

April 2018

RR3
Reducing Reoffending
Third Sector Advisory Group

RR3 Special Interest Group on accommodation: ensuring the accommodation needs of people in contact with the criminal justice system are met

About this briefing

The Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group exists with the purpose of building a strong and effective partnership between the voluntary sector and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The chair of the group and its secretariat is provided by Clinks. The terms of reference for the RR3 allows for the establishment of time-limited special interest groups (SIG) to advise on specific areas of policy and practice as the need arises.

RR3 members and the voluntary sector more widely have identified that people in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS) experience a range of barriers to securing safe and stable accommodation. In response, the RR3 convened a SIG to explore these challenges and make recommendations for how they can be addressed.

The SIG on accommodation comprises 14 voluntary sector experts, openly recruited to sit on the group due to their knowledge and experience. The SIG also held a consultation event with people with lived experience of the CJS to inform the development of this paper, and respective members of the group conducted separate consultation with their service users. A full write-up of the feedback gathered from these experts by experience can be found in the appendix.

Executive summary

The Ministry of Justice have an initial aspiration that they want to see an improvement in accommodation outcomes for people in contact with the criminal justice system by 2022. To achieve this aim, **the RR3 Special Interest Group recommends that the Ministry of Justice develops and leads a cross-departmental accommodation strategy.**

To ensure its success, **the SIG recommends that the strategy is guided by the following overarching principles:**

1. Is co-produced with people who have lived experience of the justice system and voluntary organisations supporting them
2. Promotes, recognises and facilitates good practice both at a local and national level
3. Facilitates join up across relevant governments and departments
4. Promotes flexible funding models to encourage voluntary sector involvement
5. Is evidence based and ensures accountability
6. Is responsive to the needs of people with protected characteristics
7. Is transparent and under regular review.

As well as the key principles that an accommodation strategy should uphold, **the SIG also identified opportunities for existing practice to be built upon**, complemented and improved, to ensure the accommodation needs of people can be met. The group make the following recommendations:

- Accommodation advice and support services are commissioned and delivered from a range of providers, including small specialist organisations to ensure the needs of people with protected characteristics can be met.
- Key stakeholders including prisons and probation providers should be routinely required to record and publish both the accommodation needs and long term outcomes of people in contact with the CJS.
- To ensure consistent data is collected, the MoJ should provide clear definitions of key terms including homelessness and appropriate accommodation, outline when and how these terms should be used and determine key indicators for success.
- Opportunities for early intervention and prevention are capitalised on; every time someone has contact with criminal justice agencies their accommodation needs should be identified and addressed. Local referral arrangements should be developed to support this and ensure people can access the services they need.
- NHS England encourage consistency of approach for all liaison and diversion services in terms of their assessment of accommodation issues and development of referral pathways with housing providers.
- The NPS should routinely ask about accommodation needs, and have robust systems in place to ensure these are responded to.
- Clear mechanisms and accountability structures should be put in place to address the accommodation issues people may experience when on remand.
- It is imperative that the Basic Custody Screening Tools (BCST) 1 and 2 are consistently conducted, and any resettlement needs are responded to promptly.
- The Ministry of Justice, in partnership with Welsh Government, ensures local organisations are frequently informed and updated about their role and responsibility in relation to meeting the accommodation needs of people in contact with the CJS in England and Wales.
- To support the desistance process, resettlement planning needs to take place in partnership with the person in prison and begin as soon as they enter custody.

Policy context

People in contact with the CJS are a unique group who often experience specific barriers to accessing accommodation as a result of their conviction, or contact with criminal justice agencies. This can especially be the case for those who are high risk, or those who have committed certain offences including those of a sexual nature, or arson.

SIG members have highlighted that many government policies, implemented by different departments, have had or are likely to have an impact on the accommodation outcomes for people in contact with the CJS. To provide some context, a summary of these is as follows:

Supported housing: the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government have proposed a new funding mechanism for supported housing, including short term supported housing and are currently consulting on these proposals. The timescale for implementation is 2019.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: There are two key aspects to the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) that could have positive implications for people in contact with the criminal justice system- the duty to refer (all public bodies in England will have a duty to refer an individual's case to a housing authority they identify) and the prevention duty (the time that someone threatened with homelessness has been extended from 28 days to 56, with all eligible people found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness entitled to more tailored support from the housing authority).

Universal Credit: concerns have been raised that the roll out of universal credit has already caused challenges for people, with many experiencing delays in accessing payments. The requirement to process all claims online also presents a barrier for many people in contact with the CJS, especially those in prison.

Probation: As highlighted in a joint briefing paper by Clinks and Homeless Link, the implementation of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme caused disruption and confusion for many, with local partners unclear about their responsibilities for supporting people in contact with the CJS into accommodation. It has also resulted in loss of expertise and knowledge in some areas. Small, specialist providers have struggled to engage with commissioning processes resulting in a loss of their services. This has led to people falling through the gaps in provision. A series of recent inspection reports have catalogued instances where people were released from prison with no stable accommodation and highlighted that more could be done to address the accommodation needs of people leaving prison.

The Localism Act (2011): The SIG also highlighted specific concern about the implementation of the Localism Act (2011) as there is evidence that some local authorities and social housing providers are excluding people from accessing accommodation on the grounds of having a criminal conviction. This supports evidence reflected within Crisis' report entitled 'Moving on.'

The SIG members were conscious to note that due to devolution there is a different legislative landscape existing in Wales that will have an impact on accommodation outcomes for people in contact with the CJS. The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) for example does not apply to Wales but the Supporting People programme still exists.

As the impact of policy decisions made and implemented by different government departments is felt by those in contact with the CJS who are experiencing accommodation issues, it

It is imperative a cross-departmental approach is taken to respond to this. This approach also needs to facilitate solutions to issues experienced in both England and Wales.

Key principles for a cross-departmental accommodation strategy

It is essential that people's accommodation needs are met prior to and at every stage of their journey through the CJS. There is clear evidence to demonstrate that secure and stable accommodation can have a preventative effect on first time offences and support someone on their desistance journey which contributes to a reduction in reoffending.

During a meeting of the SIG, the MoJ expressed an initial aspiration that they want to see an improvement in accommodation outcomes for people in contact with the CJS by 2022. To achieve this aim, **the RR3 Special Interest Group recommends that the Ministry of Justice develops and leads a cross-departmental accommodation strategy.**

To ensure its success, the SIG recommends that the strategy is guided by the following overarching principles:

1. **Is co-produced with people who have lived experience of the justice system and voluntary organisations supporting them.** People who have been in contact with the justice system are experts by experience and will be able to provide the MoJ with invaluable guidance and advice about how to ensure positive accommodation outcomes for people are achieved. Involving people in this work can empower and support them further on their desistance journey. The strategy would benefit from case studies of people's experiences, to reflect the impact on real lives that it is trying to achieve.
2. **Promotes, recognises and facilitates good practice both at a local and national level.** As this paper demonstrates, there are a range of successful and innovative projects led by voluntary organisations that achieve positive accommodation outcomes for people. Whilst it remains important that the MoJ provides leadership on this issue and develops a national accommodation strategy it is important that this recognises and facilitates the work already being undertaken at a local level to meet people's accommodation needs. The accommodation strategy also has a key role to play in promoting and sharing existing good practice to encourage a more consistent approach to addressing people's accommodation needs. This can be done through including up to date examples and case studies in the strategy.
3. **Facilitates join up across relevant governments and departments.** It is essential that any strategy is cross departmental. Responsibility for meeting the accommodation needs of people in contact with the CJS rests not only with the MoJ, but also with the Welsh Government and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The strategy will need to clearly define roles and responsibilities of each legislature, alongside their respective departments, local and regional bodies and also develop clear accountability structures. It is also important that the accommodation strategy compliments and joins up with existing government strategies and priorities, including those being taken forward by the Home Office, Ministry of Defence and Department of Work and Pensions. The SIG recommends the Ministry of Justice develop a shared protocol that other government departments are able to sign up to, taking the learning from the York and North Yorkshire Offender Housing Protocol, the pathway in Wales, the prevention concordat for better mental health and the Armed Forces Covenant as successful examples of this way of working.

4. **Promotes flexible funding models to encourage voluntary sector involvement.** The voluntary sector has a vast amount of knowledge and experience in working to meet the accommodation needs of people in contact with the CJS. Many voluntary organisations are small, community based and rely heavily on grant funding to meet the needs of their service users. To encourage market diversity and enable voluntary sector involvement, the strategy needs to ensure any procurement processes used to commission accommodation services are proportionate to the scale of the services being commissioned, and wherever possible large contracts are broken up into smaller lots. The strategy should also promote the use of long-term grant funding. Further to this, the life-cycle of any commissioning process should be clearly communicated in advance and be long enough to ensure organisations are able to strategically plan their future.
5. **Is evidence based and ensures accountability.** The accommodation strategy needs to reflect and be based on existing evidence of what works to ensure people are able to access secure, stable accommodation. To support this, it should include clear outcome measurements and indicators of success, developed in partnership with voluntary organisations and people with lived experience. To ensure that the needs of people of this group are adequately addressed and do not fall through the gaps between departmental responsibilities, the strategy also needs to include clearly defined lines of accountability for this group of people.
6. **Is responsive to the needs of people with protected characteristics.** Many people in contact with the CJS are from equalities groups, have protected characteristics or experience multiple and complex needs, meaning they often require specialist support and services to ensure their specific needs can be met (please see case study 4). Many voluntary organisations provide these tailored services to their clients which will often involve individual and tailored floating support that can help someone develop the skills needed to successfully maintain a tenancy. To further support people's different needs and desistance journeys, it is important that a range of housing options are available and that people's autonomy is recognised by giving them a choice in whether to engage with services or not.
7. **Is transparent and under regular review.** The policy landscape is consistently shifting, with imminent changes expected due to the implementation of both the Homelessness Reduction Act and the proposed changes to the funding for supported housing. To ensure the strategy remains relevant, effective and responsive it is essential that it remains a live document under continuous review. The SIG recommends the Ministry of Justice convene a formal advisory group, comprised of voluntary sector experts and people with lived experience of the CJS to regularly review the accommodation strategy.

Translating principles into practice

As well as the key principles that an accommodation strategy should uphold, the SIG also identified opportunities for existing practice to be built upon, complemented and improved, to ensure the accommodation needs of people can be met. Where appropriate we have provided case study examples of this existing, successful and innovative practice.

Meeting the needs of people with protected characteristics

As many people in contact with the CJS have protected characteristics or are from equalities groups, services need to be provided that work to meet their specific needs. For instance a recent report published by Muslim Hands on Muslim women in prison highlights the need for culturally competent housing for Muslim women including hostels and temporary housing post release. Similarly during the SIG's consultation with experts by experience

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participants raised the issue of services and agencies that did not recognise the importance of their cultural or ethnic background and how experiences relating to this might impact their resettlement. An interviewee for Clinks report Double Trouble highlighted this:

*"I think, speaking as a black male, it's like they should take your ethnicity into consideration as well when finding you suitable accommodation ... For instance, I [was accommodated in a dry hostel] ... and from the time that I walked into the place there was – ooh - and I knew that was because of my colour: it's not something I'm imagining ... Because I was told that C- was a very multi-cultural area so I thought let me come to C-, and where [the hostel was located], it's predominantly white orientated, and the attitude that I got was from the staff. ... And I asked one of them, the woman in charge ... 'Where can I get some hard food, some West Indian food?' 'Oh,' she said, 'You'd have to go on the other side of town but you want to avoid there because it's not a good area.' And as soon as I came here, I thought: hello, I'm home – and she said it was not a nice area, when it's the area I feel safest in. Because when I'm up there [where the hostel is], every minute even if I crossed the road, they're locking their car doors – and you're thinking: yeah, I don't want your car." **(40-year-old black man on licence)***

The SIG recommends that accommodation advice and support services are commissioned and delivered from a range of providers, including small specialist organisations to ensure the needs of people with protected characteristics can be met.

Consistent and transparent data

There is no reliable data collected about accommodation outcomes for people serving a community penalty and on release from prison. **The SIG recommends this is swiftly addressed, with key stakeholders including prisons and probation providers being routinely required to record and publish both the accommodation needs and long term outcomes of people in contact with the CJS.** This needs to move beyond just accommodation outcomes immediately on release and include longitudinal outcomes.

This data should be matched with data collected by other local and national stakeholders, such as that collected through joint strategic needs assessments conducted by clinical commissioning groups and supported housing strategic plans for example.

As highlighted by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness people in prison are often unable to make appointments with Housing Options services or Job Centre Plus while in custody due to local authority email addresses not being secure. This creates data protection issues and means people's details can't be sent in advance of release; creating delays in securing accommodation. It is therefore important that data is shared between relevant agencies during someone's journey through the CJS.

Improving the collection and transparency of data will help with the identification of both good and poor practice as well as gaps in provision, which can lead to service improvements. It is essential that any data collected is used to inform the development and delivery of current and future services.

To ensure consistent data is collected, the SIG recommends that the MoJ provide clear definitions of key terms including homelessness and appropriate accommodation, outline when and how these terms should be used and determine key indicators for success.

The following focused on key stages in someone's journey through the criminal justice system, outlining areas of good practice and making recommendations for change.

Early intervention and prevention

As soon as someone comes into contact with the CJS there is an opportunity for agencies to assess and respond to their accommodation needs which can help prevent offending and reoffending. The SIG highlights that supporting someone with mortgage and rent arrears can be important to prevent them offending in the first instance. During consultation with people who have lived experience of the CJS, people highlighted that they were often not asked about their accommodation needs, and were unaware of where to go for support or information.

Focusing resources on preventative interventions can not only lead to an increase in positive accommodation outcomes for people by, for example, enabling time for tenancy rescue, but will also likely lead to long term savings for the MoJ and other government departments.

The SIG recommends that opportunities for early intervention and prevention are capitalised on; every time someone has contact with criminal justice agencies their accommodation needs should be identified and addressed. Local referral arrangements should be developed to support this and ensure people can access the services they need. This can be achieved in a number of ways, complementing existing practice, such as street triage and liaison and diversion services. The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act's (2017) prevention duty is also likely to have a positive impact.

Identifying and addressing accommodation needs at the earliest opportunity

Case study 1: making every contact count

Making Every Contact Count is an NHS Health Education England Scheme which is an approach to behaviour change that utilises the millions of day to day interactions organisations and individuals have with other people, to support them in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing. The scheme focuses on utilising every day interaction staff across health, local authorities and voluntary organisations have with people to promote health and healthy lifestyles. It should not be an additional part to someone's role, but compliments the work they are already undertaking. The scheme seeks to promote culture change within organisations, and facilitate positive interactions with service users to encourage them to make changes in their life.

Learning from this scheme can be applied to criminal justice partners to encourage staff at all stages of the CJS to use each interaction they have with a person to determine what challenges, including those relating to accommodation they are experiencing. Determining what challenges people are experiencing is the first step to ensuring they are able to be appropriately addressed.

Street triage

Some local areas have also developed 'street triage' services to improve collaboration between police and mental health services. Street triage schemes give police access to advice from mental health professionals when responding to mental health incidents, using a variety of different models. These schemes have been shown to deliver positive outcomes, such as in reducing the overall use of s136 of the Mental Health Act, and reducing the use of police custody in crisis responses. A similar approach could be beneficial to enable police to identify and respond to accommodation needs when responding to incidents.

Liaison and diversion services

Liaison and diversion services identify people who have mental health, learning disability, substance misuse or other vulnerabilities when they first come into contact with the CJS. The service can then support people through the early stages of the criminal justice system pathway, refer them for appropriate health or social care or enable them to be diverted away from the criminal justice system into a more appropriate setting, if required.

Liaison and diversion services are required to record someone's housing and accommodation issues as part of their wider assessments of vulnerability and are required to include a person's accommodation status as part of their data returns. To ensure that they are able to address any issues that are identified, liaison and diversion services should also be developing referral pathways to housing providers and using their engagement workers to help support people attend housing appointments and make applications. There is variation across the country in terms of how this is implemented and it is also important to note that liaison and diversion services exist for 68% of the population, with the aim that this will increase to 100% of the population by 2020/21.

The SIG recommends that NHS England encourage consistency of approach for all liaison and diversion services in terms of their assessment of accommodation issues and development of referral pathways with housing providers.

Pre-sentence reports

Pre-sentence reports completed by the National Probation Service (NPS) provide an opportunity to identify whether someone has an accommodation need. Recent inspection reports have highlighted the resource challenges the NPS are experiencing, alongside the detrimental impact 'speedy justice' has had on the time the NPS are able to spend preparing pre-sentence reports. Many voluntary organisations have significant expertise in identifying and addressing the accommodation needs of people; expertise it is important the NPS are able to utilise.

The SIG recommends that the NPS routinely ask about accommodation needs, and have robust systems in place to ensure these are responded to.

Prison

Every person entering custody is subject to Basic Custody Screening, part 1 of this assessment is completed by the prison within two working days of the person entering custody. The Basic Custody Screening Tool Part 2 (BCST2) is then completed by the CRC provider within five working days of the prison completing Part 1 of the assessment. The purpose of the BCST2 is to identify any immediate needs the person may have which need addressing, for example rescuing or terminating tenancies and identifying any financial needs. Within the final 12 weeks of sentence a resettlement plan is then created for all sentenced prisoners.

Remand

According to the Target Operating Model, CRCs should be conducting screening assessments using the BCST2 with "all new receptions into prison custody, including all remanded, sentenced and recalled prisoners." It is unclear whether this is being consistently implemented. During consultation with people who have lived experience of the CJS, one case study was identified where someone's accommodation needs were not assessed in this way, which resulted in them losing their tenancy.

Failure to assess accommodation needs for someone on remand

Case study 2: the experience of someone on remand

X was in a housing association property managed by the local authority when he was remanded in custody for seven weeks. He was then released, and returned to find unopened mail warning him that an eviction process was underway alongside a final notice banning him from the property pinned to his door. During his time in prison, he had had no contact at all from the Housing Authority or Local Authority; no attempts had been made to investigate why he was not responding to his mail, identify his location or report him as a missing person. He is now rough sleeping.

He is receiving support from St Petrock's who are currently investigating the eviction and helping X challenge the decision. The organisation is making referrals into alternative emergency accommodation on his behalf, as they do not accept self-referrals. X feels that this type of work should have been carried out prior to his release as that could have prevented him from rough-sleeping.

People on remand are not eligible to receive resettlement services but being on remand can create accommodation challenges, with people often requiring tenancy rescue and support. If an accommodation need is identified by the CRC when someone is on remand it is likely that they will not receive any support to address the accommodation needs they may be experiencing.

The SIG recommends that clear mechanisms and accountability structures are put in place to address the accommodation issues people may experience when on remand.

Assessing accommodation needs for people on remand

Case study 3: Changing Lives in the North East

Changing Lives in the North East, is commissioned by Sodexo to provide Through the Gate Resettlement and Community interventions for women on behalf of Northumbria Community Rehabilitation Company. Changing Lives provide a holistic assessment of needs to all women entering custody, with their needs being re-assessed as part of resettlement planning. There are five key areas upon which they are measured: accommodation; education, training and employment; finances, benefits and debt; domestic abuse; and sex work and exploitation.

When planning resettlement, Changing Lives not only focus upon these needs, but also on any other needs identified, and link into statutory services such as DART and mental health teams to try and ensure community resources have been identified for release. As well as working to identify and assess accommodation needs for women who are serving a custodial sentence, Changing Lives also routinely conduct assessments with women on remand.

People serving short sentences

Although the BCST is in place, the SIG raised concern that in some cases accommodation issues are not identified or responded to by prison and probation services promptly. Further to this, they raised concern that the information gathered is often not at the appropriate level of detail, or shared effectively between relevant partners. This is especially concerning for those serving short term sentences, who will require a rapid response to any accommodation issues they may be experiencing if these are to be adequately addressed before release. This relates to both tenancy rescue and organising alternative, appropriate accommodation.

It is imperative that the BCST 1 and 2 are consistently conducted, and any resettlement needs are responded to promptly.

To support the desistance process, the SIG further recommends that resettlement planning need to take place in partnership with the person in prison and begin as soon as they enter custody.

Responding to the accommodation needs of people serving short term sentences

Case study 4: St Petrock's Housing Advice Service in HMP Exeter (2003 – 2016)

The St. Petrock's Housing Advice Service in HMP Exeter was launched in 2003 in response to the large number of people being released locally without accommodation. HMP Exeter holds male prisoners many of whom are serving short sentences. The housing advice team handles a high case-load of around 1,200 people per year and due to the nature of their sentence length, rapid assessment and intervention was key to ensuring successful accommodation outcomes could be achieved. For the financial year 2014/15, 42% of people were recorded as having no fixed abode prior to entering the prison whilst 87% of people had accommodation on release. This was compared to the prisons key performance indicator of 80%.

Drawing on links within the local community, the team carried out extensive preventative work, and engaged proactively with landlords and housing benefit teams to help people maintain tenancies that had been put at risk by their custodial sentences. For others, personalised support was offered to secure new accommodation prior to release. Key services included: making referrals to supported accommodation providers, hostels and recovery projects; helping clients to register on local housing lists and other waiting lists; providing advice on accessing private rented accommodation; arranging accommodation interviews prior to release.

Maintaining strong relationships with other support providers in the community, including the St Petrock's PORCH (Prolific Offender Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing) and PRS projects, were key to ensuring a smooth transition following release. Funding for one full-time post was provided by the local authority, with an additional part-time post supplied by St Petrock's other charitable income.

The project provided support to Gavin*, a 52 year old man from Cornwall who has a long history of drink-related offences and he had been locked in a cycle of repeat homelessness interspersed with short sentences in HMP for many years. He was taken back into custody following a relapse, having managed to stay sober for nearly 12 months.

Finding accommodation for Gavin upon release was challenging; he had previously absconded from accommodation on several occasions and refused to engage with services. However, through talking to Gavin in depth and examining his history, the St. Petrock's team were able to identify a number of factors that he had found helpful in the past. His Housing Officer recognised that it was important for Gavin to connect with people who knew him from the local community. She set up a meeting with the Turnaround [multi-agency integrated offender management] team; together, they put together a plan for his release.

She also arranged for him to be assessed for supported accommodation in Cornwall where he had had a good relationship with staff. The assessment went well and an offer of accommodation was made. To ensure that Gavin was greeted by a familiar face on the day of his release, the Housing Officer arranged for a Turnaround team member to meet Gavin at the prison gate and take him to his new accommodation.

**Name changed to protect anonymity.*

Through the gate services

It is essential that effective, joined up and adequately resourced accommodation support and advice services are provided to people before and on their release. However, during meetings of the SIG concern was raised that much TTG work in practice is work to, rather than through the gate, which causes challenges for successful resettlement. It is important that people are able to receive support and advice throughout their transition back into the community from prison.

Through the Gate services for people with mental health and learning difficulties/disabilities

Case study 5: Nacro's Greenwich Resettlements service

Funded by the Oxleas NHS Trust, Nacro provide an additional resettlement service to people who have medium to high risk mental health and learning difficulty/disabilities, working with them in custody, through the gate and providing support back into the community. They give people practical support by: helping ensure people attend appointments with professionals and support services; helping them secure safe accommodation; linking them into education and/or employment opportunities; and supporting them to engage with community primary care services. Of the people Nacro worked with 96% gained secure accommodation in the last year.

During the consultation event with people with lived experience, organisations highlighted good practice at HMP Bronzefield as prior to leaving prison, the women are given an appointment with an organisation, St Mungo's to help them with their accommodation needs on release. People also found it helpful to be met at the prison gate and supported to attend appointments, as this relieved stress and anxiety.

The SIG recommends that service specifications for through the gate services need to provide consistent and sustained support to people both whilst in prison and through the gate into the community.

Providing Through the Gate services for women with multiple and complex needs

Case study 6: Shelter's Housing First project at HMP Styal

The Housing First Styal service was developed as an innovation pilot funded by Shelter to respond to a gap in provision identified by prison staff for women experiencing multiple and complex needs who were in a cycle of repeat reoffending and homelessness. The women had no settled accommodation to return to after each release, and were more vulnerable to sexual violence or engaging in unhealthy relationships to access somewhere to sleep. They often reoffend to have a roof over the head, a regular meal and the daily structure provided in custody.

The service operates on the core principles of the Housing First model and has the capacity to support eight women. There are currently five women accessing the services. Of the five currently on the service, two have their own tenancy (one in the private rented sector and one in a social tenancy), one is in temporary accommodation, one in approved premises and one in custody awaiting release.

The Shelter team access both the private rented sector and social housing to rehouse women. They have a pledge of 15 private registered providers per year from the Manchester Move partnership of landlords for all Shelter housing first projects. Shelter have a good relationship with these landlords and they allow the organisation to offer good quality accommodation outside the normal rehousing system which means they are able to overcome the normal barriers and obstacles for this client group.

Shelter work with the resettlement team, Greater Manchester prison link workers and women's centres to support women through the gate and into temporary accommodation where needed.

Facilitating a whole-systems approach

No one organisation or department is solely responsible for the accommodation needs of people in contact with the CJS. A whole-systems approach needs to be facilitated to ensure there is join up between organisations both on a local and national level. As responsibility for housing is devolved in Wales, a whole systems approach needs to facilitate and implement join up between England and Wales.

Using a coordinated approach to meet people's needs

Case study 7: the MEAM Approach

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) is a coalition of Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind, formed to improve policy and services for people facing multiple needs. Together the charities represent over 1,300 frontline organisations that have an interest in the criminal justice, substance misuse, homelessness and mental health sectors.

The MEAM Approach is a non-prescriptive framework which helps local areas design and deliver better coordinated services for people with multiple needs. It encourages local areas to consider seven principles, which they adapt to local needs and circumstances. The approach is currently being used by cross-sector partnerships of statutory and voluntary agencies in 25 local areas across England.

Based on previous evaluations of areas that have adopted the MEAM Approach, there is a reported reduction in wider services use costs of 23% over two years as well as a 44% improvement in outcomes for individuals. One area highlighted that through undertaking the MEAM Approach they had identified some gaps where housing needs are not being met and that this had led to them securing funding for three pilots relating to housing for people with multiple needs.

As Clinks and Homeless Links' briefing paper highlights the implementation of Transforming Rehabilitation has created a lack of clarity about the role and responsibilities of local organisations such as CRCs and Local Authorities. This could be further exacerbated by imminent policy changes, such as the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017).

One notable exception to this is in Wales where in order to bridge the gap between the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2015, 'the pathway' has been implemented. This is designed to support local authorities, Youth Offending Teams and the Wales Community Rehabilitation Company to carry out their new responsibilities, joining up services to people due to leave the secure estate and supporting them to access appropriate accommodation on release.

Implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act

Case study 8: The Essex Trailblazer programme

As part of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer programme, Essex County Council, Nacro and Crisis are developing a pilot to test the design, delivery and impact of the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA), to prevent and relieve homelessness among people with offending histories.

One of the main aims of the pilot is to test the early implementation of the duty to refer within the HRA before it comes into force in October 2018. It will help to better understand the role that criminal justice agencies play in preventing homelessness at an early stage, as well as identifying what else works to prevent homelessness under the HRA within a criminal justice context.

The work of the trailblazer also aims to develop a housing pathway and prison housing protocol that details which agencies should do what and when to form a bridge between the resettlement planning process and the new duties under the HRA. This would be part of an integrated and coordinated service delivery model which would bring together all relevant partners within criminal and youth justice, as well as housing, health, social services and other relevant third sector organisations.

The organisations hope the pilot's learnings will help to inform Ministry of Justice (MOJ) policy, as well as the future design and delivery of MoJ commissioning processes.

The SIG recommends the Ministry of Justice, in partnership with Welsh Government, ensures local organisations are frequently informed and updated about their role and responsibility in relation to meeting the accommodation needs of people in contact with the CJS in England and Wales.

One example of where a local area has worked to develop this is through the implementation of the York and North Yorkshire Offending Housing Protocol.

Facilitating join up between local stakeholders

Case study 9: York and North Yorkshire Offender Housing Protocol

The protocol was developed to ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to the accommodation for people in contact with the criminal justice system between local stakeholders including the prison service, the national probation service, community rehabilitation companies, local authority housing and voluntary sector Housing Providers.

The protocol seeks to address: local housing authorities' duties towards the prevention of homelessness; NPS and CRCs commitment to effective resettlement; how partner agencies contribute towards community safety objectives; the contribution of registered providers (RPs) and voluntary organisations.

It notes that the key to effectiveness of the protocol is clear communication, a commitment from all partner agencies to collaborative working and open, transparent information sharing policies and decision-making processes. Each partner needs to agree the protocol and take responsibility for compliance issues within their own organisation.

The protocol is reviewed annually through the York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Homelessness Group (YNYERHG), comprising managers from Local Authority

Homelessness/Housing Options Teams, North Yorkshire County Council Supporting People, Children and Young People's Service and Health and Adult Service Teams.

As well as clarifying roles and responsibilities, it is important that local areas work to ensure all the relevant partners and agencies are engaged in coordinated work to meet people's accommodation needs.

Focusing locally: meeting the accommodation needs of people in the North East

Case study 10: Clinks North East Offender Housing group

The North East Housing for Offenders group was established in February 2016 to improve pathways for people in contact with the criminal justice system when accessing suitable accommodation. The group was established from a need identified through the North East Regional Homelessness group. The group receives no funding but the secretariat support is provided in kind by Clinks. Due to regional differences experienced in the North East, the group has split into two according to the CRC areas (Northumbria and Durham Tees Valley) but meets twice a year.

The group has representation from the National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Companies, Prisons, Local Authorities, the Department for Work and Pensions and voluntary organisations. The core intention of the group is to develop and implement practical local solutions to the challenges people in contact with the CJS are experience in relation to accessing accommodation. The work of the group is still in its early stages, although recent successes include the Local Authority exploring having one standard form for all people to complete and for the CRC to look to complete universal credit claims with people on the day of release to prevent them experiencing the 'finance gap.'

Accessing the private rented sector

Accessing the private rented sector can be particularly challenging for people in contact with the CJS, particularly those who are deemed to be high risk or have committed certain offences (including sexual offences or arson). Many people, especially those who have served a prison sentence are unable to afford a rental deposit and for those who can their conviction can act as a barrier or they do not have the skills needed to access and maintain a tenancy. Further to this, some landlords have negative attitudes towards leasing their property to someone with a conviction, which needs to be addressed through training and support.

During the consultation with people who have lived experience of the CJS, people suggested that the agencies involved could support this by providing character references or other support to get private accommodation.

Additional support and training to help people maintain tenancies

Case study 11: Crisis' renting ready pre-tenancy course

Crisis began delivering their Renting Ready pre-tenancy course in prisons in 2016. The course teaches vital tenancy management skills and helps people in prison understand the realities of renting. It covers what to expect when searching for and moving into a new home, rights and responsibilities, living on a limited budget, looking after a property and managing relationships with landlords and house mates. The course, delivered by a professional Housing Trainer, can be taught to people in prison or staff in order for them to deliver the course themselves.

The barriers that people experience to accessing the private rented sector not only increase pressure on local authority funded services, it also leads to a higher number of people living in unsuitable and unsustainable accommodation and an increased likelihood of reoffending.

Breaking down barriers to the private rented sector

Case study 12: Nacro Homes Agency

Nacro Homes Agency (NHA) is a social lettings agency and works to positively intervene in the private rented sector. The NHA specialises in supporting and securing homes for people who are homeless or experiencing insecure housing. The agency lease properties from private landlords and offer residents quality housing with rent and tenure suited to their circumstances. The organisation offers a personalised system of support and coaching to help residents maintain their tenancies and prepare for a planned move into accommodation.

Further to this, organisations highlighted specific rent deposit and bond schemes they have developed to support their clients to engage with the private rented sector.

Collaborating across the system to deliver

Case study 13: Nacro's rent deposit/bond scheme

Nacro works in Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Kent with Police and Crime Commissioners and CRCs to manage a rent deposit/bond scheme. The scheme supports people leaving prison into the private rented sector who would not otherwise be able to access it and helps them move towards an independent housing future.

Ensuring success/next steps

To ensure success, it is important that the strategy remains a living document, responsive to the external policy landscape and needs of people in contact with the CJS. **The SIG recommends that the Ministry of Justice develop a cross-departmental advisory group that has representation from key government departments, voluntary organisations and people with lived experience of the CJS. The RR3 would be happy to support the MoJ in the development of this group.**

Appendix

Consultation with people who have lived experience of the criminal justice system

To support the development of this paper, the special interest group on accommodation for people in contact with the criminal justice system held a one off consultation event with people who are experts by experience; that is they have first-hand experience of the CJS. Their views and experiences have been reflected throughout this paper but this appendix serves as a more in-depth write up of the issues they raised during the session. People with lived experience were engaged in services from Crisis and Advance Minerva, both members of the SIG who were also able to attend the session. Shelter and St Petrocks also held separate feedback sessions with their clients, and their views are also reflected in the following.

Opportunities and barriers for accessing housing

During this discussion, people focused on answering three key questions: what works well; what doesn't work well; how can things be improved? The following provides a summary of the issues and solutions they raised.

Timely, accessible information

The groups' initial reaction when asked about their experiences was that, at every stage of the criminal justice system, "no one asks about accommodation" and that when they were in contact with the CJS, they didn't know what services were available or where to go for support. They stressed that accommodation is really important, and "needs to come first" when assessing needs. People also reported that the complexity of information could feel misleading and at times seemed contradictory.

They highlighted the need for information to be given to people in an accessible format and at key points during their journey through the CJS. It was felt that information and support as early as possible in the criminal justice journey was important. When focusing on Court, it was highlighted that "judges don't understand the impact of housing when they sentence you. Just a few extra days on a sentence has an impact and could mean you lose your home." Shelter's clients highlighted that the support the organisation provides to save tenancies in the case of short sentences was important as it helped address some of these challenges. People suggested that courts could give information to people and said this would be especially important for those going through the system quickly.

Pre-sentence reports were also highlighted as an important tool to determine the accommodation needs of someone, but attendees said practitioners often did not have the time and resources to complete them fully. They stressed the need for pre-sentence reports to include a more detailed overall picture of someone's accommodation needs.

Pathways to support organisations

People told us there is often a lack of communication between staff in custody and the community. This includes social workers and staff working for Community Rehabilitation Companies and the National Probation Service. This lack of communication means that referrals between organisations are often delayed or not made at all, resulting in people's needs being unmet. People therefore felt that communication needs to be improved and resettlement provision needs to take place as early as possible with people who are serving a custodial sentence.

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It was highlighted that people in prison, including those on remand, face many practical limitations to being able to address any accommodation needs whilst inside, including limited access to communicating with external organisations due to restrictions on the availability of phone calls for example.

During the SIG consultation, one member of the group said that when they were in prison they saw people coming in and out multiple times over a four month period as prison provided a roof over their head, and regular meals- things they were unable to access in the community.

Positively, one person said that they had a particularly good probation officer who referred them to the right, specialist service. This made a real difference to them and helped them get the support that they needed.

The group stressed the need for there to be clear, appropriate and accessible pathways to support organisations. Through the gate good practice was highlighted at HMP Bronzefield where prior to leaving prison women are given a post release appointment with St Mungos to support them with their accommodation needs. This was supported by the information provided by Shelter as their clients found being met at the prison gate to be taken to appointments really important as it helped to reduce anxiety and stress.

The group suggested that information about available support should be made available as widely as possible and communication channels such as Prison Radio and Inside Times should be better utilised and more easily accessible.

The importance of relationships

People stressed the importance of trusting relationships between themselves and the staff providing support to them. Examples were given of inconsistent support and contact from housing officers where expectations were raised but not fulfilled. Individuals were unable to contact the person providing support to them and therefore unable to receive a responsive and timely service.

Participants reported that too often 'Probation just feels like check in' with little real tangible support or concern for the outcomes for that individual.

In contrast, the work of a number of voluntary sector organisations was highlighted as having made a difference to people's lives. When participants were asked specifically about what made their view of these organisations different responses focused on having received consistent support that led to tangible outcomes, for instance support to obtain a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card.

In custody the value of peer advisers was highlighted as often people are more likely to feel able to share with their peers. The importance of a consistent relationship 'through the gate' was also highlighted to support people immediately on release and reduce anxiety around this process.

Participants from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds also raised the challenges of receiving support from staff who do not understand their lived experience as a person of BAME origin. There was a feeling that staff should be more representative of the prison population in order to address this.

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Accommodation appropriate to people's needs

People raised concern that the accommodation that is available is often not suitable to meet the needs of those who require it.

There was a feeling amongst the group the SIG convened that resources follow risk and that available accommodation is often designed for high risk or MAPPA individuals but then used to meet the needs of low to medium risk offenders. These individuals had all been resettled to London. However, the information that Shelter provided highlights that people felt there was little or no provision for people who are high risk or have high support needs. This could demonstrate inconsistency of approaches across the country as the people involved in the Shelter consultation were serving their sentences in HMPs Liverpool, Humber, Risely, Hindley and Forest Bank.

For some members of the SIG group, the restrictions placed on them in these accommodation settings were inappropriate and felt like a barrier to their resettlement. However others pointed out that in some cases these parameters provide a supportive environment which acts as a stepping stone and can support individual progress towards resettlement.

Participants felt that the threshold for receiving support was too high and this left people with significant needs unsupported. Concern was raised that vulnerable individuals or those from groups whose voices often go unheard end up being ignored. It should also be recognised that people will often need additional support and many will experience challenges with literacy for example.

There was a general sense that 'Resettlement' is talked about by agencies but little actually done to facilitate it. The needs of individuals convicted of gang related crime to be resettled in a new area was raised and there was a sense that these complexities were rarely considered by agencies.

Consistency of provision

At the consultation event, people had a variety of experiences in relation to housing services and the way they operated and implemented procedures. This highlighted an issue in relation to the consistency of provision for people.

One participant had been advised to have a second child in order to be rehoused, while another was told that they needed to be sleeping on the street before any support could 'kick in', under the no-second night out scheme.

It was felt that a 'post code' lottery was in operation and that it is harder to resettle in certain areas especially if they have a higher level of deprivation. Participants highlighted there is a lack of housing stock and recognised that in areas where housing needs were already high these issues would be compounded.

Facilitating family ties

Participants raise the fact that the importance of maintaining family ties is not just relevant for individuals in the prison system but also for those in the community and continues into the resettlement process. However it was felt that housing support structures did not recognise or facilitate this consistently.

In one instance incorrect assumptions were made about the presence of family support. In another, the inappropriate accommodation provided meant that the individual's

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son could not visit him. Some individuals had experience of probation covering the costs of travel to maintain family ties but others had experience of probation limiting these funds to only cover costs of travel to interviews and other appointments.

Barriers to accessing housing in the private rented sector

Participants raised the challenge of having to provide deposits and references in the private rented sector. They suggested that the agencies involved could support this by providing character references or other support to get private accommodation.

What ideas should drive an accommodation strategy?

We told people that we think some of the challenges experienced in relation to accessing stable and appropriate accommodation can be addressed through the Ministry of Justice leading the development of a joint accommodation strategy. We asked them what should be included in it and who should be involved in its development.

Joined up services to meet people's needs

People told us that accommodation is often one of a number of needs that someone is likely to have, and it would be helpful if they were able to access support to address these needs in one place. They said a one-stop-shop model would be particularly effective and stressed the need for wrap-around support.

Effective through the gate provision

As there is not one agency or organisation responsible for addressing the accommodation needs of people in contact with the CJS consistent referral pathways need to be implemented and adhered to. This is particularly important for people as they transition from prison back into the community. People said that any accommodation strategy needs to ensure that accommodation is secured before release so that plans for other services can be put in place. This is important when you have drug appointments/probation to see.

A range of housing options need to be available

People said that "everyone is different and their need for support and types of accommodation are very different. There absolutely has to be different options for different people or it won't work. One size does not fit all." They highlighted this is particularly important for people who do not have family support or ties, people who are high risk, those experiencing poor mental health, and people with protected characteristics. In the SIG consultation people specifically highlighted the unique needs of women and people from BAME communities, outlining the need to cater appropriately to their experiences.

It is also important that people are given flexibility and are able to choose which option best suits them. This was highlighted in the Shelter consultation as someone said "I needed short term accommodation when I got out, but I wanted to move area. Any strategy needs to make sure that it allows people to have the flexibility to do what is going to work for them." This is also important for people who may have gang related offences.

Longer-term housing needs to be more readily available to move away from a reliance on short-term temporary accommodation, including bail hostels. People also raised the challenge of accessing private rented accommodation and said that it would be useful for the Government to make funds available for people's deposits and their first month's rent.



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Families ties need to be facilitated

Facilitating strong family ties is essential for supporting many people on their desistance journey. Any housing options made available to people need to take into account the impact this is likely to have on supporting someone's family ties.

It needs to be developed in partnership

People listed a range of organisations and agencies that need to be involved in the development of the accommodation strategy. These include voluntary organisations, probation providers, prisons, private landlords, and supported housing providers. They also highlighted the need to involve people with lived experience of the CJS, "if you do not speak to people with [lived] experience it's [the accommodation strategy] fiction."

What do you want the Ministry of Justice to remember?

Before the end of the session, we asked people to capture their final thoughts about what they want the Ministry of Justice to remember when leading on this work. We have listed the responses we received below to remain true to people's thoughts and views. As follows:

- Everyone is an individual
- Accommodation needs to be first. If you have somewhere to live, you can work. If you have no address you are not ready to work.
- There will be less people returning [to prison] if they had housing.
- For most people, stable accommodation may help to change people's lives and get them back into a normal life.
- Sort people problems out as much as you can. We should give citizenship cards for prisoners.
- If you keep doing the same things for people you will keep getting the same results. If you want to break the cycle you must do something different.
- Keeping family ties
- Better referral pathways
- Employment for ex-offenders
- Knowledge – speak to those who you are trying to help!

CLINKS

Clinks supports, represents and advocates for the voluntary sector working in criminal justice, enabling it to provide the best possible opportunities for individuals and their families.

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