me about the protection of the general public. As we advise anyone, owning a car should come with the minimum requirement of third-party insurance, like what is mandated in overseas jurisdictions. If you are not carrying at least third-party insurance on your vehicle, then legally, your vehicle is not allowed on the road."

David suggested that insurers should adopt a model similar to what banks are implementing with bank accounts, encouraging them to offer insurance services to inmates. However, he acknowledged the challenges, noting, *"We could end up insuring individuals who have been involved in fraud, potentially engaging in insurance fraud. Understandably, no insurance company would willingly take on such risks. They have their registers, noting any attempts at deception. Consequently, those involved in fraud would find it exceedingly difficult to obtain insurance."*

He envisioned that insurance companies would be highly selective in their offerings, with many hesitating to provide insurance to this demographic. Nonetheless, he stressed the importance of insurance: *"While you might not have contents insurance, third-party vehicle insurance*

remains crucial. If an uninsured driver causes an accident, the innocent party has limited recourse. The responsibility falls squarely on the uninsured driver, leaving the other party with little means for compensation. It is a critical issue that needs addressing."

Additionally, it was highlighted that vehicles are an important part of people's experiences with law enforcement. Ex-prisoners may drive illegally (for example, without a licence or registration), increasing the likelihood of being pulled over, which can lead to potential negative interactions with the police. This reinforces the need for addressing the issue of (at least) third party insurance for ex-prisoners to prevent further legal and financial difficulties.

However, there is doubt about the usefulness and importance of insurance provision as an immediate priority

Despite these challenges, there is doubt about the usefulness of centralising information through a database for prison-experienced people. This scepticism stems from the belief that insurance may not be affordable or an immediate priority for individuals re-entering society from prison. Andrew Henderson (Dunedin Budget Advisory Service) expressed such scepticism about the necessity and practicality of an insurance providers database. He questioned its relevance given the priorities of individuals re-entering society from prison, suggesting that insurance might not be a top priority for them. Andrew indicated a lack of perceived value in prioritising insurance for ex-prisoners and echoed concerns about the limited benefits of such a database. Additionally, there are concerns about the practicality of establishing such a database and its effectiveness in addressing the underlying issues of accessibility. Charlotte Whitaker (also Dunedin Budget Advisory Service) emphasised individual company responsibility in providing insurance and questioned the practical benefits of a centralised database. She expressed a view that insurance is a basic right and suggested that such a database might not offer significant advantages and could potentially be exploited.

Conclusion

The analysis suggests that while there is acknowledgment of the challenges faced by ex-prisoners in obtaining insurance, there's also uncertainty about the necessity and practicality of establishing a database of insurance providers for this demographic. Despite the consensus that prison-experienced individuals encounter difficulties accessing basic insurance, and the importance for the general public of third-party vehicle insurance, doubts persist regarding the immediate priority of insurance for those re-entering society from prison, as well as the effectiveness and practicality of a centralised database. This scepticism is rooted in the belief that insurance may not be affordable or an immediate concern for these individuals. Additionally, there are concerns about the potentially limited benefits of such a database and the risk of exploitation of vulnerable consumers by insurance providers.

Implications:

- The recommendation to establish a database of insurance providers willing to offer services to individuals with a history of incarceration should be explored further.
- Respondent feedback suggests that establishing such a database may face challenges in implementation and may not fully address the underlying issues of accessibility and affordability of insurance for ex-prisoners.

Recommendation 10

A Code of Practice for debt collectors should be developed that covers treatment of debtors in prison: A code of practice should be developed for debt buyers and debt collectors, which includes guidance on how to deal fairly and compassionately with debtors in prison.

What we asked

Should a code of practice be developed for debt collectors, guiding their fair and compassionate treatment of debtors in prison?

What we heard

There was consensus among respondents regarding the necessity of fair treatment for debtors, especially prisoners, emphasising the need for more compassionate and humane treatment. However, perspectives differed on the need for a specific code of practice for prisoners as a subset of the indebted population. A considerable number of respondents advocated for broader guidelines encompassing all vulnerable groups, whereas others recommended more tailored measures. Concerns raised by those sceptical of the recommendation included the rigidity of a formal code, doubts regarding the enforceability of such guidelines, and concerns about the debt-collection industry's commitment to ethical conduct. Overall, while there is widespread agreement on fair treatment, variations in opinion exist regarding the scope and implementation of guidelines for debt collectors, reflecting nuanced considerations regarding the demands of fairness and practicality.

Addressing the issues that arise on a person's entry into prison CONT

Supporters of a Code of Practice highlighted the unique vulnerabilities of imprisoned debtors, and the need to protect their whanau from being unduly targeted

Supporters of implementing a code of practice advocate for its necessity due to the unique vulnerabilities faced by imprisoned debtors, emphasising the imperative to shield their families from undue targeting. Mary Sue Hopper, Principal Practice Adviser at Corrections, strongly endorsed the idea, emphasising fair treatment, particularly when debtors encounter challenges communicating with collectors while incarcerated. She told us that *“A code of practice is crucial to prevent undue punishment for debtors in prison and their families”*, underscoring the difficulties faced by imprisoned debtors in managing their financial obligations effectively.

Similarly, Hannah Kim (Barrister) highlighted the vulnerability of individuals in the criminal justice system and asserted the necessity of a code of practice to ensure equitable treatment from debt collectors. She emphasised the importance of fair and informed financial decision-making for those in precarious circumstances. Juan Kinnear (PARS Otago) also supported the concept of a code of practice, emphasising the importance of enabling prisoners to maintain contact and exercise financial agency while incarcerated, provided it guarantees fairness and transparency. His perspective stressed the need for transparent and equitable debt collection practices, particularly for vulnerable populations like prisoners. Overall, proponents of a code of practice stressed its potential role in safeguarding the rights and dignity of imprisoned debtors and their families, ensuring fair treatment and transparency in debt collection processes.

Others favoured a universal approach to regulation fair debt collection practices, whereas some respondents suggested a Code of Practice could be “too rigid”

While some stakeholders advocate for a universal approach to regulating fair debt collection practices, others express concerns about the potential rigidity of a formal code of practice. Fiona Terry of ANZ suggested that while a formal code might be too inflexible, there is a need for guidelines or standards to ensure equitable and compassionate treatment in debt collection. Her view highlights the necessity for adaptable frameworks to address the complexities of debt collection practices. Similarly, Dr Pushpa Wood (Director of the Financial Education and Research Centre at Massey University) and respondents from the Citizens Advice Bureau supported a universal code of practice but opposed one exclusively tailored for prisoners, emphasising inclusivity for all vulnerable groups, recognising that debt distress is not only experienced by prisoners. This stance, shared by many respondents, highlights the importance of considering the needs of vulnerable populations generally within the broader regulatory framework.

Respondents from ASB advocated for universal fair treatment, endorsing existing practices that prioritise fairness and compassion for all debtors (we understood this as a reference to practices within their own organisation). Reference was made to the legislative imperatives that govern debt recovery and the way banks are required to work constructively with distressed mortgagees. This reflects the banking industry's own approach to ethical conduct in debt collection. Wellington City Mission and the Banking Ombudsman Scheme share this perspective, supporting a code of practice that ensures fair and compassionate treatment for all debtors. Their focus on ongoing training and accountability highlighted a commitment to upholding ethical standards in debt collection, regardless of the debtor's background or situation.

Overall, while there is consensus on the necessity of fair treatment in debt collection where the debtor is in prison, stakeholders differ in their approaches to achieving it. Some advocate for tailored guidelines, while others emphasise universal ethical standards that apply to all debtors.

There were contrasting views on the role of ‘compassion’ in debt collection

Notably, the role of ‘compassion’ in debt collection elicited contrasting views, reflecting both support and concerns about its practical implementation. Mondy Jera (formerly of ThinkPlace) expressed scepticism about the feasibility of compassion in debt collection, noting, *“compassion might be questioned by debt collectors, but guidelines are necessary.”* Her comment highlights the challenges of embedding compassionate practices within an industry traditionally focused on enforcing obligations and financial recovery. Charlotte Whitaker (Dunedin Budget Advisory Service) argued for extending compassion to all debtors, advocating for comprehensive guidelines. Likewise, David Verry (North Harbour Budgeting) supported establishing a code of practice to enforce ethical conduct recognising, from experience, the industry’s uneven adherence to professional ethical standards.

These perspectives collectively illustrate the nuanced debate over integrating compassion into debt collection. They highlight the tension between the ideal of compassionate, ethical treatment and the practical realities of industry resistance and potential implementation challenges.

Conclusion

Analysis of stakeholder perspectives shows a consensus on the need for fairness and ethical guidelines in debt collection, yet there are differing views on how best to achieve and enforce these principles in practice and different perspectives on the scope, implementation, and enforceability of a proposed code of practice. Stakeholders agree on the need to protect the rights and dignity of imprisoned debtors, but there exists a diversity of opinion regarding the demands of fairness, compassion, and practicality within the debt collection industry.

Implications:

- There is widespread acknowledgment of the vulnerability of imprisoned debtors and the imperative to safeguard their rights and their families in relation to debt-collection practices.
- In collaboration with stakeholders, a code of practice for the debt-collection industry should be developed to balance fairness, compassion, and practical considerations, guaranteeing fair treatment for all debtors. This code should offer specific guidance on handling incarcerated individuals, alongside similar guidance on addressing other vulnerable debtors’ needs.

Addressing the issues that arise on a person's entry into prison CONT

Recommendation 11

MSD debt should be suspended: MSD will have been notified of the fact of incarceration of a person in receipt of a benefit and should suspend any MSD debt obligations of that person while they are incarcerated.

What we asked

Should the Ministry of Social Development suspend any debt obligations for people receiving benefits, while they are incarcerated?

What we heard

Advocates for suspending debt obligations to the Ministry of Social Development for incarcerated individuals argued for alignment in how prisoners' financial responsibilities and entitlements were managed across government departments. They noted MSD's automatic cessation of social security entitlements upon imprisonment and questioned the absence of a similar process to halt interest accrual on debts to the government during incarceration.

Conversely, concerns were voiced about potential abuse of suspension measures due to a perceived "entitlement mentality" among beneficiaries. Some advocated for a more case-by-case approach to determining eligibility for suspension as more appropriate. Moreover, systemic issues like the poverty-trap and debt accumulation were identified as complicating factors in decision-making. Mixed views arose regarding the fairness of suspension measures being made available to morally blameworthy, convicted prisoners, but not to "ordinary" "law-abiding" beneficiaries with debt to MSD. This discussion reflected the normative interplay of justice, social welfare, and rehabilitation objectives within the criminal justice system.

Supporters of debt suspension for prisoners advocated for alignment in how government departments treat prisoners' financial entitlements and obligations upon incarceration.

Respondents who supported the suspension of debt obligations to MSD during incarceration emphasised the importance of consistency across government agencies. Officials from Corrections highlighted that existing practices of agencies like IRD and Justice already suspend penalties during imprisonment. It was suggested that MSD should follow the same practice to avoid incurring interest on debts. Other respondents, including all who work in the financial mentoring sector emphasised the need for sensible decision-making, stressing the futility of burdening struggling individuals with additional debt. Juan Kinnear (PARS Otago) summarised the sentiment, stating that:

"There's very little purpose in forcing people who are struggling even further down the matter. And many of our clients [Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society] are burdened with very significant debts which makes it very hard for them once they come out of prison to just manage from day to day. So, while one could argue that "well, they have had the benefit of those particular goods and services, and like anybody else, they should be required to pay for what they use" a good dose of realism is probably due. Yeah, we can't just keep on piling interest and penalties on people when they have no way of digging themselves out of the hole."

Practical concerns and challenges were raised

Some respondents, including financial mentors from Wellington City Mission, expressed concerns about the practical implications of suspending debt obligations for incarcerated individuals. They raised questions about how compensation would be managed if debts were put on hold during imprisonment. Instead, they proposed a system whereby the Ministry of Social Development would suspend someone's benefit due to imprisonment, triggering alerts to other government departments to ensure the continuity of necessary services. They further advocated, upon release, for collaborative efforts between financial mentors and individuals to address and reduce the debt burden upon reinstating the benefit. Relatedly, Dr Pushpa Wood (Director of the Financial Education

and Research Centre at Massey University) suggested that suspension of debt obligations for incarcerated individuals should be considered on a case-by-case basis rather than implementing a blanket policy. She highlighted the importance of examining factors such as the type of debt and those who would be affected by its repayment. Pushpa advocated for clear guidelines but opposed a universal mandate to wipe out all prisoner debts, emphasising the need for individualised assessments, recognising that prisoners are not a homogenous, identically situated population.

Ceasing interest accrual could prevent further financial strain and better promote rehabilitation and reintegration

Organisations like Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Bay Financial Mentors highlighted the practical challenges faced by individuals in meeting financial obligations during incarceration. Like Pushpa Wood's recommendation for individualised assessment of a prisoner's financial position, respondents from CAB told us that pre-prison debts should remain unchanged (ie not incur interest or otherwise increase) unless the individual is capable of paying, for example if they are earning income. However, individuals should not be burdened with debts they cannot manage while in prison. One financial mentor from Bay Financial Mentors highlighted the challenge of meeting financial obligations with zero income, especially concerning child support arrears, which can accumulate interest and become burdensome. She called for a re-evaluation of the interest rate system that applies to debt-to-government, describing it as crippling for individuals. Another financial mentor at Bay Financial Mentors echoed these concerns, emphasising how financial burdens can hinder a person's rehabilitation and reintegration into society. They both discussed the numerous barriers faced by those re-entering society after incarceration, underscoring the importance of basic needs like accommodation and food as fundamental human rights.

The need for fairness for incarcerated and non-incarcerated debtors-to-government was also highlighted

One respondent acknowledged the tension between 'emotional' and 'taxpayer' perspectives on the matter. While the respondent leaned emotionally toward the idea of not accumulating more debt when an individual cannot pay — *"Yeah, like that doesn't make sense to rack*

up any more debt when there's nothing you can do to pay the debt right" — they also raised concerns about the broader issue of government debt owed by people in poverty. They highlighted the staggering amount of money owed by beneficiaries to the government, expressing frustration with the system and questioning its fairness. In highlighting the disparity between a person in prison receiving debt relief and a non-incarcerated individual not receiving any relief, this respondent touched on themes of justice and feasibility. They pointed out the inequity in the system, drawing a poignant comparison between a *"poor single mum"* who has not broken the law and a person in prison who receives debt relief, questioning the justice of such a scenario. They also emphasised the need to consider the poverty trap in such situations.

Conclusion

Except for one respondent, all stakeholders were supportive of suspending debt obligations to the Ministry of Social Development during incarceration. Many respondents advocated for consistency in handling prisoners' financial responsibilities across government departments. They highlighted the automatic cessation of social security entitlements by MSD upon imprisonment but questioned the absence of a similar process to halt interest accrual on government debts during incarceration. Practical challenges in managing debt obligations during incarceration were noted, with suggestions for case-by-case assessments and collaboration between financial mentors and individuals upon release. Additionally, the importance of fairness between incarcerated and non-incarcerated debtors was underscored.

Implications:

- As a priority, when a person receiving a benefit is incarcerated and has no expected income streams during their imprisonment, MSD should suspend any debt obligations owed by that individual.
- Alternatively, or as an interim solution, the existing application process for suspending debts to the government should be simplified and better communicated to prisoners upon their entry into custody.

Addressing the issues for a person who is in prison and not due to be released

Recommendation 12

Financial capability workshops should be run in prisons: Financial capability workshops should be run regularly in every prison. Some prisons currently run financial capability workshops, but a nationwide programme would ensure all prisoners have access to this form of learning. There are existing resources available (such as the MoneyMates financial literacy curriculum that was developed by MSD). These could be developed for use in prisons with the assistance of financial mentors.

What we asked

Should financial capability workshops be regularly conducted in all prisons, ensuring that prisoners have access to financial education?

What we heard

There is broad support for financial capability workshops in prisons

Respondents widely supported the proposal for financial capability workshops to be provided in all prisons, viewing them as essential components of comprehensive rehabilitation programmes. They emphasised the benefits of such workshops in preparing individuals for life after incarceration and addressing financial education gaps that may have contributed to their imprisonment. Various stakeholders, including representatives from ASB, Westpac, Kiwibank and ANZ, expressed strong support for these workshops, highlighting their potential positive impact on prisoners' reintegration into society. They stressed the importance of tailoring workshops to individual needs and ensuring accessibility for all prisoners, regardless of their conviction status or length of incarceration. Moreover, respondents underscored the need for practical advice on budgeting and financial planning to equip prisoners with essential skills for managing their finances post-release.

Financial education should be relevant

While most respondents support financial capability workshops in prisons, some expressed reservations about their effectiveness and relevance. One respondent questioned the primary focus on financial education. They highlighted that attributing financial challenges to a lack of money management skills is often misguided, citing the common refrain of telling disadvantaged individuals, "Oh, well, the problem is, you don't know how to budget your money." Rather, they suggested that addressing access to banking services may be a more crucial priority. Similarly, a mentor from Bay Financial Mentors also doubted the receptiveness of prisoners to such programmes if they lack interest, emphasising the importance of providing support when needed or requested. These concerns highlight the need for careful consideration of workshop content, timing, and delivery methods to maximise engagement and effectiveness.

Many respondents called for tailored support and practical assistance

Respondents also emphasised the importance of tailoring financial capability workshops to prisoners' specific needs and circumstances. They called for practical assistance and support, including opportunities for applying lessons learned and managing finances effectively. Additionally, respondents reiterated the need for ongoing reinforcement of financial skills throughout incarceration to better prepare individuals for their transition back into society. The emphasis on practical relevance and individualised support reflects a comprehensive approach to financial education in prisons, aiming to empower prisoners with the skills and knowledge needed for successful reintegration into the community.

Respondent organisations like Citizens Advice Bureau and PARS Wellington also suggested that participation should not be mandatory and emphasised the need for financial mentors or course providers to offer practical support to apply the lessons learned.

Resourcing and logistical support is needed to ensure success

Respondents also acknowledged logistical challenges and practical considerations in their implementation. Officials from Corrections mentioned staffing levels as a potential barrier, while respondents from Citizens Advice Bureau and other reintegration workers raised concerns about the uptake of workshops among prisoners. Respondents emphasised the need for clear guidelines, adequate resources, and collaboration between prison authorities, financial mentors, and other stakeholders to ensure the success of these workshops.

Conclusion

There is broad support for financial capability workshops in prisons. Stakeholders, including all the respondent banks, recognise the potential of these workshops to equip prisoners with essential financial skills for successful reintegration into society. However, concerns about effectiveness and relevance arose. Tailoring workshops to prisoners' specific needs and circumstances is widely identified as crucial, with an emphasis on providing practical assistance and support to apply learned skills effectively. Despite this support, logistical challenges such as staffing levels and prisoner participation remain significant considerations. Clear guidelines, adequate resources, and collaboration between prison authorities, financial mentors, and other stakeholders were also highlighted as essential for the successful implementation of these workshops.

Implications:

Recommendation 12 should be adopted and implemented in its entirety.

Addressing the issues for a person who is in prison and not due to be released CONT

Recommendation 13

All prisoners should be given the opportunity to set up a bank account while in prison: All prisoners (excluding those on remand or who are sentenced for less than 6 months in prison) who want one should be given the opportunity to set up a bank account. The account would be a basic account for depositing money into and transferring money out of. Restrictions might apply to persons who have been involved in fraud in the past. The account would not provide any access to credit or overdraft and would be fee free. It might be a specially designed 'basic bank account' like those offered in the UK and Australia, or it might be an account of a type already offered by the bank. Details of the type of account would be worked out with the banks who participate in the programme referred to in the next recommendation.

What we asked

Should all prisoners (except those on remand or sentenced for less than 6 months) be given the opportunity to set up a basic bank account while in prison?

What we heard

There is broad support for facilitating the setting up of basic bank accounts while incarcerated

Numerous stakeholders, including from Corrections, ANZ, Kiwibank, Banking Ombudsman Scheme, Wellington City Mission, Salvation Army and all the financial mentors and reintegration workers we spoke to strongly supported the proposal for prisoners' access to bank accounts, irrespective of their release status. They emphasised the importance of enabling prisoners to engage in legitimate financial activities to prevent their reliance on criminal networks upon release. Many

respondents recognised that access to banking services can help manage finances, save money, and aid in reintegration into society upon release.

Barrister Hannah Kim highlighted the necessity for prisoners to fulfil their financial obligations, such as supporting children or conducting legitimate transactions, even if they are serving long-term sentences. She noted instances where services for prisoners have been halted, such as weekly transfers to children, stressing prisoners' rights to maintain connections with their families. Similarly, David Verry (North Harbour Budgeting) gave anecdotal evidence of an instance where he was asked by the prison director at Paremoremo for assistance to open a bank account for a prisoner who was not due for release. The account was needed to enable receipt of a statutory compensation payment for harm which the individual had experienced in prison. However, the only available accounts belonged to the prisoner's gang-affiliated criminal associate. If the gentleman's payment was to be deposited into the associate's account, it was likely that he would lose control over the money, and it would defeat the purpose of his redress. No resolution was reached. The prisoner couldn't get a bank account. This example typifies the practical challenges faced by prisoners without banking access, especially those who are unlikely to be released.

Respondents from Corrections reported that case managers can assess individual situations and facilitate this process. Banks expressed qualified support, with Fiona Terry from ANZ highlighting the value of bank accounts for prisoners to manage finances and build stability, even with small amounts of money.

PARS Wellington supported the initiative, noting that it is already happening for long-term inmates through guided release programmes. Reintegration support worker, Adie Transom, explained that Corrections prefer not to hold large sums, and facilitating access through local banks has been cooperative. They suggested extending this support to all prisoners, especially those with lengthy sentences, who need financial management options.

A reintegration worker from PARS Taranaki encouraged a universal approach, noting that short-term and remand prisoners are also vulnerable, stating, *“The ones serving less than 2 years, or even as little as 6 months, are the ones who go back and forth and are most at risk and vulnerable to not having a bank account.”*

Westpac NZ noted that it already has a programme in place whereby Westpac has offered bank accounts to prisoners who are not due for release where they have a genuine need for an account at this stage of their sentence. See further, the comments on Recommendation 14.

Regulatory, safety, and security concerns were raised

Some respondents expressed mixed views and raised concerns about the feasibility and risks associated with providing banking services to prisoners not due for release.

Several stakeholders, including ASB and Pushpa Wood (Director of the Financial Education and Research Centre at Massey University), highlighted the practical challenges and logistical barriers to implementing the initiative effectively. ASB pointed out regulatory limitations and the need for collaboration between prison authorities and financial institutions to address these challenges. Pushpa Wood emphasised the potential value of case managers assisting prisoners in obtaining essential services like setting up a bank account but hesitated to mandate it as an obligation. She advocated for a systematic approach where every prisoner has access to necessary services, stressing the importance of collaboration between prisoners, prison authorities, and family members. These perspectives underscore the need for clear guidelines, adequate resources, and effective collaboration to overcome potential hurdles in implementing this proposed recommendation.

Reintegration support workers Juan Kinnear (PARS Otago) and Charlotte Whitaker (Dunedin Budget Advisory Service) also expressed reservations, highlighting potential security risks and challenges associated with managing individual accounts within the prison environment. Juan highlighted the existing process where prisons operate a single trust account, which could pose challenges if individuals were to access their own bank accounts. While he sees the theoretical benefit of this proposal, like ASB’s

observation about the risk of intimidatory tactics, Juan emphasised the need to carefully consider safety implications, particularly regarding vulnerability and victimisation within the prison environment. He advised proceeding with caution due to the potential for exploitation and victimisation among inmates. Charlotte emphasised the potential risks associated with prisoners having bank accounts while incarcerated, suggesting that it could expose them to coercion or threats from other inmates seeking access to their funds. Charlotte and Andrew Henderson (also Dunedin Budget Advisory Service) suggested a compromise, proposing a shorter timeframe (less than six months, preferably a few weeks before release) for setting up bank accounts to balance safety concerns with facilitating timely access to banking pre-release.

Other respondents favoured a more individualised, case-by-case approach to facilitating access

Several respondents favoured an individualised approach to providing banking services to prisoners, considering factors such as sentence length, readiness for release, and specific needs. Pushpa Wood and Citizen Advice Bureau suggested considering each prisoner’s circumstances on a case-by-case basis to determine the appropriate timing and level of support for setting up bank accounts. Bay Financial Mentors emphasised the need for safeguards and practical solutions to prevent misuse of funds and ensure responsible financial management.

Some opposition to prisoner banking noted the potential for undermining imprisonment’s punitive dimension

A minority of stakeholders advocated for alternative approaches to managing prisoners’ finances. Charlotte Whitaker (Dunedin Budget Advisory Service) suggested the establishment of separate banking systems within Corrections, proposing that prisoners’ financial access should be limited until their release. She argued that this would prevent any perception of undermining the punitive dimension of imprisonment. Another respondent echoed this sentiment, asserting that banking services should only be made available at the end of prisoners’ sentences to ensure that the correctional system’s rehabilitative and punitive goals are maintained.

Addressing the issues for a person who is in prison and not due to be released CONT

Conclusion

Most of the stakeholders supported allowing all prisoners (excluding those on remand or with sentences under six months) to set up basic bank accounts in prison. They argued this promotes financial inclusion and helps prisoners manage finances for eventual reintegration. However, concerns from ASB and other respondents highlight regulatory hurdles and safety risks like coercion and misuse of funds within prisons. Some advocate for individualised approaches to banking access based on prisoners' circumstances. Overall, while there is consensus on the benefits, addressing regulatory, safety, and logistical challenges will be crucial in implementing this proposal to ensure that balance financial autonomy with prison and personal security.

Implications:

- Recommendation 13 should be prioritised and fully adopted.
- Close collaboration between prison authorities, financial institutions, and other stakeholders is crucial for the successful implementation of a proposal allowing prisoners (not due for release) to set up bank accounts.
- The proposal for a designated bank for unbanked persons who are repeatedly declined by banks could be explored. However at least one bank stressed that it would be preferable for all major banks to be involved in onboarding these customers, not only so that risk can be spread among all banks, but also as this would also give the prisoners choice.
- To assist with addressing regulatory and security concerns highlighted by stakeholders, banks could introduce a specially designed 'basic bank account'. This account would allow deposits and withdrawals without offering credit or overdraft facilities. It should be fee-free and tailored to prevent misuse by individuals with past fraud involvement. The account could resemble those offered in the UK and Australia or align with existing bank offerings, with specific details to be determined in collaboration with participating banks.

Recommendation 14

All major banks should participate in a programme that offered prisoners' bank accounts. All major banks would agree to be part of a programme that offered accounts to persons in prison not due for release.

What we asked

Should all major banks participate in a programme that offers bank accounts to prisoners who are not due for release?

What we heard

Much of the same concerns expressed in relation to the previous recommendation were repeated here, in particular by banks. Westpac NZ noted that for over a year, Westpac has been offering bank accounts to prisoners who are not due for release where they have a genuine need for an account at this stage of their sentence. These requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If approved, the bank account options are tailored to the individual's need as for any customer, via a video interview. More than 30 prisoners have been onboarded under this initiative.

Practical challenges and risks were highlighted by banks and other stakeholders

Respondents from ASB expressed mixed views and concerns about the practicalities and potential risks associated with providing banking access to prisoners. They generally supported the idea but raise concerns about account management logistics, security of funds, and the potential burden on bank staff. This respondent advocated for careful consideration and individualised assessment rather than blanket policies.

One respondent from a bank raised concerns about managing accounts, ensuring fund safety, and the strain on staff, while another emphasised the need for discretion in establishing relationships with clients. Fiona Terry from ANZ acknowledged the challenges but supported the recommendation for maximal inclusivity in banking services, recognising prisoners' rights and needs despite the potential unprofitability of prisoners not eligible for release as customers.

Many of the respondents from banks stated a preference for achieving financial inclusion for all prisoners through facilitative mechanisms that preserve the bank's discretion, rather than through coercive policies or regulation.

One interviewee suggested that while major banks should participate in the proposal to offer bank accounts to prisoners who are not due for release, regulation should be avoided in favour of strategies like pressuring banks into participation.

Concerns over fund misuse and potentially undermining incarceration's punitive aspect were raised by opponents of the proposal

For much the same reasons as discussed in analysis of the previous recommendation, a minority of respondents including Charlotte Whitaker and Andrew Henderson (both Dunedin Budget Advisory Service) opposed the proposal for major banks to participate in the programme to offer bank accounts to prisoners who are not due for release. They argued that prisoners should not have access to banking services until they are due for release, citing concerns about misuse of funds and potentially undermining the punitive aspect of incarceration. They suggested having alternative banking systems within Corrections facilities that would limit financial activities.

Conclusion

There is broad (but not unanimous) support for the general proposal for prisoners' access to bank accounts, irrespective of their release status. Stakeholders in support of the proposal emphasised the importance of enabling prisoners to engage in legitimate financial activities to prevent their reliance on criminal networks upon release. Others placed emphasis on the necessity for prisoners to fulfil financial obligations and maintain family connections, highlighting instances where current limitations have proven detrimental. However, banks and other stakeholders have raised significant challenges and concerns regarding implementation and risk management, advocating for careful consideration and individualised approaches. There is a divergence of opinion regarding whether this proposal - facilitating prisoners' access to bank accounts, in general - should be voluntary or coercive for banks, with some advocating for incentivising banks' voluntary participation over regulation.

Implications:

- Recommendation 14 should be investigated further and banks' concerns about the proposal explored and if possible addressed.
- Corrections should collaborate with major banks to develop guidelines and protocols to address concerns around fund misuse and operational risks.
- The proposal for a designated bank for unbanked persons who are repeatedly declined by banks could be explored further. The preferable position would be for all major banks to be involved in onboarding these customers.

Addressing the issues for a person who is in prison and not due to be released CONT

Recommendation 15

Proof of address met by PIP documents: All banks would agree to use the prison PIP of a prisoner as the proof of address.

What we asked

Should the prison PIP (Personal Identification Papers) serve as proof of address for prisoners opening bank accounts?

What we heard

Most respondents, including those from Corrections, Banking Ombudsman Scheme, and Citizens Advice Bureau expressed support for using PIPs as proof of address. We heard that Prison Identification Papers are accessible, free of charge, and comprehensive. We were told that a PIP can be accessed by probation and staff, is simply presented and easy-to-understand, and has an up-to-date photo. It says when that was generated and has the signature of the issuing Corrections officer.

PIPs are already being accepted as proof of address by some banks, but practice is not uniform

Respondents from ASB confirmed that PIPs can serve as proof of address for prisoners seeking to open bank accounts. This process is facilitated through an exceptions process already in place, whereby if an incarcerated individual cannot provide satisfactory ID or address verification, documents from the prison, such as PIPs, can suffice. Overall, ASB emphasised that this practice is already in place and followed by most banks. An interviewee from another bank (ANZ) indicated that broader recognition across banks of PIPs as valid proof of address would align with efforts to simplify banking procedures and enhance financial inclusion for prisoners.

Challenges with using PIPs as proof of address were also raised

Despite overall support, some respondents expressed concerns and highlighted challenges associated with using PIPs as proof of address. Wellington City Mission raised issues related to stability and reliability, noting that prisoners may lack stable accommodation upon release, which makes PIPs unreliable for establishing residence. Hannah Kim (Barrister) shared that many

of her clients have resorted to using their bail bond as proof of address due to a lack of alternatives, mentioning that some clients have never held essential documents like birth certificates or driving licences.

Some financial mentors and reintegration workers from Wellington City Mission argued against PIPs serving as proof of address for opening bank accounts, citing prisoners' frequent struggles in finding stable accommodation upon release. They proposed that individuals should establish a stable residence before being allowed to open a bank account and suggested that banks could work directly with prisoners *upon their release* to manage accounts. They advocated for addressing these stability concerns proactively before enabling prisoners to open bank accounts, proposing alternative approaches to account management upon release.

Kiwibank reported that while Steps to Freedom documentation given to prisoners is currently accepted as a secondary form of ID and can be considered on its own as part of the ID exception process, there needs to be an assessment of whether PIPs could serve as proof of address for opening bank accounts. We were told that the bank needs to be sure that identification documents are authentic to ensure they meet official standards. In contrast to two of the other banks we spoke with, in Kiwibank's viewpoint, personal identification papers from prison cannot serve as proof of address for opening bank accounts after release, as the individual no longer resides in the prison. However, some documentation provided by the Ministry of Justice to the released prisoner does have an address they are expected to reside at. Kiwibank would accept this as proof of address. Kiwibank noted that address requirements are for proof of residence, not merely a service address. Kiwibank supports the MOJ proposed changes in AML-CFT legislation to eliminate the need for proof of address altogether to address issues faced by vulnerable communities.

Relatedly, respondents from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme questioned the necessity of proof of address rules in banking onboarding rules. They suggested that requirements should focus more on verifying identity than on where someone lives. They recommended exploring alternatives, such as coordinating with government agencies or utilising existing identification mechanisms, to streamline banking procedures and enhance financial inclusion for prisoners.

The need to streamline banking procedures and enhance financial inclusion was also emphasised

The need to streamline banking procedures and enhance financial inclusion was also emphasised. Many respondents highlighted the importance of simplifying banking procedures and promoting financial inclusion for prisoners. They argue that expanding the list of acceptable identification documents to include PIPs would streamline the process for prisoners and reduce unnecessary delays. Recognising PIPs as valid proof of address would enable banks to facilitate access to banking services for prisoners, thereby aiding their successful reintegration into society.

Other respondents highlighted the challenges faced by homeless individuals without a fixed address, emphasising the need to simplify banking procedures and eliminate barriers for prisoners, especially those experiencing homelessness or vulnerability. By accepting PIPs as proof of address, banks could potentially, to some extent, address these challenges and promote financial inclusion for all individuals, regardless of their housing situation.

Conclusion

While there are challenges and concerns to address, the overall sentiment among respondents was supportive of enhancing financial inclusion and streamlining banking procedures for prisoners. PIPs are already being used by some banks as proof of address as part of AML-CFT exception procedures. Broader adoption of this practice by all banks could facilitate greater access to banking services, promote financial inclusion, and contribute to the successful reintegration of prisoners into society.

Implications:

- Building on current practices by some banks, acceptance of PIPs as proof of address as part of AML-CFT exception procedures should become more uniform across banks. To foster regulatory certainty, guidance on this should be provided by the Reserve Bank.
- Any regulatory proof of address requirements in banking contexts for AML-CFT purposes should be reviewed and potentially eliminated. Modern bank onboarding processes should focus on verifying identity rather than place of residence.

Recommendation 16

Costs of getting ID documents to be met by Corrections All the costs of getting the prisoner's ID documents (the birth certificate, a Kiwi Access card and any required photos) would be met by Corrections.

What we asked

To support access to banking, should the Government provide the necessary resources to ensure that every prisoner has the required identification documents (like a birth certificate and photo ID) before they are released, and cover all associated costs?

What we heard

Many respondents acknowledged the critical role identification documents play in the successful reintegration of prisoners into society. Many respondents, including those from Corrections and the banks emphasised that access to identification facilitates engagement with essential services, including banking, employment, and social welfare. They highlighted that providing identification before release is essential for empowering individuals to navigate life post-incarceration effectively.

Many expressed support for the Government's role in providing resources for ID

Most respondents expressed support for the Government's role in providing resources and covering costs associated with obtaining identification documents for prisoners before their release. They argued that the Government has a duty to ensure that individuals leaving prison have the necessary tools to reintegrate successfully into society.

Respondents from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme emphasised that government intervention is crucial to address barriers to banking access and financial inclusion for released prisoners. They advocated for covering these costs as part of the exiting process, ensuring basic needs are met before release. Similarly, interviewees from Citizens Advice Bureau suggested

Addressing the issues for a person who is in prison and not due to be released CONT

that Corrections could use access to the Births, Deaths, and Marriages database to assist with obtaining ID documents and cover associated costs.

While there is substantial support, some stakeholders pointed out practical and administrative challenges which should be considered. They stressed the need for collaboration and efficient processes to manage the workload and ensure prisoners can retain their documents upon release.

Opponents of government provision of free ID emphasised personal responsibility

While many respondents supported government intervention, a very small minority believed that prisoners should be responsible for covering the cost of obtaining identification documents, such as birth certificates and photo IDs, for moral and accountability reasons. They acknowledged that most prisoners have some funds available but might choose not to spend it on IDs if left to their discretion. One respondent proposed that either spending money on IDs should be mandatory, or the Government should intervene to ensure it gets done, stressing the importance of prisoners taking responsibility for this task themselves.

An allied viewpoint stressed the necessity of having identification upon release, noting that the cost of obtaining such documents is around \$70. This respondent agreed that having identification is essential for reintegration into society. Similarly, it was suggested that Corrections should ensure prisoners prioritise obtaining their IDs, either through mandated spending or government assistance.

Respondents from Wellington City Mission and Salvation Army Reintegration Services acknowledged concerns about the potential impact of providing items for free, which could diminish a sense of ownership and the personal imperative to “look after” the ID. However, the City Mission staff strongly argued that having documents is crucial for ex-prisoners’ reintegration into society and that this should outweigh personal responsibility concerns.

Almost all of the interviewees were agnostic about which agency, whether Corrections or the Ministry of Social Development, should cover the costs associated with obtaining ID documents. However, a respondent from Wellington City Mission did mention the possibility of an arrangement whereby Corrections invoiced MSD for the costs of obtaining the ID documentation from the Department of Internal Affairs but did note that a pool of funding from a single government department might be more feasible.

Conclusion

The feedback strongly supported the proposal for Corrections to cover all costs associated with obtaining identification documents for prisoners before their release. Key stakeholders, including Corrections, banks, the Banking Ombudsman Scheme, and Citizens Advice Bureau, emphasised the critical role of identification in facilitating prisoners’ successful reintegration into society. They highlighted that access to ID is essential for engaging with vital services such as banking, employment, and social welfare post-incarceration. While there is robust support for government intervention in providing resources for ID documents, some stakeholders highlighted practical challenges, such as administrative burdens and ensuring document retention upon release. Despite these concerns, the majority consensus favours Corrections taking responsibility for these costs to ensure a seamless transition and effective rehabilitation for prisoners. Opponents of free ID provision raised arguments around personal responsibility, suggesting that prisoners should bear the costs themselves to foster accountability.

Implications:

Recommendation 16 should be adopted to address key barriers to banking access and societal reintegration for released prisoners. It supports rehabilitation efforts and aims to reduce socio-economic disparities post-incarceration, highlighting the Government’s important role in facilitating a successful transition back into society for former inmates.

Recommendation 17

Banks and Corrections to work together to develop a bespoke form of ID for prisoners:

The major banks, the Reserve Bank, the NZ Banking Association and Corrections should work together to develop a tailored form of ID that would be acceptable by banks in relation to applications from prisoners. This would replace what is currently required by banks, namely the birth certificate and a form of photo ID such as a Kiwi Access card. The UK UNLOCKing Banking programme ID provides a model that can be followed and adapted for NZ use. The Identity Verification Code of Practice could be amended to provide for the specific form of ID that was considered to be acceptable for persons in prison.

What we asked

Should banks and Corrections collaborate to develop a specific form of ID for prisoners that is acceptable to banks?

What we heard

There was a strong preference for generic IDs

Respondents predominantly preferred generic IDs over prisoner-specific ones. Many interviewees favoured generic IDs, like a drivers' licence, arguing they offer more versatility and are less stigmatising.

Concerns about stigmatisation and preserving prisoners' dignity were prevalent. Respondents from Wellington City Mission, Salvation Army Reintegration Services, Citizens Advice Bureau, and Bay Financial Mentors highlighted that prison-specific IDs could undermine prisoners' dignity and hinder reintegration.

While most respondents favoured generic IDs, some, like Juan Kinnear (PARS Otago) and Pushpa Wood (Director of the Financial Education and Research Centre at Massey University), had mixed views. Juan was open to banks and Corrections developing a specific ID for prisoners if it facilitated access to services, and he acknowledged the need for financial assistance without specifying who should cover the costs. Pushpa saw potential benefits in having a bespoke form of ID but raised concerns about taxpayer burdens which may arise from having to fund the development, production and distribution of a new ID product.

Conclusion

In summary, while the majority support generic IDs for their versatility and reduced stigma, some respondents have mixed views or practical concerns about developing and funding a bespoke alternative.

Implications:

The proposal for a bespoke form of ID for prisoners should not be progressed. Instead, the opportunity for prisoners to acquire generic IDs, namely a birth certificate and a form of photo ID such as a drivers' licence or the Kiwi Access card, should be prioritised and made available pre-release.

Addressing the issues for a person who is in prison and not due to be released CONT

Recommendation 18

Certification of documents could be done by the prison officers: Any ID documents that have to be certified as true and correct should be able to be certified by a prison officer at an appropriate level of seniority (for example, a senior Corrections Officer). This practice could be recognised in the Identity Verification Code of Practice.

What we asked

Should prison officers be authorised to certify documents as true and correct for prisoners?

What we heard

Authorising Corrections officers to certify documents could streamline administrative processes to acquiring ID

There was a predominant theme of support for the authorising of prison officers, particularly Principal Corrections Officers (PCOs), to certify documents for ID purposes. It was widely suggested that involving Corrections officers in certifying documents could alleviate bottlenecks and delays, especially in cases where finding an appropriate identifier outside the prison environment is challenging. This perspective is highlighted by respondents from Corrections and banks, who emphasised the potential efficiency gains of empowering prison officers in this capacity.

However, there were significant concerns about potential corruption and fraud

Some respondents expressed reservations about authorising prison officers and raised concerns about the risk of corruption and fraudulent activity. Hannah Kim (Barrister) and Wellington City Mission (WCM) were particularly vocal about these concerns, citing past experiences of deceptive conduct by prison officers and emphasising the need for rigorous checks and processes to ensure authenticity. WCM suggested that higher-ranking officers, such as PCOs, could be authorised occasionally due to their seniority, experience and level of trust but expressed apprehension about extending this authority to all prison officers.

Relatedly, other respondents with experience working in prisons also highlighted the importance of considering the status and trustworthiness of prison officers when discussing authorisation for document certification. They too, also suggested that higher-ranking officers, such as PCOs, might be better suited for this role due to their seniority, experience, and level of trust and authority within the prison system. David Verry (North Harbour Budgeting) compared the potential role of experienced prison officers to that of Justices of the Peace or lawyers in witnessing documents, emphasising their trustworthiness and reliability in acting in this capacity.

Some respondents offered mixed views on the issue, considering factors such as the potential benefits of streamlining administrative processes as balanced against concerns about corruption and fraud. Juan Kinnear (PARS Otago) acknowledged the challenges faced by prison-experienced clients in obtaining certified documents and expressed tentative support for empowering prison officers if it can mitigate administrative burdens for prisoners.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis shows mixed opinions on authorising prison officers to certify documents for prisoners. Supporters, mainly from Corrections and banks, highlight potential efficiency gains, especially if Principal Corrections Officers (PCOs) were so authorised. However, significant concerns about corruption and fraud are raised by various stakeholders. They suggested rigorous checks and limiting the authority to higher-ranking officers to ensure trust and reliability. While some acknowledge the administrative benefits, the consensus leaned towards a cautious approach, authorising only trusted senior officers and implementing stringent verification processes.

Implications:

- Only higher-ranking prison officers, such as Principal Corrections Officers, should be authorised to certify documents for prisoners.⁵
- Rigorous checks and processes should be implemented to ensure authenticity and to mitigate risks of corruption and fraud, thereby safeguarding trust and confidence in the ID verification system. This approach balances the need for streamlining administrative processes with maintaining trust and integrity.

Recommendation 19

Banks would have immunity in law from loss or damage caused by messaging between prisoners using their bank transactions, if all reasonable steps have been taken by the bank to prevent this occurring.

Banks would not be responsible in the event that persons in prison used their bank account transactions to message criminals. However, this immunity would only apply if the bank had taken all reasonable steps to prevent this occurring.

What we asked

Should banks be immune from liability if prisoners use their bank accounts for illegal activities, as long as the banks have taken reasonable precautions?

What we heard

There was broad opposition to the proposal for immunity from liability

Many respondents opposed granting banks immunity from liability when prisoners use their accounts for illegal activities. They emphasised the necessity of clear regulations and rigorous due diligence to mitigate risks associated with banking prisoners. Respondents, including from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme, stressed equal standards and accountability across all account holders. They argued that immunity could lead to unfair treatment and overlook individual circumstances, advocating instead for addressing underlying financial challenges and maintaining banks' responsibility.

⁵ Westpac NZ told us that Principal Corrections Officers have been authorised to certify documents since at least April 2021.

Addressing the issues for a person who is in prison and not due to be released CONT

There were varying levels of trust in banks' risk management capabilities and their ability to handle risks associated with serving prisoners.

Respondents exhibited diverse levels of confidence in banks' abilities to manage risks associated with providing banking services to prisoners. Those who supported granting immunity under strict conditions, such as Kylie Ewing (PARS Taranaki) and Mondy Jera (formerly of ThinkPlace), argued that banks should be shielded from liability if they have implemented reasonable precautions. They noted that providing such legal protection can foster trust within the banking sector, encouraging banks to responsibly take on some level of risk in respect of the unbanked, prison-experienced population.

Conversely, others like respondents from ASB and David Verry (North Harbour Budgeting) were in favour of maintaining accountability through existing monitoring mechanisms rather than introducing new legal immunities. They contended that banks should continue to uphold robust standards of risk management and regulatory compliance. This approach prioritises the effectiveness of current regulatory frameworks in identifying and preventing illegal activities, thus ensuring that banks remain vigilant without the need for additional legal protections. By relying on established monitoring practices, these respondents argue for a cautious approach that balances the imperative of financial inclusivity with the imperative of maintaining financial integrity and consumer protection.

The tension between maximising financial inclusion while managing risk was apparent across all responses

The tension between promoting financial inclusion and managing risks is apparent across the spectrum of responses. Stakeholders uniformly supported initiatives aimed at enhancing access to banking services, yet concerns persist regarding the implications of serving individuals with a history of (in particular) financial crimes. Wellington City Mission proposed a middle-ground solution by advocating for the provision of

restricted basic accounts. This approach aims to mitigate risks associated with serving prisoners while ensuring essential banking access. By striking this balance between inclusivity and risk management, stakeholders seek to safeguard both consumers and financial institutions from potential harm.

In contrast, respondents from PARS Wellington challenged the notion of granting immunity. They argued for a system that holds banks accountable for any fraud-related activities, promoting equitable treatment and consumer protection. Their stance prioritises what they saw as the Government's role in supporting ex-prisoners' reintegration into society through access to vital services like banking. This perspective emphasises the importance of a compassionate and equitable approach in addressing the financial needs of former prisoners, while also upholding standards of fairness and accountability within the banking sector.

Practical challenges of implementing an immunities regime were also highlighted

Respondents highlighted practical challenges and implementation issues associated with granting banks immunity from liability. They pointed out difficulties such as defining what constitutes "reasonable precautions," operationalising regulatory requirements, and ensuring compliance with existing laws and regulations. Many expressed scepticisms about the feasibility of effectively implementing such measures without clear guidelines and extensive consultation.

Adie Transom, from PARS Wellington, emphasised that banks encounter fraud risks daily, regardless of whether the account holder is a prisoner. She questioned the rationale behind absolving banks of liability solely in relation to accounts opened for prisoners, citing potential unfairness in such a policy. Adie advocated instead for a system where banks are held accountable for any fraud-related activities, regardless of the criminal history of the account holder.

Conclusion

The consensus among stakeholders largely leans against introducing immunity in law from loss or damage caused by messaging between prisoners using their bank transactions (even if all reasonable steps have been taken by the bank to prevent this occurring). While some stakeholders acknowledge the complexities and practical challenges involved in balancing financial inclusion with risk management, there is a prevailing sentiment that granting immunity could undermine accountability and fairness in banking practices. The emphasis remains on robust regulatory frameworks, clear guidelines, and effective risk mitigation strategies to safeguard against misuse of banking services, ensuring equitable treatment and consumer protection across all account holders.

Implications:

- The recommendation for introducing immunity in law from loss or damage caused by messaging between prisoners or between prisoners and criminals using their bank transactions if all reasonable steps have been taken by the bank, should not be prioritised at this stage. It requires further study and broader consultation to address concerns raised regarding fairness, accountability, and practical implementation challenges.
- A “regulatory sandbox” approach for developing this proposed regulatory immunity should be considered. This approach should involve collaborative efforts among banks, the Banking Association, and the Council of Financial Regulators. It would allow for controlled testing and refinement of the immunity framework, ensuring that adequate safeguards are in place to mitigate risks associated with banking prisoners who might otherwise be unbanked.

Addressing the issues for a person who is due for release or parole

Recommendation 20

Financial capability workshops should be run regularly in every prison.

Some prisons currently run financial capability workshops, but a nationwide programme would ensure all prisoners have access to this form of learning. There are existing resources available (such as the MoneyMates financial literacy curriculum that was developed by MSD). These could be developed for use in prisons with the assistance of financial mentors.

What we asked

Should financial capability workshops be regularly conducted in all prisons, ensuring that prisoners have access to financial education?

What we heard

Stakeholder feedback on this recommendation closely aligns with that analysed in relation to Recommendation 12.

Stakeholders' consensus supports the recommendation for regular financial capability workshops in all prisons to enhance inmates' financial literacy and aid their reintegration. Stakeholders acknowledged the prevalent lack of financial literacy and skill among prisoners

and stressed that workshops could empower inmates to make informed financial decisions upon release. While some prisons currently offer such programmes, stakeholders stressed the necessity of a nationwide initiative to ensure consistent access across all facilities. They supported the suggestion utilising resources like the MSD-designed MoneyMates financial literacy curriculum, with guidance from financial mentors, to facilitate this rollout.

Despite widespread support, stakeholders expressed concerns about logistical challenges such as staffing, funding, and effectively delivering workshops in diverse prison environments. Some stakeholders doubt whether financial education alone can fully address the deeper financial issues prisoners face. However, stakeholders agreed on the importance of tailoring education to meet inmates' diverse needs, providing practical guidance and opportunities for skill application.

Conclusion

Overall, stakeholders viewed financial capability workshops as integral to broader efforts in prisoner rehabilitation, ensuring inmates are equipped with the necessary skills and support to navigate financial challenges effectively beyond their incarceration.

Implications:

Recommendation 20 should be adopted and implemented in its entirety.

Recommendation 21

Pre-release obligation on case manager to assist every prisoner to get ID and a bank account set up

Case managers should be required to go through a pre-release checklist no later than 6 months prior to release or date of parole hearing. The checklist should include asking does the person have ID and a bank account, and if not, the case manager should assist the prisoner through all the steps required to get an account open before release/parole. This would include getting the requisite ID documents and assisting with filling in all the forms required for the bank account application. The bank account number would be made available to the prisoner on their release.

The account would be a basic account for depositing money into and transferring money out of. Restrictions might apply to persons who have been involved in fraud in the past. The account would most likely not provide any access to credit or overdraft and would be fee free. It might be a specially designed 'basic bank account' similar to those offered in the UK and Australia, or it might be an account of a type already offered by the bank. Details of the type of account would be worked out with the banks who participate in the programme referred to in the next recommendation.

If a person is incarcerated for less than 6 months or is on remand the case manager would provide the prisoner with information on how to get ID and set up an account and refer the prisoner to an agency that could assist the prisoner on release.⁶

What we asked

Should case managers be obligated to assist every prisoner in obtaining ID and setting up a bank account at least 6 months before their release or parole hearing?

What we heard

There is high-level support for assisting every prisoner in obtaining ID and setting up a bank account before release

There was widespread agreement among respondents on the importance of assisting prisoners in obtaining ID and setting up bank accounts well in advance of their release or parole hearings. This preparation is seen as essential for facilitating successful reintegration into society, reducing the risk of recidivism, and promoting financial stability upon release. Notably, Chris Ellmers, Senior Practice Adviser at the Department of Corrections, drawing on his experience as a case manager, highlighted recent improvements in the process of assisting prisoners to acquire ID as part of their pre-release preparation and emphasised the positive impact of such interventions in places where they have been piloted. He noted that the proposed obligation to assist every prisoner in obtaining ID and setting up a bank account at least six months before their release or parole hearing "*should be part of the normal [Business as Usual]*" across the Corrections system.

Concerns were expressed about the practicality of obligating case managers to assist every prisoner

Similar to previous discussion regarding imposing obligations on prison officers, while there is consensus on the importance of pre-release preparation, some respondents expressed concerns about the practicality of obligating case managers to assist every prisoner in this process. Resource constraints, including heavy workloads and limited staffing, were identified as significant challenges that case managers face in fulfilling their responsibilities effectively. Respondents highlighted the need for adequate resources and support to enable case managers to assist prisoners in obtaining ID and setting up bank accounts in a timely manner.

⁶ Our rationale for excluding remand and short term sentenced prisoners from our recommendations was that there would not be time to get an account set up for a person that was only incarcerated for a short period. Some of the assumptions behind this rationale will be tested in a related research project on the issues faced by custodial remand prisoners, currently being conducted in the Centre for Justice Innovation New Zealand. See further, <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/law/news-and-events/news/new-law-reform-project-to-focus-on-bail-and-custodial-remand-practices-in-aotearoa>.

Addressing the issues for a person who is due for release or parole CONT

There are differing perspectives on proposed timelines and responsibilities

Various perspectives were also offered regarding the timeline and responsibilities associated with assisting prisoners in obtaining ID and setting up bank accounts. Suggestions range from three to six months before release or parole hearings, with some advocating for these tasks to be explicitly included in case managers' job descriptions. There is, however, a consensus that this assistance should be proactive and systematic, ensuring that every prisoner has access to these essential services well in advance of their release.

Some preferred a collaborative approach over imposing an obligation on officers

Several respondents emphasised the importance of collaboration and support systems in facilitating pre-release preparation for prisoners. Some respondents supported the proposed obligation and mention efforts to reduce barriers and improve process efficiency. Others, such as Pushpa Wood (Director of the Financial Education and Research Centre at Massey University), advocated for a collaborative approach involving prisoners, prison authorities, families, and external stakeholders to ensure necessary services are provided effectively. The Wellington City Mission highlighted the practical desirability of starting the process six months prior, allowing ample time to navigate potential complications or any unforeseen 'hiccups' in a pre-release process. Overall, respondents stressed the need for a system that guarantees access to essential services, like obtaining ID and setting up bank accounts, for every prisoner, regardless of individual circumstances.

While many respondents supported the idea of obligating case managers to assist every prisoner in obtaining ID and setting up bank accounts, others advocated for a more nuanced approach. Some believed that while case managers should be expected to assist, they should not necessarily be obligated

to do so. There was a degree of debate about the extent to which case managers' responsibilities should be mandated, with some emphasising the need for flexibility and discretion in determining appropriate support measures for individual prisoners.

Conclusion

While there is consensus on the significance of these tasks for successful reintegration into society, there are differing perspectives on the practicality of obligating case managers to assist every prisoner in this process. Resource constraints, proposed timelines, responsibilities, and the role of collaboration and support systems are key considerations in determining how best to facilitate pre-release preparation for prisoners and promote their successful transition back into the community.

Implications:

- Recommendation 21 should be implemented in its entirety. Case managers should be required to assist prisoners in obtaining ID and setting up a bank account at least six months before their release or parole hearing. This six-month period allows time to address any issues or challenges that may arise during the pre-release preparation.
- The Government and / or Corrections should allocate necessary resources and provide the needed training to case managers to handle these additional responsibilities effectively.
- In addition to introducing the obligation to assist prisoners in obtaining ID and setting up a bank account in a process that starts at least six months before their release or parole hearing, Corrections should continue to foster a collaborative approach involving prisoners, prison authorities, families, and external stakeholders to ensure efficient and effective provision of pre-release services.

Recommendation 22

All major banks should participate in a programme that offered prisoners' bank accounts

All major banks would agree to be part of a programme that offered accounts to persons in prison due for release.

What we asked

Should all major banks participate in a programme that offers bank accounts to prisoners who are due for release?

What we heard

There is broad support for major banks' participation

Respondents across various sectors expressed strong endorsement for major banks participating in a programme that facilitates the provision of bank accounts to prisoners due for release. They emphasised the dual benefits of facilitating legitimate financial activities and supporting prisoners in responsible financial management as they prepare to reintegrate into society. This support was grounded in the belief that such initiatives contribute to successful reintegration. For instance, Chris Ellmers, Senior Practice Adviser at the Department of Corrections, underscored the transformative impact of Westpac's initiative, New Start, a collaboration between Westpac and Corrections aimed at supporting prisoner reintegration and promoting greater inclusion in New Zealand's banking system. Ellmers noted:

Recent initiatives to assist prisoners with obtaining ID and setting up bank accounts have shown promising results. This proactive approach not only equips individuals with essential tools for reintegration but also fosters a sense of financial responsibility.

Westpac NZ told us that in the last year it has made the New Start programme more accessible. In the year to 30 September 2023, 41 accounts were opened, and in the year to 30 September 2024, 189 accounts were opened under the New Start programme. In addition, accounts have been offered to prisoners not due for release, where there is a genuine need. These requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and tailored to individual needs. More than 30 prisoners not due for release have been onboarded under this programme and 20 further prisoners have been approved for accounts. Westpac NZ has also shared information with Corrections to help probation officers to support released prisoners to obtain bank accounts

Most respondents emphasised the importance of prisoners having access to basic banking services

Many stakeholders echoed strong support for major banks' involvement in providing bank accounts to prisoners nearing release. Respondents stressed the importance of prisoners having access to basic banking services for legitimate activities such as receiving wages, managing any existing debts, and preparing for life post-incarceration. A reintegration worker emphasised that access to financial services can reduce prisoners' reliance on criminal associates and set them up for responsible financial management upon release.

Discretion and compliance were also key considerations for some respondents

Discretion and compliance were significant considerations, especially for the banks. Some banks emphasised the importance of discretion in establishing relationships, highlighting that banks should have the freedom to decide whom they engage with, without an obligation being imposed upon them. It was noted that, from a financial compliance perspective, there should not be any inherent obstacles as long as risk management is properly considered.

Respondents from ANZ supported a programme offering bank accounts to prisoners nearing release. They believed banks should have the discretion to support these individuals while recognising the need for inclusivity in banking services, favouring facilitative mechanisms rather than coercive policies.

Addressing the issues for a person who is due for release or parole CONT

The Banking Ombudsman Scheme and Citizens Advice Bureau agreed with the necessity for discretion and compliance

The Banking Ombudsman Scheme and Citizens Advice Bureau concurred on the need for banks to exercise discretion while adhering to regulations. Respondents from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme emphasised, “Banks should accommodate prisoners’ financial needs responsibly, considering their rights while managing risks.”

Conclusion

The proposal for major banks to be involved in a programme that provides bank accounts to prisoners nearing release received broad stakeholder support. Emphasising the benefits of enabling legitimate financial activities and fostering responsible financial management, stakeholders highlighted access to banking as crucial for prisoners’ successful reintegration and financial inclusion. Despite raised concerns over operational challenges, discretion, and compliance, stakeholders predominantly endorsed inclusive banking practices. They underscored the importance of flexibility in meeting prisoners’ financial needs while mitigating risks.

Implications:

- Recommendation 22 should be implemented. The major banks would agree to be part of a programme that offered accounts to persons in prison due for release.
- While concerns over operational complexities, discretion, and compliance were noted, stakeholders endorsed inclusive banking practices, advocating for flexibility to meet prisoners’ financial needs while managing associated risks.

Recommendation 23

Total Money Management to be reinstated

Total Money Management should be reinstated as a service offered by financial mentoring organisations and supported by MSD.

What we asked

Should financial mentoring organisations offer Total Money Management services, supported by the Ministry of Social Development?

What we heard

Overall, respondents strongly supported Total Money Management (TMM) services, recognising the potential of TMM to improve financial management and address challenges, especially among individuals with high-and-complex cognitive needs or a history of incarceration. Many financial mentors and reintegration support workers spoke of the empowering nature of TMM, recognising the effectiveness of TMM in improving financial situations and boosting confidence, particularly for long-term incarcerated individuals reintegrating into society.

TMM is effective in enhancing financial stability and boosting confidence

Respondents from Wellington City Mission and Salvation Army Reintegration Services, when asked, initially had doubts but endorsed TMM services for their effectiveness in enhancing financial stability and boosting confidence, particularly beneficial for long-term incarcerated individuals reintegrating into society. Respondents from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme also expressed strong support for TMM, highlighting its preventive role in addressing financial issues before they escalate. They stressed the integrated approach of TMM services in managing debts and liabilities comprehensively, underscoring its empowering impact on consumers. An example mentioned by the Dunedin Budget Advisory Service involved adults with cognitive and/or developmental disabilities who receive a benefit. They noted that having these funds managed by a financial mentor through TMM allowed the money to be handled on behalf of these individuals and in their

best interests. This arrangement enables the parents of a client to focus on being parents without the added burden of managing their adult children's finances. The professionalism of TMM was seen as mana-enhancing and relationship-preserving, as it removes the handling of money from situations where one party in the relationship may be at a special disadvantage.

TMM suffers from a lack of sustained funding and resources

Despite the support for TMM services, there are significant challenges related to funding and resourcing. Some organisations, including financial mentoring organisations, have not received funding for these services for extended periods, limiting their capacity to support clients effectively. Respondents emphasised the importance of government support, particularly from the Ministry of Social Development, in funding and facilitating TMM services. They argued that such support is crucial for ensuring the accessibility and effectiveness of these services for vulnerable populations, including individuals leaving prison. Respondents from PARS Wellington emphasised the necessity of government funding for TMM services, especially for former prisoners burdened with debt, noting TMM's role in negotiating favourable terms with creditors and facilitating financial recovery.

These perspectives endorsed Total Money Management services, for the ability of the services to empower individuals, prevent financial crises, and provide crucial support to financially vulnerable people who may not have the skills or ability to manage their own money, or who are highly susceptible to financial abuse and manipulation. The respondents emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts with government agencies to enhance service delivery and maximise effectiveness.

Trust is essential for successful TMM

While there was general recognition of and support for Total Money Management services, respondents emphasised that trust is essential for their successful provision. One respondent cautiously supported TMM schemes, noting successful negotiations with local budgeting and advice services for some clients. However, they expressed reservations about the overall acceptance of such services, highlighting trust issues, particularly regarding government involvement. Trust issues were identified as a significant barrier to participation despite the potential benefits.

Financial mentors are well placed to offer TMM effectively

Another respondent highlighted the historical role of financial mentoring organisations in providing TMM services supported by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). They noted that these services effectively helped clients manage their affairs independently, but changes in regulations have led to their discontinuation, resulting in harm to certain clients. They acknowledged the importance of avoiding paternalistic relationships but believe that, within strict boundaries, such services are beneficial for clients who struggle without assistance.

A different respondent affirmed the need for financial mentoring organisations to offer TMM services supported by MSD. However, another pointed out that there has been no indication of such support from MSD. While the Ministry might be considering options, they have yet to take concrete steps, leaving organisations like theirs without funding for critical services. This respondent concluded by expressing their desire for funding to continue so they could continue to effectively support their client base. One issue we were alerted to is that there appears to currently be a lack of clarity around the standards for TMM intervention.

Conclusion

In summary, there is strong support for reinstating Total Money Management services, recognising the potential for these services to enhance financial wellbeing and address challenges, particularly for individuals with complex needs or a history of incarceration. Respondents from various organisations, including the Wellington City Mission, Salvation Army Reintegration Services, and the Banking Ombudsman Scheme, highlighted the empowering and preventive nature of TMM services. In view of significant challenges related to funding and resourcing, many emphasised the importance of government support, particularly from the Ministry of Social Development, to ensure the accessibility and effectiveness of these services. Trust issues were noted as a barrier, underscoring the need for collaborative efforts to enhance service delivery and maximise effectiveness.

Implications:

Recommendation 23 should be adopted in its entirety.

Addressing the issues for a person who is due for release or parole CONT

Recommendation 24

MSD should review the practice of payment of a benefit to an agent

MSD should review the current system of allowing a benefit to be paid to a 'mate' or other nominated person, to ensure there are robust checks in the system that will enable the beneficiary to ultimately benefit from the payment.

What we asked

Should the process of paying a benefit to a nominated person be reviewed to ensure the beneficiary ultimately benefits from the payment?

What we heard

Many respondents expressed concerns about the safety and vulnerability of individuals who nominate others to receive their benefits. They highlighted the potential for exploitation, abuse, and manipulation, particularly among vulnerable populations such as individuals with disabilities or those lacking financial literacy.

There is support for a review due to safety and vulnerability concerns

Respondents overwhelmingly highlighted trust as a critical factor in the process of paying benefits to a nominated person. Several respondents emphasised the risk of manipulation, abuse, and exploitation, particularly when the nominated person is not trustworthy.

Respondents from Wellington City Mission stated:

When a benefit is paid into a mate's account, it exposes you to abuse and intimidation, complicating relationships. We've had instances where individuals come in to collect a friend's envelope or cash, or we pay someone's cash allowances into a friend's account, and it often leads to complications.

It's never a good story, especially if you're just out of prison and your social circle consists mostly of former inmates or individuals associated with the circumstances that led to your imprisonment, increasing the risk.

A respondent from Westpac pointed out that while the option of nominating a 'mate' to receive a benefit is available for individuals without bank accounts, it is one of [their] least preferred options, due to uncertainty about whether the money reaches the beneficiary safely. Similarly, Hannah Kim (Barrister) highlighted the substantial risk associated with allowing prisoners to nominate someone else to receive benefits upon release, particularly if they lack a bank account and address. She, also, raised concerns about potential exploitation, citing examples of vulnerable individuals with cognitive issues or disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated:

There is a danger that [nominated agents who receive benefit payments on behalf of another] might take advantage, especially of those who are vulnerable on many levels. Some of them have cognitive issues, and some have actual disabilities. I've seen this happening during COVID-19. [...] Nominating someone else to manage their finances is fine, but there is a concern about potential exploitation. What if that person takes advantage and refuses to give the money back? There needs to be a strengthened and focused process that caters to individual needs, ensuring a more secure and inclusive approach.

Almost all responses emphasised that relying on a trusted mate or a nominated person for benefit payments can leave individuals vulnerable to financial and other forms of abuse. There was consensus around the need for a thorough review and strengthening of the process to meet individual needs and minimise the risk of financial exploitation. As one respondent told us: "It is too easy for guys [MSD clients] to have the benefits paid to someone else."

Respondents advocated for regulated and accountable systems

There was a strong call for regulation and accountability within the system to protect beneficiaries from exploitation. An interviewee from Bay Financial Mentors strongly advocated for increased regulation, citing numerous instances where individuals have been taken advantage of: *"I think it absolutely needs to be regulated. It's a terrible system."* She provided examples involving vulnerable individuals, such as homeless people, who might nominate someone they trust, only to have their funds misused. Another interviewee from Bay Financial Mentors echoed these concerns and suggested implementing accountability measures to ensure that payments directly benefit the intended recipients. She proposed involving organisations that manage Total Money Management services, stating, *"It needs to be an organisation that is accountable like we are with TMM."* Similarly, respondents from the Banking Ombudsman Scheme highlighted the need for better support systems to help manage money effectively post-release. They indicated that the current system might be setting individuals up for failure and advocated for accredited and audited support services, such as the Downtown Community Ministry, which is legally empowered to take deposits for and on behalf of unbanked clients.

We were told of the need for a refined system and improved procedures

Several respondents acknowledged the importance of refining the current process and improving procedures to ensure beneficiaries ultimately benefit from the payments. Juan Kinnear (PARS Otago) supported a review, noting instances where untrustworthy nominees caused issues. He emphasised the value of discussing and potentially improving the process. An interviewee from PARS Wellington suggested that while the process of paying benefits to a nominated person should still be allowed, it needs refinement. She proposed tightening the process by requiring actual meetings with WINZ case managers to clarify responsibilities and risks for both parties - the actual beneficiary and the nominated agent or 'mate'.

There needs to be recognition of complexity and diverse client needs

Respondents acknowledged the complexity of the issue and the diverse needs of beneficiaries. Chris Ellmers from Corrections supported a review of the process, recognising the complexity while affirming that the option to nominate someone should remain available. In contrast, one financial mentor opposed a review, highlighting that changes could impose additional stress on individuals who rely on others to manage their finances. She emphasised the need to consider the diverse needs and circumstances of individuals to avoid adding unnecessary risks to their financial well-being.

Dr Pushpa Wood (Director of the Financial Education and Research Centre at Massey University) suggested that the process should be reviewed only if there is evidence of misuse or inefficiency. She emphasised the importance of evidence-driven reviews, recommending periodic evaluations every five to ten years to adapt to changes in the financial sector and close any loopholes that could lead to exploitation.

Conclusion

Most respondents advocated for a review of the process to ensure that beneficiaries ultimately benefit from their payments. While there is consensus on the need for accountability, regulation, and protection of vulnerable individuals, there are also differing opinions on the balance between flexibility and protection, as well as the role of autonomy and empowerment. The proposed review would be apposite to examine the existing extent of abuse, and to recommend evidence-informed approaches to policy and practice to ensure that the ultimate beneficiaries truly benefit from the payments.

Implications:

Recommendation 24 should be adopted in its entirety.

Addressing the issues for a person who is due for release or parole CONT

Recommendation 25

Corrections to review the process by which photo ID is facilitated

Corrections should review the current system by which a photo is obtained for photo ID and liaise with Hospitality NZ to ensure that the system works effectively for obtaining photos for persons who are incarcerated.

What we asked

Should Corrections review the process of obtaining photo IDs for prisoners and collaborate with Hospitality NZ to improve the system?

What we heard

The consensus among respondents is that the new process currently being piloted which involves collaboration with Hospitality NZ is more efficient and straightforward compared to the previous (existing) method involving the Automobile Association (AA) whereby the AA would come into prisons, at a cost, to take photos which would be used to generate an ID for inmates. By contrast, the currently being piloted Hospitality NZ process is web-based, and officers can take a photo, upload it and complete an application for a Kiwi Access card. This simplification is crucial for reducing the time and complexity involved in obtaining photo IDs for prisoners, thereby aiding their pre-release preparation and reintegration into society.

The pilot collaboration with Hospitality NZ is assessed as being successful

Chris Ellmers, Senior Practice Advisor at Corrections, strongly supported a review of the AA method and provided detailed insights into an ongoing pilot project at three correctional sites aimed at simplifying the process of obtaining photo IDs for prisoners through collaboration with Hospitality NZ. The initiative focuses on acquiring Kiwi Access cards and involves case managers initiating the process, securing essential documentation such as birth certificates, and taking photos within the prison. The new process is significantly faster and more straightforward than the previous one involving the AA, with the transition to an online system in 2021 playing a key role in these improvements to accessibility, reduced costs, and improved efficiency.

Reflecting on the success of the collaboration between Hospitality NZ and Corrections in providing efficient access to Kiwi Access Cards, the Banking Ombudsman Scheme pointed out that improvements in this area could benefit a wider population.

There was widespread stakeholder support for the pilot. Many suggested it be rolled out across all prisons

The current pilot project garnered widespread support among stakeholders. Advocates for reform emphasised the pilot's potential to significantly enhance the efficiency and accessibility of ID documentation within prisons. The streamlined approach, which includes securing essential documents and capturing photos within the prisons, was praised for its effectiveness in reducing bureaucratic hurdles and ensuring timely issuance of Kiwi Access cards. There was consensus among stakeholders for the pilot's expansion across the entire Corrections system. Proponents argued that scaling up the initiative would not only standardise and improve the current procedures but also establish a robust model for other prisons nationwide. This expansion is seen as a crucial step towards ensuring that all prisoners, regardless of their location or circumstances, have equitable access to the necessary documentation for reintegration into society.

Conclusion

There is broad support among respondents for Corrections to review and potentially expand the pilot programme currently being done in collaboration with Hospitality NZ across the Corrections system. They recognised the pilot's effectiveness and expressed willingness to see it implemented more widely to benefit a larger population of prisoners. Respondents recognised the benefits of simplification, emphasised the transition from previous processes, highlighted technological advancements, and expressed support for a review and expansion of the pilot programme. Overall, the responses reflected a positive outlook on initiatives aimed at enhancing administrative procedures to support prisoners' successful reintegration into society.

Implications:

Recommendation 25 should be adopted in its entirety.

Addressing the issues for persons who have been released into the community

Recommendation 26

On release from prison, all prisoners should be given information on:

- The services available to assist with managing financial matters, including the contact details for a financial mentoring service that offers these services to prisoners and ex-prisoners.
- Organisations that work with ex-prisoners such as mentoring services, Te Pā and the Salvation Army should be given additional funding to ensure that they can assist prisoners to get their financial affairs sorted out to the best extent possible to enable reintegration into the community

What we asked

Should released prisoners be provided with information about available services and organisations to help them manage their finances and reintegrate into the community?

What we heard

Support for Information Provision

Corrections and several others expressed strong agreement on the necessity of providing released prisoners with ample information to manage their finances effectively. Chris Ellmers, Senior Practice Advisor at Corrections, stated that information on budgeting and finances typically forms part of a reintegration plan which is developed by case managers and prisoners, ensuring that individuals leaving prison are equipped with essential financial knowledge. This sentiment was echoed by other respondents, who highlighted ongoing efforts to improve informational materials like basic banking booklets in simplified language, aimed at enhancing financial literacy among released prisoners.

Practical support and immediate needs should be prioritised

Several respondents highlighted the challenges faced by released prisoners due to inadequate pre-release management and overworked case managers. They pointed out that individuals without strong support structures, such as housing or employment, are at a higher risk of reoffending. Therefore, there is a need for improved case management and assistance in finding long-term accommodation to prevent recidivism.

A consistent approach in financial information provision is needed nationwide

Another respondent drew attention to the uneven implementation of support programmes across different prisons, pointing out that good intentions often fail due to inconsistent practices. They advocated for greater uniformity in disseminating information about available services nationwide, ensuring equitable access to support for all released individuals. This sentiment was echoed by another respondent, who emphasised the importance of improving information sharing and navigation to connect individuals with relevant resources effectively.

Literacy and other practical concerns should be addressed

Two respondents expressed reservations despite their overall agreement with the idea of providing information. One questioned the practical usefulness of informational efforts, particularly for long-term incarcerated individuals with potential literacy issues. The other highlighted the need for a structured approach to reintegration support, acknowledging the challenges faced by released individuals in adjusting to life outside prison and managing their time effectively.

Another respondent strongly advocated for accessible information dissemination, suggesting more hands-on approaches such as verbal presentations for those with reading difficulties. They emphasised that without adequate support, recidivism rates could escalate, reinforcing the urgency of effective informational strategies.

Out-of-gate and financial mentoring services are willing to cooperate in information and service provision

Several respondents, such as representatives from Citizens Advice Bureau and various financial mentoring organisations, expressed their commitment to offering comprehensive guidance and assistance to released prisoners. They perceive their roles as crucial resources that extend support not only during incarceration but also crucially upon release. These organisations aim to bridge the gap between prison life and community reintegration by providing practical advice on financial management, accessing essential services, and navigating societal challenges. They can also assist released prisoners to access low or no interest rate finance to assist with high levels of debt. They emphasised the importance of tailored support that addresses the unique needs of released prisoners, facilitating a smoother transition and reducing the likelihood of recidivism. Their dedication underscores a collective effort towards fostering resilience and empowerment among individuals re-entering society from the criminal justice system.

Conclusion

There exists a broad consensus among stakeholders for equipping released prisoners with comprehensive information and robust support systems. Key voices, including those from Corrections and financial mentoring organisations, emphasised the critical role of structured reintegration plans in imparting essential financial information to individuals transitioning out of prison. Highlighted challenges include insufficient pre-release management and literacy barriers, and respondents noted the importance of practical support to address immediate needs. Concerns about inconsistent implementation practices across different prison facilities underlie the call for a uniform approach nationwide. Moreover, stakeholders stressed the importance of accessible information dissemination and collaboration from advisory services, aimed at fostering resilience and empowerment during prisoners' reintegration into society.

Implications:

- Recommendation 26 should be implemented in its entirety, with all released prisoners provided with comprehensive information on financial management and reintegration services.
- Nationwide consistency in delivering financial and reintegration support is essential to ensure equitable access for all released prisoners.
- Increased funding should be allocated to mentoring services, and out-of-gate services such as Te Pā and the Salvation Army, to support their role in assisting prisoners with financial matters and community reintegration.
- Information provided to released prisoners must be accessible, with special provisions for individuals facing literacy challenges, such as verbal presentations or simplified materials.
- Immediate needs such as housing and employment should be prioritised in conjunction with financial support to reduce the risks of recidivism.
- Collaboration between Corrections, financial mentoring services, and community organisations is critical to facilitating smoother reintegration and reducing recidivism rates.

Appendix One

Below is the content of the Immediate Needs Questionnaire, developed by the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Family Finances Services Trust. This form is part of a pilot trial set to be conducted at Arohata and Rimutaka prisons.

We gratefully reproduce the form here with the permission of the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Immediate Needs Questionnaire

Now that you are in the care of the Department of Corrections, you may have personal matters outside the prison system that need attention as soon as possible so they don't become difficult to sort out later on.

It is strongly recommended that you take a few minutes to review this list of items identified by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Family Finances Services Trust (FFST) as possible areas of concern for someone in custody. These two community organizations have provided advice and assistance to prisoners over many years.

Completing the form

Place a tick (✓) in the box next to any of the issues below that you would like help with.

Place the completed form in the envelope provided. It will be sent to the CAB, who may begin working with you to resolve these issues. Budgeting and finance matters will be sent to FFST.

Need help filling this in?

If you have trouble filling out this form, consider asking a Corrections staff member for assistance.

Important – Privacy Statement

The information you provide on this form will only be made available to the Citizens Advice Bureau and/or the Family Finances Services Trust. It will be used solely to assist in resolving the issues you have identified, and only with your express consent.

Questionnaire

Full Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ PRN: _____

Residential Address: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Prison: Arohata Rimutaka

Other: _____

Unit: _____

1. Prisoner Status

- Which of the following best describes your prisoner status:
- Convicted and sentenced
 - Convicted awaiting sentence
 - On remand awaiting trial
 - Other (specify): _____

2. Family

- Do you have dependent children living at home with you?
- Yes No
- If Yes, how many? _____
- Do you have someone to look after them?
- Yes No
- Are you receiving a benefit?
- Yes No
- If Yes, which benefit?
- Sole Parent Support
 - Youth Payment
 - Young Parent Payment
 - Disability Allowance
 - Jobseeker Support
 - State Housing

Note: Benefits are automatically stopped when you enter prison.

- Are you supposed to be paying child support?
- Yes No
- If Yes, have you found out if you qualify for an exemption?
- Yes No

3. Accommodation

- Were you paying rent or a mortgage before custody?
- Yes No
- If Yes, was it:
- Rent Mortgage
- Was the agreement in your name or someone else's?
- My name Someone else's name
- Who is making the payments now?
- Me Someone else
- Who is paying the rates (if you owned your home)?
- Me Someone else
- Do you have house and/or contents insurance?
- Yes No
- If Yes, who is paying the insurance?
- Me Someone else
- Do you have any pets?
- Yes No
- If Yes, are they being cared for?
- Yes No Don't know

4. Banking

- Do you have a current bank account?
- Yes No
- If Yes, which bank? _____
- Do you have automatic payments?
- Yes No
- If Yes, what for? _____
- Do you have direct debits (e.g. Sky TV, Netflix)?
- Yes No
- If Yes, what for? _____

Appendix One CONT

Do you pay a regular membership fee (e.g. gym)?

Yes No

Do you have an overdraft?

Yes No

Do you have a credit card?

Yes No

If Yes, how many? _____

Do you have any hire purchase agreements?

Yes No

Have you authorized anyone to access your bank account?

Yes No

5. Utilities (Gas, Electricity, etc.)

Is the electricity account in your name?

Yes No Not applicable

If Yes, have you authorized someone to manage it?

Yes No

Is the gas account in your name?

Yes No Not applicable

If Yes, have you authorized someone to manage it?

Yes No

Do you have a mobile phone subscription?

Yes No

6. Motor Vehicles

Are you the registered person for any vehicles?

Yes No

Note: You may be liable for any fines (e.g., parking, speeding) while in prison.

Will someone else use your vehicle while you are in prison?

Yes No

7. Personal or Property Matters

What is your IRD number? _____

Are you on any prescribed medication?

Yes No

If Yes, have you advised Corrections?

Yes No

Do you hold any identity documents (e.g., driver's license, passport)?

Yes No

If Yes, where are they? _____

Are you currently in training or education?

Yes No

If Yes, have you notified the provider of your absence?

Yes No

Do you have a student loan?

Yes No

Do you have personal property in storage?

Yes No

If Yes, have you advised the storage provider?

Yes No

Are the Police holding any property that should have been returned?

Yes No

8. Employment

Have you notified your employer of your absence?

Yes No Not applicable

Did you receive your final pay (including any holiday pay)?

Yes No Not applicable

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix Two

List of organisations interviewed in the research for Stage Two

Banks and Financial Institutions

- ANZ
- ASB
- Kiwibank
- Westpac
- BNZ

Financial Advisory and Support Services

- Bay Financial Mentors
- Dunedin Budget Advisory Service
- Family Finances Services Trust, Upper Hutt
- North Harbour Financial Mentoring

Government Organisations

- Department of Corrections | Ara Poutama Aotearoa
- Banking Ombudsman Scheme

Prisoner Support and Rehabilitation

- Otago Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society
- Manawatu Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Society
- Taranaki Prisoners Aid and Reintegration Society
- Wellington Prisoners Aid and Reintegration Society
- Canterbury Prisoners Aid and Reintegration Society

Community and Reintegration Services

- Citizen Advice Bureau
- Wellington City Mission
- Salvation Army Reintegration Services

Research and Consulting

- ThinkPlace
- Financial Education and Research Centre, Massey University

Other

- Hannah Kim, Barrister

FinCap 