



Operation Black Vote and the Parole Board



About Parole Board members

The Parole Board

The Parole Board is an independent Executive Non-Departmental Public body (NDPB) that works with its criminal justice partners to protect the public by risk assessing prisoners to decide whether they can be safely released into the community.

Work of the Parole Board

In brief, the Board's functions are carried out by panels, the composition of which varies according to the type of case.

Most panels consist of three members. Judicial, psychiatrist and psychologist members normally sit on lifer panels and oral hearings. Independent members sit mainly on panels considering parole applications for determinate sentence prisoners (DCR panels) and considering recalls, but can eventually expect to sit on oral hearings.

Parole Board hearings

Oral hearings

These normally take place in prison. They will usually be chaired by a judge, but in some cases by a legally qualified or experienced Parole Board member. Where the circumstances of the case warrant it the panel will include a psychologist or psychiatrist. The third person will be an independent, probation or criminologist member.

In addition to the prisoner and the panel, others who may be present include the legal representative of the prisoner, together with a public protection advocate representing the Secretary of State and the victim, and witnesses such as the prisoners probation officer and prison psychologist. The victim might also be in attendance in order to present their victim personal statement.

Oral hearings are used to consider the majority of cases where an indeterminate sentence prisoner is applying for release and also for some cases involving both determinate and indeterminate sentences where a prisoner is making representations against a decision to recall them to prison.

Paper hearings

Parole Board members sit in panels of one, two or three to consider cases on the papers and each member contributes to them on an equal footing.

The panel takes a considered decision on the basis of a dossier that contains reports from prison staff and the probation service as well as details of the prisoners' offending history. The dossier also contains a variety of formal risk assessments based on offending history, behaviour in prison, courses completed and psychological assessments. The dossier may also contain a victim impact statement or a victim personal statement.

Paper panels are used to consider the majority of cases where a determinate sentence prisoner is applying for parole and also for the initial hearing for cases where a determinate prisoner has been recalled to prison.

Who are the Parole Board looking for?

The Parole Board is looking for people who can put aside preconceptions and bring to the Board intelligent, well reasoned thought, a strong awareness of victim concerns and with a resolute commitment to protecting the public above all else. To be a member you must demonstrate the mental capacity for assimilating complex, detailed information, constructing logical risk assessment and writing clear, concise and thorough reports. Ultimately, you must be able to justify your decisions in the face of intense public scrutiny. When making assessments you will need to take every viewpoint and fact into consideration. This ranges from the point of view of the victims (especially when setting conditions of release) to reports from prison officers, psychologists, criminologists and the prisoners themselves. The Parole Board engage in painstaking, balanced risk assessment that must always prioritise the protection of the public.

Who are Parole Board members?

Parole Board members come from many backgrounds and professions. Some are experts in the criminal justice system, trained psychologists, psychiatrists and criminologists. However, it is vital to have people with different experiences to represent the society and victims we protect and to bring new perspectives and balance.

Members are located throughout England and Wales. These positions are fixed term appointments for three years with the possibility of extending for a further three years, subject to performance.

All new members will undergo a training programme within the first two months of membership and will receive ongoing support and mentoring. The Parole Board operates an appraisal process that applies to all members.

The work of Parole Board members

The Parole Board serves to protect society and reduce the risk of future victims. Members will need to demonstrate an understanding of and empathy for victims and those affected by crime. This could be through direct experience of being a victim of crime, or, through having links to other who have been victims of crime or through a wider understanding of the issues victims face.

Part time independent members

- Will need to commit to an equivalent of 2.5 days work per week. Much of the work is background, including reading reports and drafting preparatory notes, which can be undertaken at home during the evening and at weekends. You will attend panels two to three times per month.
- The panels are mainly held in London - every weekday. Some panels are held at regional centres in Newcastle, Manchester and Bristol.
- The work is [fee based at set rates](#) and covers both the preparation and attending the panel in a single fixed fee.
- During your first one to two years independent members will only be involved in paper panels. These consider either the recall of a prisoner or whether to release on parole licence (DCR).
- By two years, independent members will probably also take part in oral hearings at prisons, normally in your area. These consider release or recall of life sentence and high-risk prisoners.
- An empathy and understanding for the effect panel decisions have on people's lives is critical in this role.

Part time probation members

- You will be involved in a wide range of cases.
- In particular, you will be called upon to use your professional expertise in managing risk in the community to assess the risk posed to the public by the release of prisoners in terms of the adequacy of the release arrangements and to reduce the risks to future victims.
- You will be expected to offer 50 days per year. However, a large proportion of this includes preparation time, which can be worked at home and in the evenings, to fit in with your other commitments.
- The work is [fee based](#) and covers both the background working and attendance at panel hearings.

For full details visit: www.paroleboard.gov.uk

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Specialist members

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Part time forensic psychologists - must be an accredited British Psychological Society member.

Part time consultant psychiatrists - Although specific experience in forensic psychiatry is not essential, it is highly desirable.

Part time judicial members - must be a Circuit Judge or a retired Circuit or High Court Judge in order to qualify as a judicial member.

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Fees and expenses

Part-time members receive fees for time spent on Board business. The extract of fees below are set out according to the task undertaken and are reviewed each year.

The fees are per panel and include both the preparation time required and attendance at the panel.

Paper hearings DCR

Independent, probation & criminologist members £524

Psychiatrists and psychologists £750

DCR panel chair £101

Extra DCR case (per case) £22

Chairing extra DCR cases (one off payment) £10

Intensive case management

Each case £100

Paper recall panels

Two member recall panel £322

Extra case £13

Single member recall panel each case £18

Oral hearings

Independent, probation & criminologist members £229

Psychiatrists and psychologists £322

Retired judicial members/chairmen £418

Cancelled hearing (having read and prepared) £53

For full details of fees and expenses and further information about the Parole Board and the role of Parole Board members please visit: www.paroleboard.gov.uk

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