

November 2017



CLINKS
RESPONSE

Clinks' response to Crisis 'Have your say' call for evidence

About Clinks

Clinks is the national infrastructure organisation supporting voluntary sector organisations working in the criminal justice system. Our aim is to ensure the sector and those with whom it works are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders and their communities. We do this by providing specialist information and support, with a particular focus on smaller voluntary sector organisations, to inform them about changes in policy and commissioning, to help them build effective partnerships and provide innovative services that respond directly to the needs of their users.

We are a membership organisation with over 500 members, including the voluntary sector's largest providers as well as its smallest. Our wider national network reaches 4,000 voluntary sector contacts. Overall, through our weekly e-bulletin Light Lunch and our social media activity, we have a network of over 15,000 contacts. These include individuals and agencies with an interest in the CJS and the role of the voluntary sector in rehabilitation and resettlement. Clinks also manages the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance, which is the leading national network supporting the arts in criminal justice.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to Crisis 'Have your say' consultation to inform their plan to end homelessness and have focused our response on the questions of most relevance to the work of our members.

Our response

Question 32) How can the statutory and voluntary/faith sector work together more effectively to prevent homelessness? What evidence already exists to support successful partnership working in this area? Please include as much detail as possible, for example target group, any outcomes achieved, scale, budget, how it was commissioned and if it is a programme that is still being used.

Clinks is a member of the Making Every Adult Matter Coalition (MEAM), alongside Homeless Link and Mind and fully supports the submission MEAM have made to this consultation.

To ensure the accommodation needs of people experiencing multiple and complex needs (defined as those experiencing a combination of problems including homelessness, substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill health) are met, Crisis' plan to end homelessness should:

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1. Encourage the development of better coordinated cross-sector approaches to multiple needs in every local area in the country. The MEAM Approach¹ and Housing First² are two models that can help local areas take forward this work. The two approaches are complementary: areas using Housing First should have a focus on coordinated cross-sector support, and areas using the MEAM Approach should create flexibility in housing provision.
2. Include asks of central government that reflect the four actions set out in *Multiple Needs: Time for Political Leadership*.³ In particular it should call for an urgent cross-departmental strategy to prevent and respond to homelessness and appropriate long-term resources for local areas to support implementation. The strategy must link clearly with other work happening across government on mental health, drug and alcohol treatment and criminal justice reform.

Question 56) What role should the Criminal Justice System (i.e. police, prisons, courts, Community Rehabilitation Companies, National Offender Management Services, National Probation Service and other criminal justice services including through-care services and criminal justice social work in Scotland) play in helping to prevent homelessness?

People in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS) are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness – data from 2014/15 shows that 32% of rough sleepers contacted in London had been in prison at some point.⁴ Further to this, 15% of the prison population were homeless before custody. Securing stable and appropriate accommodation is essential for enabling people to progress on their journey to desistance.⁵

Addressing needs during first contact with the CJS

As soon as someone comes into contact with the CJS, there is an opportunity for criminal justice agencies to determine whether they have an accommodation need and if so to refer them to appropriate services to address these needs. It is important that resources are focused up-stream to ensure preventative action can be taken at the earliest opportunity, such as contact with the police or in court.

Liaison and Diversion services identify people who have 'mental health, learning disability, substance misuse or other vulnerabilities' when they come into contact with the CJS.⁶ If appropriate, people with these additional needs can be diverted into services and away from the CJS. As highlighted by the Liaison and Diversion service specification, individuals are offered a holistic assessment to determine their needs, which includes an assessment of their social circumstances such as their housing situation.⁷ This is a key opportunity to ensure someone's housing needs can be addressed, and it is therefore important that there are clear referral routes to appropriate services developed and maintained to ensure these can be addressed.

Develop a cross-departmental accommodation strategy

The Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) reforms have changed the way probation services in England and Wales are commissioned and delivered, and as highlighted in a joint inspectorate report "however effective the new arrangements are, they will be undermined if offenders cannot access stable accommodation when they leave prison."⁸ To understand how the accommodation needs of people in contact with the CJS are being met since the implementation of TR,



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Clinks and Homeless Link commissioned a short scoping exercise.⁹ This included desk-based research, as well as interviews with key stakeholders, including voluntary sector providers, local authorities and prisons. The scoping exercise explored outcomes for people being supervised by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) and the National Probation Service (NPS).

The results from this scoping exercise found that many challenges remain in terms of ensuring people in contact with the CJS are able to secure appropriate and stable accommodation. Whilst some of these challenges were due to external factors such as increasing pressures on housing supply, and reductions in Local Authority budgets, which is leading to fewer housing options many of the challenges were directly related to the implementation of the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms.

Stakeholders reported disruption and confusion about the new probation landscape and the roles and responsibilities of each organisation. This is supported by a recent recommendation report published by Crisis for the All Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness which found there was a lack of understanding of who was responsible for meeting the housing needs of prison leavers and many prison leavers were often unaware of what would happen to them on release.¹⁰ Stakeholders in Clinks and Homeless Links' research also raised their concern that local authorities are removing funding for specialist services for people who have offended, partly due to a misconception that equivalent services will be offered by CRCs. Further to this, in areas covered by the research (except Wales) there are not yet strong strategic or operational links between the local authority Housing Options Teams and the CRCs.

To address these challenges and ensure that appropriate accommodation outcomes are achieved for people in contact with the CJS Clinks recommends that the Ministry of Justice, in partnership with the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Department of Work and Pensions develop an accommodation strategy. This would need to facilitate and support strategic relationships between organisations working at both national and local levels.

At a local level Clinks recommends that CRCs and the NPS work to develop and maintain positive relationships between themselves and local authorities, including Housing Options Teams, to ensure that there is firstly a clear understanding about each partner's responsibilities and secondly to promote positive accommodation outcomes for their service users.

Timely resettlement support

To ensure the accommodation needs of someone leaving prison can be met, it is essential that resettlement planning takes place at the earliest opportunity. Due to the implementation of TR, a systematic screening tool called the Basic Custody Screening Tool part 2 (BCST 2), is conducted by the CRC within five days of the initial screening tool being completed by prison staff. For all sentenced prisoners, the resettlement plan is reviewed 12 weeks before release. During the last 12 weeks of someone's sentence, CRCs are required to take action on the resettlement plan developed on the basis of the BCST 2. Clinks and Homeless Links' scoping exercise highlighted an example of good practice, as one CRC was more flexible with resettlement planning and undertook either assessments before the 12-week period specified, which was generally felt to support better pre-release planning and support.



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It is important to note that the worsening conditions in prisons are in many cases making it challenging for timely resettlement support to take place. One organisation that took part in Clinks state of the sector research said that due to the prison regularly enforcing shut downs and a lack of staff and resources, they were often unable to access their service users in prison and help them plan for release. They said "If the wings aren't open, we can't work. If people are suffering from mental health challenges and can't get out of their cells, then we can't work."¹¹

Effective through the gate services

Recent inspection reports have consistently outlined concern in relation to through the gate services provided to people on release from prison. A joint thematic inspection report that explored through the gate services for people serving short term sentences found that not "enough was done to address accommodation needs. Prisoners did not know who would help them, what that help would consist of, and when they would know what had been done."¹²

Eight months later, a further joint inspection report was published that explored though the gate resettlement services for prisoners serving 12 months. Of concern, the report highlighted that in the majority of cases the accommodation needs of people were not being met and found that "too many prisoners (more than one in seven) were released not knowing where they would sleep that night. Only two prisoners were found accommodation via Through the Gate arrangements. Three more were placed in short-term accommodation provided by HM Prisons and Probation Service for home detention curfew. Work that could and should have been done by Through the Gate services in prison was left for responsible officers to pick up after release."¹³

Clinks provides the chair and secretariat and chair for the Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3), which is made up of 16 voluntary sector experts who offer advice the Ministry of Justice and HM Prisons and Probation Service on policy development. The terms of reference for the group allow for the development of special interest groups to explore priority policy areas in more depth. The RR3 has recently set up a special interest group to explore the barriers people in contact with the criminal justice system experience when trying to access appropriate accommodation and make recommendations for how these can be addressed.¹⁴ During the first meeting of the Special Interest Group (SIG), members highlighted concern about the payment metric probation providers were implementing as they felt it was often prohibitive to ensuring successful accommodation outcomes and could lead to 'tick box' behaviour from providers. Further to this, they noted a reduction in resources available for accommodation advice and support services, which was also resulting in poorer accommodation outcomes for people. Clinks would be happy to provide the notes in full from this meeting once they are finalised.

Clinks recommends that CRCs publish details of their supply chains to ensure total transparency in terms of the services they are commissioning.

CRCs should commission effective, high-quality through the gate services to ensure the accommodation needs of people can be met on release.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and Her Majesty's Probation Inspectorate should closely monitor the quality of commissioned services against existing evidence of good practice, working directly with specialist voluntary organisations to contribute evidence of good and poor practice.



Recording outcomes

Obtaining data that accurately reflects the accommodation outcomes for people on release from prison remains challenging. Currently prisons rely on self-reported information from people, which is recorded at the point of release. This information is not followed up, or recorded longitudinally so it is not possible to determine any long-term outcomes.

Clinks recommends that long-term accommodation outcomes on release from prison and for those on probation licence are routinely recorded and published.

During the implementation of the TR reforms, accommodation outcomes were migrated to CRCs, who have a target of 90% of people leaving prison going to settled accommodation. The scoping exercise found some confusion about how the target figure should be viewed under the new arrangements, with some CRCs reportedly seeing the 90% target as aspirational while others say it's a clear target.¹⁵

Clinks recommends that the Ministry of Justice clarify the accommodation outcomes CRCs are expected to achieve.

According to the most recent performance management information published by the Ministry of Justice in April 2017, the average for all CRCs for someone release into settled accommodation (excluding the London CRC as there was not sufficient data) was 69.9% for 2016/17. However, this masks some of the differences between outcomes achieved by different CRCs, with one reporting 41.4% of people released from prison had settled accommodation but this figure was 85.2% in other areas.¹⁶

Question 57) Are there any examples of where this already works well? Please include as much detail as possible, for example target group, any outcomes achieved, scale, budget, how it was commissioned and if it is a programme that is still being used.

Through Clinks and Homeless Links' scoping exercise into the impact of the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms on the accommodation outcomes for people in contact with the CJS and Clinks' work supporting the RR3 SIG on accommodation, we have gathered the following good practice.

The Pathway in Wales

The pathway aims to bridge the gap between the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2015, supporting prisoners to access appropriate accommodation on release. It is designed to support local authorities, Youth Offending Teams and the Wales Community Rehabilitation Company to carry out their new responsibilities, providing services to people due to leave the secure estate.

Although there is a positive focus on prevention, there is currently a lack of additional resources to support the implementation of the pathway, alongside a lack of housing stock, especially that which is appropriate for women.



The Departure Lounge at HMP Durham

A 'departure lounge' has been developed at HMP Durham, within the prison visitor centre, for people released from HMP Durham within the Durham Tees Valley area. This provides an opportunity for the CRC to meet with their client immediately after release. The departure lounge has been developed in partnership with local agencies such as Durham Food and Clothes Bank, Drug and Alcohol Action Teams and Nepacs. The Through the Gate team provide an appointment card listing all of the client's appointments and issue an all-day bus pass. The departure lounge also provides a place for the families of those being released to meet them.

St Petrock's PORCH project

The St. Petrock's PORCH (Prolific Offender Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing) project provided housing and intensive support to help prolific and persistent offenders in the Exeter, East and Mid-Devon areas to make the transition to independent living and resettle within the community.

The project opened in 2007, and was run by St Petrock's from 2010 until early 2017 and was funded by charitable income from St Petrock, alongside some investment from the local authority. The PORCH team was based in Probation offices and worked closely with the Turnaround team.

Many clients were referred to PORCH directly from prison. A PORCH worker visited offenders whilst they were still in custody to develop a personalised support package with them and begin to build a relationship of trust. Referrals were also received from a range of sources within the community, including from Probation, the police and drug treatment agencies.

When the project began, accommodation was largely provided by trusted social landlords who had a good understanding of the client group. Over time, the team also built up excellent contacts with Local Authorities, private landlords and supported accommodation. They managed two houses for the LA, and provided the support element in a wide range of other accommodation, enabling clients to access stable housing immediately on release.

Once accommodated, clients received ongoing support to tackle benefit, debt, budgeting, health and substance misuse issues, to access training and work opportunities and to further personal development. Balancing support with a more coercive approach provided by police/probation colleagues in the Turnaround Team proved effective in helping clients to maintain their tenancies. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funding to sustain the project, this came to an end in 2017.



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Clinks supports, represents and campaigns for the voluntary sector working with offenders. Clinks aims to ensure the sector and all those with whom they work, are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders.

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End notes

1. For more information on the MEAM Approach please visit <http://www.themeamapproach.org.uk/>
2. For more information on Housing First please visit <http://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/national-projects/housing-first-england>
3. MEAM (2017) Multiple Needs: time for political leadership, Online: <http://meam.org.uk/policy/time-for-political-leadership-on-multiple-needs> (last accessed 14.11.17)
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8. HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted (2014) Resettlement provision for adult offenders. Online: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cjji/inspections/adultresettlementthematic/#.VBllzkuDPeN (last accessed 13.01.2017)
9. Clinks and Homeless Link (2017) *Are the accommodation needs being met for people in contact with the criminal justice system*, Online: <https://www.clinks.org/briefings> (last accessed 25.10.2017)
10. All Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness (2017) *Homelessness prevention for care leavers, prison leavers and survivors of domestic violence*, Online: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237534/appg_for_ending_homelessness_report_2017_pdf.pdf (last accessed 25.10.2017)
11. Clinks (2017) *The state of the sector: key trends for voluntary sector organisations working with offenders and their families*, Online: <https://www.clinks.org/resources-reports-mapping/state-sector-reports> (last accessed 25.10.2017)
12. HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2016) *An Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for Short-Term Prisons*, Online: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cjji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/09/Through-the-Gate.pdf> (last accessed 25.10.2017)
13. HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prison (2017) *An Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for Prisoners Serving 12 Months or More*, Online: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cjji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/06/Through-the-Gate-phase-2-report.pdf> (last accessed 25.10.17)
14. More information on the RR3 group can be accessed here: <https://www.clinks.org/criminal-justice-influencing-criminal-justice-policy-reducing-reoffending-third-sector-advisory>
15. Clinks and Homeless Link (2017) *Are the accommodation needs being met for people in contact with the criminal justice system*, Online: <https://www.clinks.org/briefings> (last accessed 25.10.2017)
16. Ministry of Justice (2017) *Community performance quarterly management information release: October 2016 to December 2016*, Online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-performance-quarterly-mi-update-to-december-2016> (last accessed 25.10.2017)