



# Scoping and Mapping Study to improve the Resettlement of Prisoners coming out of Custody

February 2015

*This scoping and mapping study has been written by Joy Williams from the Local Authorities' Homelessness and Supporting People Networks, and published with the support of the Welsh Government.*

# Contact

## Welsh Local Government Association

The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote a better local government, its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy.

It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales with the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities as associate members.

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**Published:** February 2015

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**ISBN:** 978-1-78286-019-8

## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Background Information</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Mapping of Services</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Recommendations</b>	<b>27</b>

Appendix 1:	<b>Transforming Rehabilitation</b>	<b>31</b>
Appendix 2:	<b>Housing (Wales) Bill</b>	<b>33</b>
Appendix 3:	<b>PARWG Terms of Reference</b>	<b>36</b>
Appendix 4:	<b>Study Action Plan</b>	<b>40</b>
Appendix 5:	<b>Question used as part of the study</b>	<b>42</b>
Appendix 6:	<b>Exemplar Pro-forma</b>	<b>44</b>

## Executive Summary

With the forthcoming changes expected with regards to Transforming Rehabilitation and the proposals for new legislation set out in the Housing (Wales) Bill, the Minister for Housing and Regeneration established the Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group, to develop effective arrangements to ensure that appropriate accommodation and support is available to prisoners upon release from custody.

This report summarises the finding of work carried out from January to May 2014. It looks at the current arrangements for resettling prison leavers and suggests ways in which prisoner resettlement can be improved with the introduction of Transforming Rehabilitation, the introduction of the Community Rehabilitation Companies and the proposed removal of automatic priority need status for all those found homeless leaving prison.

The report draws on information gathered from local authorities, prisons and partner organisations during interviews and events, as well as data provided by local authorities and the National Offender Management Service.

There were several concerns raised regarding the resettling of prison leavers who were homeless. These included, the tracking of offenders from custody to presentation for appointment with the local authority, the resettlement of prison leavers into unsuitable temporary accommodation and the preference of a few prison leavers to sleep rough rather than engage with the local authority and local services due to previous poor experiences.

Many areas of good practice were identified during the study and several new projects were also initiated. Several local authorities have dedicated case workers who deal mainly, or solely, with prison leavers requiring accommodation. Some of these case workers work with prisoners within the prison as well as on release. Several local partnership organisations exist to assist prison leavers in finding and retaining accommodation as well as with other support needs, these projects are funded through a variety of sources. Three pilot projects have also been started since the commencement of this study; they are:

- Female Pathways Project – developing a specific accommodation pathway for females, particularly those who may be vulnerable, leaving custody and obtaining and

maintaining secure, settled accommodation initially working with women leaving HMP Eastwood Park

- Line of Sight Project - a partnership project between HMP Parc, Bridgend County Borough Council and various other partners, with the intention of helping prisoners see clearly their route to resettlement, embracing the Community Dialogue aspect as well as Dialogue within the prison
- Prisoner and Resettlement Housing Support Service Pilot – a pilot support service set up to identify individuals who may be homeless, or at risk of homelessness. The pathway starts pre-sentence and continues throughout custody and post release and resettlement. The pilot scheme is designed to prevent or to alleviate homelessness of prisoners. This project is running through Isle of Anglesey's supported housing scheme

These pilots will be monitored by the Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group to study their effectiveness and repeatability in order to roll out similar models across Wales if appropriate.

The findings from the interviews and events with stakeholders suggest an overarching recommendation for all stakeholders involved in resettling prisoners to work together to improve communication and data sharing within and between agencies in order to provide the appropriate accommodation and support services to meet both the communities' and individual's resettlement support when returning to communities in Wales. This could be achieved through local authorities and housing providers becoming joint signatories with IOM Cymru Regional Information Sharing Agreements.

The other main recommendations for partners are:

- Welsh Government to facilitate the development of a set of minimum standards for all agencies involved in resettling prisoners back to Wales
- Welsh Government to facilitate the development of a seamless pathway involving all agencies involved in resettling prisoners back to Wales
- Welsh Government to Review S180 funding for Prison Link Cymru and considers the most effective way of providing prevention services to prisoners/former prisoners

- Local authorities to work together to co-ordinate service provision for those leaving custody
- NOMS in Wales to ensure prison staff are aware of the need and process to be taken with housing case workers
- NOMS in Wales to enable prisoners to access housing case workers at any point during their time in custody
- NOMS in Wales to encourage the sharing of information which may be needed to assess risk when placing someone in suitable accommodation post release

The Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group should ensure that all partners are aware of these recommendations and are committed to working towards fulfilling them in collaboration with one another.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

In January 2014, the Minister for Housing and Regeneration established the Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group. He asked the group to develop effective arrangements to ensure that appropriate accommodation and support is available to prisoners upon release from custody. Its role stemmed from consideration of the changes needed to address these matters in light of the changes expected with regards to Transforming Rehabilitation and the proposals for new legislation set out in the Housing (Wales) Bill.

This report summarises the finding of work carried out from January to May 2014. It looks at the current arrangements for resettling prison leavers and suggests ways in which prisoner resettlement can be improved with the introduction of Transforming Rehabilitation, the introduction of the Community Rehabilitation Companies and the proposed removal of automatic priority need status for all those found homeless leaving prison.

The changes as a result of Transforming Rehabilitation are summarised at Appendix 1 and the new legislation proposed in Appendix 2. The Terms of Reference for the Working Group, which also includes its membership, are attached in Appendix 3.

The work plan of the group had several strands. These included researching the current arrangements for supporting prisoners on housing matters, identifying what works and what needs to be improved, and taking action that result in improvements. The work reflected in this report covered the following actions:

- Mapping existing services and provision to identify support systems in place, gaps and further development needed
- Development events to inform work to strengthen the new accommodation pathways for former prisoners

In order to achieve these actions the Local Authority Homelessness and Supporting People Network undertook a scoping and mapping study to identify current practice and to suggest modifications and potential pathways for the future.

This project builds on previous work funded under the Welsh Government's good practice in homelessness programme which was the result of a successful joint bid by the Welsh Local Government Association, Community

Housing Cymru and the All Wales Chief  
Housing Officers Panel<sup>1</sup>.

## **Approach**

The project plan for this study was as follows. The work was funded by a S180 Homelessness Prevention Fund Grant and carried out by the senior project officer of the Local Authorities' Homelessness Networks.

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<sup>1</sup> Humphreys and Stirling (2008) *Necessary but not Sufficient: Housing and the Reduction of Reoffending*. WLGA. Available from:  
<http://www.wlga.gov.uk/housing-pubs/research-report-necessary-but-not-sufficient-housing-and-the-reduction-of-re-offending>



**Table 1: Action plan for the scoping and mapping study**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Individuals involved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interrogate prisoner data to find average number of prison leavers from each prison each month requiring resettlement. Map where these prisoners are coming from and going to.</li> </ul>	Project officer, NOMs, local authorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey each local authority to scope how each deals with prisoners presenting as homeless.</li> <li>Information required from prisoner/prison</li> <li>Time to present before release</li> <li>Accommodation available</li> <li>"Intentionality" policy</li> <li>Number of staff dedicated to working with ex-offenders</li> <li>Protocols for dealing with low, medium and high risk prison leavers.</li> <li>Good practice of prisons identified</li> </ul>	Project officer, local authority homelessness teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey each prison discharging prisoners into Wales to find out:</li> <li>Number of staff dealing with prisoners homeless on release</li> <li>Information gathered on reception and release</li> <li>Local authorities prisoners discharged to</li> <li>Average length of stay of prisoners</li> <li>Level of risk of prisoners being released</li> <li>Good practice of local authorities identified</li> </ul>	Project officer, Prison resettlement officers, prisons, NOMs, Prison Link Cymru
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map support services available for individuals leaving prison.</li> <li>Where are these services available?</li> <li>Who commissions and pays for these services?</li> <li>Who delivers these services?</li> <li>How sustainable are these services?</li> </ul>	Project officer, Supporting People teams, Cymorth, Gofal, Probation, Prison Link Cymru, Service Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross reference needs of local authorities and prisons when resettling prisoners to develop a draft joint working protocol to improve the resettlement of people leaving prison.</li> </ul>	Project worker, local authorities, prisons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold 3 stakeholder events to share the findings of the surveys and the draft protocols.</li> </ul>	Project worker, all stakeholders

Activity	Individuals involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with stakeholders to develop protocols and next steps.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use all of the evidence collected to draft a report to advise stakeholders as to whether potential models e.g. a “hub” type service to link prisons and local authorities would be viable and useful.</li> </ul>	Project worker, NOMs

The full action plan can be found in Appendix 4.

**The aims of the study were:**

- To map the numbers of prisoners resettled in Wales on release from prison and the local authorities they were returning to**
- To compare the total number of prisoners returning to Wales with those who presented to local authorities as homeless on release. These figures along with the numbers currently in custody would give some indication of the numbers of prison leavers local authorities could be expected to be working with once the legislation was introduced**
- To understand how each of the 22 local authorities in Wales and the eight main prisons serving Wales**
- currently work to develop a picture of how they are**

**working to resettle prison leavers at present and their hopes for resettling prison leavers in the future**

- To map the support services available to prisoners to help them to resettle on leaving prison along with the funders of these services**

The project arranged three Wales-wide stakeholder events to disseminate information about the changes to probation and housing legislation as well as to gather thoughts and ideas as to how organisations could better work together in the future.

The information and evidence gathered from all of this work has been used to develop this initial report.

## **Methodology**

A set of questions were devised in conjunction with PARWG to gather information on how local authorities and prisons were working with prisoners, the numbers of prisoners they were working with; and how these practices could be

improved for the future. These questions can be seen in Appendix 5.

Face to face interviews were undertaken with staff in prisons and local authorities to identify current practice. In local authorities it was generally the Housing Options manager and case workers who specifically worked with prison leavers who attended these meetings and in prisons it was with the resettlement officer and occasionally other officers with a responsibility for resettlement. When carrying out these interviews it became apparent that there were other organisations within and outside prisons who also worked with prisoners to assist with their resettlement and so as many of these organisations were interviewed as well. This included Prison Link Cymru, which has a presence in the eight prisons, identified as housing Welsh prisoners. They offer advice and assistance to prisoners resettling back to Wales.

For this study, 19 of the 22 local authorities were questioned face to face and data on the number of prison leavers presenting to the local authority was gathered from all of them.

Interviews were carried out with the following prisons:

- HMP Parc
- HMP Usk/Prescoed
- HMP Styal
- HMP Altcourse
- HMP Eastwood Park

Written responses were received from:

- HMP Swansea
- HMP Cardiff

A future meeting was set up with HMP Stoke Heath, a prison in England that also holds prisoners from Wales. This has since taken place.

Interviews with the following were also carried out:

- 2 police officers with responsibility for Integrated Offender Management (IOM).
- Wales Probation Trust
- Public Sector Prisons, Wales
- NOMS<sup>2</sup> in Wales
- Forensic Psychiatry, Gwent NHS
- Wallich PREP (Prisoner Release Empowerment Project) project, Bridgend
- Caer Las housing advisor, Probation, Bridgend
- St Giles Trust, Cardiff
- Prison Link Cymru, Shelter Cymru, North Wales
- Prison Link Cymru, Gwalia Housing, South Wales

Data was gathered from a number of sources including local authority housing staff (number of presentations), NOMS in Wales and members of the Welsh

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<sup>2</sup> National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

Government's Prisoner Accommodation Resettlement Working Group. It is important to note that the figures received from NOMS are not published figures and represent the estimated number of prisoners who may be released within a one month period.

In order to begin to map services for prison leavers across Wales local authority Supporting People (SP) teams were asked about the types of services they commission and the number of units this represents. A unit is a service provided for one individual. This will provide a figure of the amount of support funded through the Welsh Government Supporting People programme. However, there are many other funders of services for prison leavers and ex-offenders and mapping these proved more difficult.

In order to map the services funded by the Supporting People Programme the following questions were asked:

- *Please provide details of services that work specifically with ex-offenders (name and provider)*
- *Number of services and units\* specifically aimed at ex-offenders and the percentage of all services and units that these represent.*
- *Percentage of services which will work with ex-offenders but who fall under a different spend category. Are these in any specific other spend categories*

*(such as Mental Health, Substance misuse)*

- *Are there any specific services that ex-offenders are not able to access? If so please provide further details?*

## Regional Events

To inform stakeholders of the changes to probation services and housing legislation and to gather as wide a response as possible from stakeholders; three events were held across Wales. These events took place as follows:

- 28<sup>th</sup> April: Future Inn, Cardiff
- 29<sup>th</sup> April: Village Hotel, Swansea
- 7<sup>th</sup> May: Optic Centre, St Asaph

These events gave agencies the opportunity to understand the changes being introduced as well as to ask questions. They also gave the opportunity for stakeholders to discuss a range of questions and suggest possible improvements and ways forward for resettling people from prison in the future. The delegates were arranged into mixed-agency groups and were asked to discuss a series of questions. The questions have been used to structure the feedback and findings, which are set out in the following Chapter.

\* A unit of support is the capacity of the support available. For example a three bed house has three beds and can support three people; a floating support project that can support twelve people has a capacity of twelve units of support

## Chapter Two

### Background Information

In 2013/14 there were 1,867 prison leavers presenting to local authorities in Wales. This is 7.5% of all presentations. A prison leaver presenting includes

offenders who have an appointment which was arranged prior to release and offenders who were unexpected.

**Table 2: Number of presentations including those who were prison leavers, to local authorities in Wales during 2013/14**

Local Authority	Male prison leaver presentations	Female prison leaver presentations	Total number of prison leaver presentations	Total number of all presentations	% of presentations who were prisoners
Cardiff	301	32	333	3742	8.9%
Swansea	244	30	274	3419	8.0%
NPT	154	16	170	2286	7.4%
Newport	133	12	145	1028	14.1%
Wrexham	94	19	113	1687	6.7%
Caerphilly	82	9	91	799	11.4%
Carmarthenshire	74	17	91	1214	7.5%
Conwy	68	4	72	1071	6.7%
Bridgend	59	12	71	487	14.6%
RCT	58	13	71	1485	4.8%
Denbighshire	56	3	59	1502	3.9%
Gwynedd	55	2	57	582	9.8%
Blaenau Gwent	37	6	43	674	6.4%
Torfaen	40	2	42	499	8.4%
Flintshire	37	2	39	1072	3.6%
Vale of Glamorgan	32	3	35	1041	3.4%
Merthyr Tydfil	34	0	34	242	14.0%
Ceredigion	29	0	29	510	5.7%
Powys	26	2	28	284	9.9%
Anglesey	24	1	25	272	9.2%
Pembrokeshire	20	3	23	634	6.3%
Monmouthshire	17	5	22	388	4.4%
Total Wales	1674	193	1867	24,918	7.5%

**The data in Table 2 was provided by local authority Housing Options staff**

There is some discrepancy between these figures and those recorded on the WHO12 system. This is because these figures relate to presentations whereas the WHO12 only records decisions.

Table 3 provides an estimate of the numbers of prisoners discharged from prisons by their address prior to reception into custody. Information on a prisoner's residence is provided by prisoners at reception stage into prison and recorded on a central NOMS IT system. Addresses include a prisoner's home address, an address to which they intend to return on discharge and next of kin. To analyse the population as a

whole, if no address is given, a prisoner's committal court address is used as a proxy to determine the area in which a prisoner is resident. The data collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in all large recording systems. While the data has been checked as far as possible, it should be regarded as approximate.

The estimated volume of discharges has been calculated using the annualised average number of offenders who have less than one month to serve based on snapshots of the prison population from 2013-14.

**Table 3: Estimated annual discharges to Wales in 2013/14 (unpublished data from NOMS Management Information Systems)<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Estimated annual discharges</b>			
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>All</b>
Cardiff	84	1218	1302
Swansea	90	600	690
Merthyr Tydfil	<5	327	351
Neath Port Talbot	36	288	324
Rhondda	27	228	255
Flintshire	<5	219	252
Newport	<5	225	249
Torfaen	<5	216	237
Bridgend	<5	189	216
Wrexham	<5	204	210
Gwynedd	<5	189	201

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<sup>3</sup> This method is subject to error when comparing the estimate figures in Table 3 and published statistics for England & Wales. Our sensitivity analysis shows that the figures given may understate the total number of discharge buy up to 8%

Carmarthenshire	<5	156	180
Blaenau Gwent	<5	168	176
Conwy	<5	144	150
Caerphilly	<5	120	135
The Vale of Glamorgan	<5	88	100
Denbighshire	<5	84	87
Powys	<5	72	72
Pembrokeshire	<5	69	72
Anglesey	<5	<5	<5
Ceredigion	<5	<5	<5
Monmouthshire	<5	<5	<5
Grand Total	462	4797	5259

A comparison of these figures reveals a difference between the number of prisoners who leave prison and don't present to homelessness services within local authorities (Table 3). There are several possible reasons for this. They include:

- Offenders return to alternative accommodation
- Offenders experiencing difficulty in accessing service provision
- Offenders not wishing to stay in temporary accommodation offered
- Offenders having been previously found intentionally homeless by the local authority

authority housing offices arrive without an appointment or what happens to those who do not present.

Data in Table 4 would suggest that around 36% of offenders discharged back to Wales present at their local housing office. This proportion varies by local authority from 68% in Denbighshire to 10% in Merthyr Tydfil. Data is not available to suggest what proportion of those presenting at local

**Table 4: Estimated number of offenders resettling to Wales who present at local authority housing offices**

Local Authority	No. of prison leavers presenting to local authority housing offices	Estimated number of discharges to the local authority	Estimated % of discharges who present to the local authority housing offices
Denbighshire	59	87	68%
Caerphilly	91	135	67%
Newport	145	249	58%
Wrexham	113	210	54%
Neath Port Talbot	170	324	52%
Carmarthenshire	91	180	51%
Conwy	72	150	48%
Swansea	274	690	40%
Powys	28	72	39%
Vale of Glamorgan	35	100	35%
Bridgend	71	216	33%
Pembrokeshire	23	72	32%
Rhondda	71	255	28%
Gwynedd	57	201	28%
Cardiff	333	1302	26%
Blaenau Gwent	43	176	24%
Torfaen	42	237	18%
Flintshire	39	252	15%
Merthyr Tydfil	34	351	10%
Anglesey	25	<5	n/a
Ceredigion	29	<5	n/a
Monmouthshire	22	<5	n/a
All Wales	1867	5259	36%

**Source: NOMS internal Management Information**

There are many complexities in tracking offenders on their release from custody as the following example demonstrates; a woman left HMP Eastwood Park

requiring local authority housing assistance due to previous domestic violence issues. An appointment was arranged with a Welsh local authority



where she had relatives but despite the efforts of the prison and the LA she did not present for the appointment and it is not known where she settled on leaving prison. This is common of the stories of many women leaving prison. There are services that support women's resettlement; for example the jointly commissioned Transitional Support Service by NOMS in Wales and Welsh Government. This provides mentoring resettlement support to prisoners with substance misuse issues serving less than twelve months and can include at the gate pick up as part of the mentoring.

IOM Cymru: Women's Pathfinder – accommodation pathway. This project will work with female prisoners, local authorities, supporting people providers and any other relevant partner organisations to help identify barriers to an effective resettlement of former female prisoners threatened with homelessness. This will support the potential development of a female specific pathway model for former prisoners looking to access the revised and enhanced homelessness services proposed in the Housing (Wales) Bill, which can be replicated across Wales. Similar concerns were voiced regarding male prisoners who left prison with no settled accommodation but did not present to the local authority for help on release. A North Wales night shelter worker suggested that males refer to the night shelter on leaving prison rather than presenting to the local

authority. This may be for a variety of reasons including not wishing to stay in the temporary accommodation offered by the local authority or being previously found intentionally homeless by the local authority.

Whilst the intention of the current prioritisation of prisoners is to ensure there is suitable housing on release, it does not seem to have incentivised housing departments to engage at an earlier stage in the resettlement planning process. This highlights the potential benefit of providing appropriate prison in-reach housing provision to work alongside prison resettlement and the offender management to assess need and secure suitable accommodation and support prior to release. Some local authorities e.g. RCT at HMP Cardiff have adopted an in-reach housing service which has demonstrably improved service provision and cost efficiency.

A recent register of rough sleepers in Denbighshire showed that out of six rough sleepers who they identified during January to June 2014 four of these individuals had previously been in prison but had not presented to services for a variety of reasons. (Denbighshire rough sleeper register Jan – June 2014)

## Chapter Three

### Mapping of Services

A full record of the responses from Local Authority Supporting People teams regarding services provided for ex-offenders can be obtained from the Local Authorities' Homelessness and Supporting People Networks'. In summary, all Authorities have some services for ex-offenders although these may not be specifically provided for this service user group. Many local authorities have accommodation based projects specifically for ex-offenders or which accommodate a high proportion of ex-offenders and these projects offer support (not always 24 hour) as well as accommodation. Many local authorities also offer floating support services which support prison leavers in their own or temporary accommodation. There are some projects funded through the Supporting People Programme which specifically do not take ex-offenders but this is generally due to the nature of the project, for example, it is specifically for individuals with learning difficulties or for the elderly. Other projects would carry out a risk assessment on the individual prior to accepting them. This is common practice for all placements. It would be useful to study how effective these services were at successfully resettling ex-offenders compared to placing individuals in other temporary accommodation such as Bed & Breakfast. It is also worth noting that

local authorities have always had a corporate responsibility to work to reduce reoffending in their area.

Services for ex-offenders and prison leavers are also provided by other agencies and funded from a variety of sources. Some of which will be time-bound projects. These have been more difficult to map and will provide an opportunity for further work.

Following on from the work of the Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group three new pilot projects have been commissioned and funded to develop existing or model new ways of working with prisoners and prison leavers regarding accommodation and resettlement. These are:

- Female Pathways Project – developing a specific accommodation pathway for females, particularly those who may be vulnerable, leaving custody and obtaining and maintaining secure, settled accommodation initially working with women leaving HMP Eastwood Park
- Line of Sight Project - a partnership project between HMP Parc, Bridgend County Borough Council and various other partners, with the intention of

helping prisoners see clearly their route to resettlement, embracing the Community Dialogue aspect as well as Dialogue within the prison

- Prisoner and Resettlement Housing Support Service Pilot – a pilot support service set up to identify individuals who may be homeless, or at risk of homelessness. The pathway starts pre-sentence and continues throughout custody and post release and resettlement. The pilot scheme is designed to prevent or to alleviate homelessness of prisoners. This project is running through Isle of Anglesey's supported housing scheme.

These pilots will be monitored by the Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group to study their effectiveness and repeatability in order to roll out similar models across Wales if appropriate.

**Main points from interviews with local authorities:** The findings of the interviews with local authorities have highlighted the following:

There is wide variation between organisations on the interpretation and application of **settled** accommodation and **intentionality**. Organisations also vary in the type, amount and length of time temporary accommodation is used. Local authorities also highlighted the

risks of resettling prison leavers including:

- Restrictions and licenses
- Presenting whilst intoxicated
- Lack of information
- Unpredictable or violent behaviour
- Drug, alcohol and/or mental health issue
- Risks of disclosure
- Placing several offenders in same accommodation
- Arson

In order to mitigate against these issues many local authorities discussed the use of information sharing and risk assessments. The use of a standard referral form was highlighted as good practice and several authorities provided examples of the type of referral form they would like to receive from prisons or Prison Link Cymru referring prison leavers to the local authority to make a homeless application. These forms included information such as:

- Local connection details
- Personal details (health, mental health, substance use) and needs assessment
- Housing history, last known address
- Details of offences
- Details of other agencies working with the individual
- Eligibility. Benefits information

An example of one of these forms can be seen in Appendix 6.

Many local authorities discussed the role of Prison Link Cymru and there was a mixed response as to the effectiveness of this service. Where a local authority has good links with the Prison Link Cymru worker referrals are good and information is relevant and comprehensive. However, these links are not consistent across local authorities and there is currently a particular lack of provision in South Wales. Many local authorities expressed the view that they were unsure of the role of Prison Link Cymru and the level of outcomes of this service. There were suggestions that this service should be incorporated in the work of the local authority when the new duties are introduced in order to help local authorities to deliver their duties in prisons and that this service could be reconfigured to act as a "hub" type service for engaging with prisoners on reception and linking them with their home authority and ensuring that the relevant reasonable steps were taken to ensure the prevention or alleviation of homelessness.

There is also much good practice taking place across Welsh local authorities with prisons and prison leavers including local authority "in-reach" surgeries and partnership working with other agencies. Many local authorities have specific homelessness case workers who work with resettling prison leavers and

this often provides an improved level of service for prison leavers. However, not all local authorities receive the number of prison leavers to warrant this level of provision.

**Main points from interviews with prisons and other agencies:** The findings of the interviews with prisons and other agencies highlighted the following:

All prisoners have a reception interview within 4 days of admission to prison. This interview asks the prisoner about their housing status just prior to going in to prison as well as any support needs they may have. With co-ordination between services this information can be shared and validated by the local authority in order to assist those prisoners who may be in housing need.

At present prisoners who have sentences longer than 12 months are under the services of probation on release and therefore housing advice and assistance can be co-ordinated this way. Most with shorter sentences are not currently engaged with probation services, although those aged 18 to 21 years of age have a supervision period of three months. It is felt that those not under supervision would miss out on the housing advice and assistance this might provide. With the changes to probation and the introduction of the Community Rehabilitation Company to work with those on shorter sentences

there may be opportunity to redress this situation. However, it is still unclear what risks might be posed by the introduction of a new CRC provider. Prison services have expressed the need for agencies to work together in helping prisoners without accommodation to secure suitable accommodation on release. There is a strong will to allow external services access to prisoners whilst still in custody to enable them to do this and it is thought that much of this could be done on a regional or sub-regional basis.

Prison resettlement officers identified difficulties with trying to access Local Authority housing staff on occasions and it was suggested that a directory of useful contacts be established in order for prison staff to get through to the right person in local authorities to deal with housing issues experienced by prisoners and this directory can be obtained from the Homelessness Network.

Similar concerns were expressed about the Prison Link Cymru Service. Prison Link Cymru work across HMP Cardiff and HMP Swansea but unfortunately there is no clarity or consistency in their delivery or outcomes, this has been reflected in the comments received from both prisons. This is due, in part, to a change in the staff working for PLC across both regions and the difficulty of new staff gaining access to prisons and prisoners. There is scope for reconfiguring the roles and outcomes of

this service to better meet the needs of prisoners, local authorities and prisons. Already in North Wales and HMP Altcourse changes are being introduced in order to trial a better way of working.

There is also much good practice in resettling prison leavers taking place across Welsh prisons, and prisons housing Welsh prisoners including:

- Partnership working with agencies
- Integrated Offender Management (IOM Cymru)
- Transitional Support Scheme (TSS)
- St Giles Trust peer mentoring scheme
- The Wallich PREP service
- Caer Las probation housing advice service
- Women's Turnaround Service

However, this work is not always co-ordinated or communicated to other partners and can therefore lead to the duplication of work or gaps in services occurring. A more consistent co-ordinated approach to these services would lead to greater benefits for prisoners and organisations working with them.

### **Main points from regional events:**

Discussions were facilitated around four key questions. The following summarises the main points:

## **1. How do we achieve excellent communication and co-ordination between partners?**

Participants felt that communication was much better when they knew who they were communicating with. This included having a named point of contact within organisations to whom partners can refer. This is helpful as well as having regular face to face meetings with these individuals to build up a relationship and get to know colleagues. Participants felt communication was much better when they knew the person with whom they were communicating with. Regular network meetings were suggested to facilitate these relationships and help to build up trust between partners. Some local authorities already have a specific case worker who deals with queries regarding prison leavers and many local authorities could name the individual in the prison whom they would refer to.

Understanding one another's policies and procedures and why certain courses of action might be taken meant that people might better understand why certain decisions were made. An example of this was Friday releases from prison; it helped the audience to understand that sentence lengths are issued by the courts and if a sentence ends on a weekend then the previous Friday is always the date of release. This means that more people are released on a Friday and bank holidays often exacerbate this. However, these decisions are not made by the prison

and understanding this process could help other agencies to plan for this spike in releases.

Shadowing workers in partner agencies could help to develop understanding between agencies and build up trust and cooperation between partners. Visiting partner agencies would also help with this.

MAPPA<sup>4</sup> and IOM<sup>5</sup>/PPO<sup>6</sup> multi-agency meetings were highlighted as an example of good practice in communication and co-ordination. This model of working could be extended to work with more prison leavers in the future in order to share information and discuss particular cases. Protocols for the sharing of information would also help in allowing agencies to work more closely and deliver the best service for the service user. An example of a risk assessment which was signed by the prisoner to allow information sharing was highlighted as a way forward in being able to pass potentially sensitive information between partner agencies. A "hub" type model or one-stop-shop was suggested as a way in which information could be shared and passed between agencies. This would also help prisoners to understand who they needed to go to for assistance with accommodation and this contact would

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<sup>4</sup> Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

<sup>5</sup> Integrated Offender Management (IOM)

<sup>6</sup> Prolific and Priority Offender (PPO)

then be able to signpost individuals to the right help to address their needs. This would require all agencies to sign up to the process and would ensure that processes are not duplicated and would highlight any gaps in service provision which could quickly be addressed.

## **2. What support do prison leavers need to sustain suitable, settled accommodation?**

Tenancy support is vital in order to help prisoners resettle when leaving prison. It was suggested that this support should start prior to the release from prison and should be carried out by a key individual who would help to co-ordinate any other services which were to be accessed by the prison leaver. This would ensure that support was provided in a timely manner and there were no gaps in provision which could result in a delay in the receipt of benefits or medical scripts.

Prisoners may also need support whilst still in prison in order to develop the right skills required to obtain and maintain a tenancy. This may include shopping and cooking skills, budgeting, job search skills, basic numeracy and literacy and other soft skills needed to live as a successful tenant and neighbour.

Support may also be needed in order to start and sustain a tenancy such as help with bonds and rent in advance, assistance with furniture packs and food

packages and access to funds in order to purchase white goods. All of these provisions will enable prisoners to settle into tenancies quickly and help them to feel “at home”, this security should hopefully help to reduce reoffending rates.

## **3. What does good intervention and prevention of homelessness look like?**

In order to provide good intervention and prevention of homelessness there needs to be a good understanding across agencies about what services are available for prison leavers to access. This might be achieved by having a local/regional service directory or through good networking and sharing of information between agencies.

Intervention or prevention of homelessness needs to be available on reception to prison rather than on release. This will allow for planned move on and potentially for tenancies to be sustained or surrendered in a planned way in order to provide accommodation on release or prevent rent arrears from building up. In order for tenancies to be sustained there needs to be good communication between landlord and tenant and this can be facilitated by the resettlement team, Prison Link Cymru or the local authority homelessness team. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) will need to be sympathetic to the position of the prisoner and willing to work with

them in order to provide the best outcome for the tenant.

Good joined up working across and between agencies is also vital in ensuring that prisoners get the best possible assistance whilst in prison and on release. There is a need for local authorities to work in conjunction with other agencies such as Prison Link Cymru, prison resettlement teams, third sector agencies and even Department of Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus in order to allow for a smooth transition from court, through prison and back into the community. Multi agency networks and key workers will help to allow this to happen well.

Joint assessments and standardised forms will enable agencies to gather information on behalf of one another and also to share information ensuring that the correct details are collected and passed on. The use of data sharing protocols and signed permission forms from prisoners will allow for the transfer of information between agencies without the some of the common concerns associated with data sharing. This will mean that service users only need to share their stories once and all agencies get the same information regarding service users preventing misunderstandings from occurring.

#### **4. What does a perfect pathway for resettlement look like?**

Drawing on all the previous discussion delegates identified features of the perfect pathway for resettling prison leavers.

Any pathway for resettlement should begin at the court stage to identify individuals who may be in need of housing advice and assistance. This will help to identify those who have been on remand and who are released from court. At present individuals in this situation who may be homeless can often fall through a gap in services as no help is currently offered at this stage. There is scope for this facility to be carried out in conjunction with probation services to identify individuals and can refer people on to other services if they need assistance.

On reception at prison interviews are carried out to assess the circumstances of the prisoner. It should be possible at this stage for a housing advice worker to be part of this process and gather information around the individual's housing situation. This could be potentially done by Prison Link Cymru in partnership with the local authority. It needs to be stressed that prisoners will need to share correct information in order to get the service they need and are entitled to. Once this initial housing information has been collected local authorities and other agencies will be in a position to engage with the individual



and help to prevent or alleviate any homelessness.

Any pathway will rely on good communication between partners and the sharing of relevant information to make informed decisions. Standardised referral forms will also make it easier for agencies to collect the relevant information from prisoners and consent from prisoners will enable data to be shared between agencies. Regular communication and networking between partners will enable everyone to understand one another's roles and to share work rather than duplicating it. It may well be useful to have a lead agency to co-ordinate this process.

The development of a National Standard for homelessness support to prison leavers could set out the expected level of service provision by local authorities. This would provide local authorities with a baseline with which to benchmark their service and ensure that prison leavers are provided with a minimum level of service. Local authorities would not be constrained by this standard but would be encouraged to develop good practice which provides over and above the minimum standard set out by Welsh Government. This standard could encompass the initial point of engagement by a local authority, the reasonable steps which could be taken by a local authority to assist a prison leaver and the support services which might be available from a local authority in order to resettle prison leavers

successfully and assist in reducing reoffending. This standard could provide guidance for dealing with specific groups of prison leavers such as women, young people or veterans. This standard could also inform any pathway which could be developed to outline best practice in resettling prison leavers. Recommendations for this standard are outlined in the next chapter.

There are many examples of good, joined-up working in prisons and between agencies such as the work of Gofal within HMP Parc working with prisoners with mental health needs, the Wallich PREP project which supports prisoners returning to Bridgend, working with them prior to being released from prison until they are resettled within the community, and the St Giles trained peer mentors within HMP Cardiff who identify fellow inmates who may be homeless on release and work with them to help them access housing assistance. This good practice can be built on and replicated to develop a seamless pathway from sentencing to release back into settled accommodation. Initiatives such as peer mentors, gate pick ups, multi agency meetings with prisoners and key workers co-ordinating the support from other agencies can all help to deliver this service in a timely and cost effective way.

### **Prison Link Cymru Service**

Prison Link Cymru (PLC) is a joint initiative operated by Shelter Cymru and

Gwalia, launched in January 2005 to provide preventative housing advice and support to prisoners whilst still in custody, looking at all the accommodation options available to them prior to release. The aim of the service was to provide information to local authorities in Wales about homeless prisoners due to be discharged to their area and to facilitate the provision of appropriate housing and support on release. The service operates across the four Welsh prisons and Altcourse, Walton, Risley, Styal, Stoke Heath, Eastwood Park and Ashfield prisons in England.

There is scope for reviewing the current service specifications to ensure it is responsive to meet both prisoner accommodation needs and LA housing requirements.

## **The Wales CRC**

The Wales CRC will be responsible for supervising and rehabilitating low and medium risk offenders in Wales. Offenders who are high risk of harm will be offender managed by the National Probation Service. CRCs will also be responsible for the resettlement planning for prisoners in liaison with both the relevant criminal justice agencies and community agencies. CRCs will be expected, where appropriate, to manage the employment, accommodation and financial needs of the offenders to be resettled together with signposting specialist services to address the needs

of those who have previously been a sex worker or a victim of domestic abuse.

In addition, they will be able to deliver further interventions that they believe will enhance the likelihood of preventing re-offending. This will mean that offenders returning to communities in Wales will have access to a package of pre-release activity and resettlement services delivered by the Wales CRC. The vast majority of prisoners resettling back to Wales will be held at or transferred at least three months prior to discharge to a designated resettlement prison for Wales.

To support the successful resettlement of offenders Local Authorities are required to liaise with the probation services to ensure that prisoners have full and equal access to the range of accommodation services as early as possible to prevent homelessness upon release, and where possible, retain existing accommodation upon reception to custody. This will be of particular relevance for prisoners on remand and for those serving short sentences.

There will be a need for the CRC and its service provider agencies to work closely with the local authorities to ensure that there is a joined up pathway for resettlement and no duplication or gaps in services.

## Chapter Four

### Recommendations

There is an overarching recommendation for all stakeholders involved in resettling prisoners to work together to improve communication and data sharing within and between agencies in order to provide the appropriate accommodation and support services to meet both the communities' and individual's resettlement support when returning to communities in Wales. This could be achieved through local authorities and housing providers becoming joint signatories with IOM Cymru Regional Information Sharing Agreements.

#### **Recommendations relevant to a National Standard**

- 1. Support criminal and social justice agencies, including the Homelessness Network through the auspices of IOM Cymru partnership arrangements to facilitate the development of a set of minimum standards for all agencies involved in resettling prisoners back to Wales**
- 2. Support the criminal justice services and the Homelessness Network to facilitate the development of a seamless**

**pathway involving all agencies involved in resettling prisoners back to Wales**

- 3. Support the Homelessness Network to facilitate the development of standardised referral forms and data collection forms to be used and shared between all agencies involved in resettling prisoners back to Wales**
- 4. Recognise and address the specific issues faced by priority offender groups, including female prisoners resettling back to Wales; in line with the Wales Reducing Reoffending Strategy and Delivery plan**
- 5. Support NOMS in Wales and the Homelessness Network to facilitate focus groups of prisoners and ex-prisoners in order to incorporate the service users views into any recommendations made**

## **Further Recommendations**

### **Recommendations for Welsh Government**

- 6. Commission the Homelessness Network in consultation with partners to develop a comprehensive list of support services provided for offenders and prison leavers across Wales including funders of these services**
- 7. Review S180 funding for Prison Link Cymru and considers the most effective way of providing prevention services to prisoners/former prisoners**
- 8. Ensure all recommendations are considered in the light of the statutory Code of Guidance for Homelessness Prevention**

### **Recommendations for Local Authorities**

- 9. Provide a named contact within the housing team for other agencies to liaise with in the first instance**
- 10. Obtain a secure email address for this named contact in order to receive emails regarding prisoners**

- 11. In preparation for the new housing solutions duty work with prisons to identify prisoners on reception/induction who might be in need of housing advice and/or assistance**
- 12. Work with neighbouring local authorities and prisons to coordinate and streamline "in reach" services into prisons**
- 13. Work with neighbouring local authorities to develop joint working protocols for the placements of prison leavers in temporary accommodation and protocols for reciprocal arrangements**
- 14. Share examples of good practice in providing settled accommodation for prisoners available on release from prison**
- 15. Develop partnerships to provide floating/tenancy support for prisoners prior to and on release from prison**
- 16. Work with prisons and other agencies to identify those who may be vulnerable on release**

- 17. Ensure prisoners on remand and those serving less than 13 weeks who are eligible for Housing Benefit can apply or are able to maintain it**

## **Recommendations: NOMS in Wales**

### **Custody**

- 18. Provide a named contact within the resettlement team for other agencies to liaise with in the first instance**
- 19. Ensure prison staff are aware of the need and process to be taken with housing case workers**
- 20. Enable prisoners to access housing case workers at any point during their time in custody**
- 21. Share information which may be needed to assess risk when placing someone in suitable accommodation post release**
- 22. Enable CRCs and other agencies to have timely pre-release access to prisoners to provide the most appropriate through the gate resettlement provision for the individual**

## **National Probation Service (NPS) in Wales**

- 23. Assist offenders into settled and suitable accommodation in order to provide a positive framework for effective rehabilitation, resettlement and risk management**
- 24. Work with local authorities and the third sector to provide housing assessment, support and accommodation referral services to offenders, delivered by specialist housing support staff**
- 25. Develop mechanisms for early identification of accommodation need, for example at court stage through signposting to relevant support services**

## **Wales Community Rehabilitation Company\***

- 26. Ensure 'Through the Gate' services includes provision of housing related support**
- 27. Ensure timely access to housing advice, support and suitable accommodation for agreed priority groups of offenders as identified by local IOM Cymru partnerships**
- 28. Work with community housing services to ensure coordinated provision of 'in-reach' services to prisoners to enable them to secure the best possible accommodation outcomes in order to reduce the risk of reoffending.**

## **Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru**

- 29. Ensure local housing services work with IOM partnerships to ensure services are responsive**

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\* At the present time all CRCs are subject to a share sale. This will result in a new contracted provider being responsible for the delivery of the Wales CRC services, which will be announced later this year. These suggested recommendations do not form part of the contracted requirements and would be subject for discussion with the new provider to develop appropriate integrated services.

**to identified risks and priority needs**

- 30. Develop and implement mechanisms for improved information sharing between offender management services and housing service providers**

## **Recommendations for other agencies (service providers etc.)**

- 31. Support services to work with local authorities to provide suitable tenancy/floating support**
- 32. Work with referrers to accept prison leavers who may require other housing related support services such as drug/alcohol intervention services and/or mental health services in order to sustain a tenancy**
- 33. Work together to identify and fill gaps in services and reduce duplication of provision**
- 34. Registered Social Landlords, local authorities and other housing service providers to engage with the IOM Cymru partnership to ensure service design and delivery is fully aligned and integrated**

# Appendix 1

## Transforming Rehabilitation: Briefing

In “*Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform*”, the Secretary of State for Justice set out plans to introduce a new system for the management and rehabilitation of offenders in the community across England and Wales.

The reforms comprise:

- the opening up of the market to a diverse range of new rehabilitation providers, incentivised through payment by results to reduce reoffending;
- a new public sector National Probation Service (NPS) which will be part of National Offender Management Service (NOMS);
- the extension of supervision after release to nearly all offenders leaving custody; and
- a new “through the prison gate” resettlement service across England and Wales.

Once the reforms are fully implemented, there will be 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), each of which will provide rehabilitative services under contract in its Contract Package Area (CPA). There will be one distinct CRC for Wales which will be owned and run by the successful bidder in the present competition. The Wales CRC will deliver the sentence of the court for each offender allocated to them to manage, and in doing so will seek to rehabilitate offenders and reduce reoffending.

The National Probation Service, (NPS), will directly manage offenders who pose a high risk of serious harm to the public (including those whose risk has escalated to high during the course of their sentence) or those released from custody who have committed the most serious offences. It will have a key role at certain stages of the process for all offenders, for example in advising the courts on sentencing, determining allocation and dealing with enforcement action. Within the new arrangements, the NPS and CRC in Wales will work very closely together.

The Ministry of Justice have currently designated all prisons, in Wales, except HMP Usk as resettlement prisons. Through the Gate will be a universal service with providers paid to develop a resettlement plan to address the identified needs. The kind of support offered by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) would potentially include interventions around finance and debt management, accommodation and some aspects of parenting work with families. Resettlement plans would be reviewed prior to release and the intention is to ensure prisoners are in the right Resettlement Prison at least three months prior to release. CRCs would be mandated to hold a pre-release meeting. The process of moving prisoners so they are in the right resettlement prison would begin in early 2014

Responding to local needs and making the best use of effective local services are central to the aims of the Transforming Rehabilitation strategy. The commissioning process will be informed by engagement with co-commissioning partners at a national, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and local authority level. Contracts will be designed to respond to changing demands and priorities at local and national

levels, new legislation and the wider commissioning context. Effective engagement with Local Authorities, Community Safety Partnerships and Criminal Justice partnerships is an essential part of the competition process.

The Ministry of Justice established a network of local competition teams to support the competition process. The Wales team worked with key local partners to design and deliver local strategic partner events.



## Appendix 2

### Relevant Sections of the Housing (Wales) Bill

#### 66 Duty to help to prevent an applicant from becoming homeless

- (1) A local housing authority must help to secure that suitable accommodation does not cease to be available for occupation by an applicant if the authority is satisfied that the applicant is—
- (a) threatened with homelessness, and
  - (b) eligible for help.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not affect any right of the authority, whether by virtue of a contract, enactment or rule of law, to secure vacant possession of any accommodation.

#### 68 Interim duty to secure accommodation for homeless applicants in priority need

- (1) The local housing authority must secure that suitable accommodation is available for the occupation of an applicant to whom subsection (2) or (3) applies until the duty comes to an end in accordance with subsection (5), (6) or (7).
- (2) This subsection applies to an applicant who the authority has reason to believe may—
- (a) be homeless,
  - (b) be eligible for help, and
  - (c) have a priority need for accommodation,
- in circumstances where the authority is not yet satisfied that the applicant is homeless, eligible for help and in priority need for accommodation.
- (3) This subsection applies to an applicant—
- (a) who the authority has reason to believe or is satisfied has a priority need or whose case has been referred from a local housing authority in England under section 198(1) of the Housing Act 1996, and
  - (b) to whom the duty in section 73 (duty to help to end homelessness) applies.
- (4) The duty under this section arises irrespective of any possibility of the referral of the applicant's case to another local housing authority (see sections 80 to 82).

#### 70 Priority need for accommodation

- (1) The following persons have a priority need for accommodation for the purposes of this Chapter—
- (a) a pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
  - (b) a person with whom a dependent child resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
  - (c) a person—
    - (i) who is vulnerable as a result of some special reason (for example: old age, physical or mental illness or physical or mental disability), or
    - (ii) with whom a person who falls within sub-paragraph (i) resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
  - (d) a person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster;
  - (e) a person—
    - (i) who is homeless as a result of being subject to domestic abuse, or
    - (ii) with whom a person who falls within sub-paragraph (i) resides (other than the abuser) or might reasonably be expected to reside;
  - (f) a person aged 16 or 17 when the person applies to a local housing authority for accommodation or help in obtaining or retaining accommodation;
  - (g) a person who has attained the age of 18, when the person applies to a local

housing authority for accommodation or help in obtaining or retaining accommodation, but not the age of 21, who is at particular risk of sexual or financial exploitation;

(h) a person who has attained the age of 18, when the person applies to a local housing authority for accommodation or help in obtaining or retaining accommodation, but not the age of 21, who was looked after, accommodated or fostered at any time while under the age of 18;

(i) a person who has served in the regular armed forces of the Crown who has been homeless since leaving those forces;

(j) a person who has a local connection with the area of the local housing authority and who is vulnerable as a result of one of the following reasons—

(i) having served a custodial sentence within the meaning of section 76 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000,

(ii) having been remanded in or committed to custody by an order of a court, or

(iii) having been remanded to youth detention accommodation under section 91(4) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

(2) In subsection (1)—

“looked after, accommodated or fostered” (*“yn derbyn gofal, yn cael ei letya neu’n cael ei faethu”*) means—

(a) looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 74 of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 or section 22 of the Children Act 1989),

(b) accommodated by or on behalf of a voluntary organisation,

(c) accommodated in a private children’s home,

(d) accommodated for a continuous period of at least three months—

(i) by any Local Health Board or Special Health Authority,

(ii) by or on behalf of a clinical commissioning group or the National Health Service Commissioning Board,

(iii) by or on behalf of a county or county borough council in Wales in the exercise of education functions,

(iv) by or on behalf of a local authority in England in the exercise of education functions,

(v) in any care home or independent hospital, or

(vi) in any accommodation provided by or on behalf of an NHS Trust or by or on behalf of an NHS Foundation Trust, or

(e) privately fostered (within the meaning of section 66 of the Children Act 1989);.

“regular armed forces of the Crown” (*“lluuedd arfog rheolaidd y Goron”*) means the regular forces as defined by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

(3) In subsection (2)—

“care home” (*“cartref gofal”*) has the same meaning as in the Care Standards Act

2000; “clinical commissioning group” (*“grŵp comisiynu clinigol”*) means a body established under section 14D of the National Health Service Act 2006;

“education functions” (*“swyddogaethau addysg”*) has the meaning given by section

597(1) of the Education Act 1996; “independent hospital” (*“ysbyty annibynnol”*)—

(a) in relation to Wales, has the meaning given by section 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000, and (b) in relation to England, means a hospital as defined by section 275 of the National Health Service Act 2006 that is not a health service hospital as defined by that

section; “local authority in England” (*“awdurdod lleol yn Lloegr”*) means—

(a) a county council in England,

(b) a district council for an area in England for which there is no county council,

(c) a London borough council, or

(d) the Common Council of the City of London; “Local Health Board” (*“Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol”*) means a Local Health Board established under section 11 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006.

# Appendix 3

## Prisoner Accommodation Resettlement Working Group

### Draft Terms of Reference

#### Purpose

The Minister for Housing and Regeneration has established the Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group with the purpose of providing advice on the issues surrounding the change to priority need status for former prisoners as part of the homelessness legislation and to develop and/or facilitate effective arrangement to ensure that prisoners have equal access to support services and appropriate accommodation upon release from custody.

#### Background

During the autumn of 2013, the Welsh Government consulted on a proposal to change the priority need status of former prisoners. Following support for the proposal in responses, this amendment was included in the Housing (Wales) Bill published on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2013, which aims to create a stronger framework of prevention and relief duties on local authorities covering all groups.

The consultation also raised a number of important potential consequences of the change. In the light of this, the Minister for Housing and Regeneration wishes to ensure that the legislative changes would not unfairly discriminate against former prisoners once they have served their sentence and to ensure that the housing needs of vulnerable former prisoners are met. He is also keen to support the development of this legislation and statutory guidance, and to promote effective housing pathways for prisoners at risk of homelessness.

#### Existing Legislation

The Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order 2001 specifies a number of additional priority need categories under section 189 of the 1996 Act. This includes homeless former prisoners. Provision is made for them in Article 7 (set out below):

***‘7.- A former prisoner homeless after being released from custody***

*(1) A former prisoner who has been homeless since leaving custody and who has a local connection with the area of the local housing authority.*

*(2) A “prisoner” means any person for the time being detained in lawful custody as the result of a requirement imposed by a court that he or she be detained.’*

#### Proposed Legislation

Section 55 of the Housing (Wales) Bill proposes the following wording in relation to priority need for former prisoners:

(j) A person who has a local connection with the area of the local housing authority and who is vulnerable as a result of

- (i) Having served a custodial sentence within the meaning of section 76 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000,
- (ii) Having been remanded in or committed to custody by an order of a court, or
- (iii) Having been remanded to youth detention accommodation under section 91(4) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

### Aims

The Group aims to ensure that prisoners receive the same access to advice and services as other people at risk of homelessness to ensure they have equal access to appropriate housing.

### Membership:

Membership incorporates relevant Welsh Government departmental leads and strategic partners.

Attendance is by invitation only. Where core members are unable to attend meetings, they are responsible for nominating an appropriately briefed deputy, at the relevant level of authority, to attend in their place.

Where absence is unavoidable from either the core members or nominated deputy due to the exigencies of duty, a written update will be invited.

### **Welsh Government:**

- Ceri Breeze – Director, Housing Policy Division (Chair)
- Geoff Marlow – Senior Homelessness Policy Officer
- Donna Lemin – Supporting People Policy Officer
- Robert Owen – Homelessness Policy Officer
- Carl Spiller – Homelessness Policy Officer
- Sarah Cooper – Community Safety Division
- Mike Hardy – Head of Offender Health Policy
- Denise Lodge – Police Liaison Officer
- Rae Cornish – Senior ESF Manager (Offender Learning Agenda)

### **Criminal Justice Sector:**

- Rob Heaton-Jones – NOMS (Strategy)
- Eryl Drew – NOMS (Operations)
- Ian Barrow – Wales Probation
- Superintendent Liane Bartlett – South Wales Police (representing ACPO)
- Dusty Kennedy – Youth Justice Board

## **Housing sector:**

- Naomi Alleyne/Sue Finch – Welsh Local Government Association
- Martin Whatty – City and County of Swansea
- Cheryl Emery – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
- Ewan Hilton – Gofal Cymru
- John Puzey – Shelter Cymru
- Auriol Miller/Mike Vigar – Cymorth Cymru
- Amanda Oliver – Community Housing Cymru
- Lesley Phoenix – Adref (representing Rough Sleepers Cymru)
- Joy Williams – Homelessness Network
- Tbc – (representing Housing Associations)

CC:

Sarah Payne

## **Governance**

The Working Group will report to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration. However, it will also liaise with the Reducing Reoffending Pathways Group to ensure that its work complements and supports the wider work to reduce reoffending in Wales.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The purpose of the Working Group is to:

- Provide advice to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration as necessary, during the Housing (Wales) Bill scrutiny phase.
- Support the development of statutory guidance on homelessness legislation.
- To consider and advise on the adoption of a consistent vulnerability test for former prisoners.
- Work collaboratively with all partners to develop a cross-sector approach and practical steps to support effectively the accommodation needs of former prisoners.
- Identify any potential financial implications of its advice and how these may be addressed
- Agree a work programme that results in a more integrated approach to assisting former prisoners.
- To inform future homelessness prevention activity in support of implementation of the Housing Bill.

## **Approach**

- Meetings will be convened regularly to ensure that the Group can deliver against the task set for it by the Minister for Housing and Regeneration
- The Chair of the group will be Ceri Breeze, Deputy Director Housing Policy Division

- Findings from the Group will be reported to the Minister for Housing and inform the Reducing Reoffending Pathways Group.
- Administration support for the Group will be provided by the Housing Policy Division of the Welsh Government.

### **Timescale**

- The Group is being established as a Task and Finish Group. Given the matters that need to be considered during the Housing Bill's scrutiny and the preparatory work required in advance of commencing the legislation (subject to the Bill being passed by the National Assembly for Wales), the Group is expected to be active from January 2014 to April 2015.

## Appendix 4

### Scoping and mapping study to improve the resettlement of prisoners coming out of custody

Activity	Individuals involved	Time scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interrogate prisoner data to find average number of prison leavers from each prison each month requiring resettlement. Map where these prisoners are coming from and going to.</li> </ul>	Project officer, NOMs, LAs	2 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey each local authority to scope how each deals with prisoners presenting as homeless.</li> <li>Information required from prisoner/prison</li> <li>Time to present before release</li> <li>Accommodation available</li> <li>"Intentionality" policy</li> <li>Number of staff dedicated to working with ex-offenders</li> <li>Protocols for dealing with low, medium and high risk prison leavers.</li> <li>Good practice of prisons identified</li> </ul>	Project officer, LA homelessness teams	2 weeks
<p>Survey each prison discharging prisoners into Wales to find out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of staff dealing with prisoners homeless on release</li> <li>Information gathered on reception and release</li> <li>LAs prisoners discharged to</li> <li>Average length of stay of prisoners</li> <li>Level of risk of prisoners being released</li> <li>Good practice of LAs identified</li> </ul>	Project officer, Prison resettlement officers, prisons, NOMs, Prison Link Cymru	2 weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map support services available for individuals leaving prison.</li> <li>Where are these services available?</li> <li>Who commissions and pays for these services?</li> <li>Who delivers these services?</li> <li>How sustainable are these services?</li> </ul>	Project officer, Supporting People teams, Cymorth, Gofal, Probation, Prison Link Cymru, Service Providers	2 weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross reference needs of LAs and prisons when resettling prisoners to</li> </ul>	Project worker, LAs, prisons	2 days



develop a draft joint working protocol to improve the resettlement of people leaving prison.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold 3 stakeholder events to share the findings of the surveys and the draft protocols.</li> <li>• Work with stakeholders to develop protocols and next steps.</li> </ul>	Project worker, all stakeholders	3 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use all of the evidence collected to draft a report to advise stakeholders as to whether potential models e.g. a “hub” type service to link prisons and LAs would be viable and useful.</li> </ul>	Project worker, NOMs	3 days

# Appendix 5

## Questions used as part of the study

### Local Authorities

1. What is your definition of homeless upon release?
2. What information would you like to have when ex-offenders present as homeless leaving custody?
3. How soon before release would you like this information?  
b) How long prior to release are you willing to work with an offender?
4. Which prisons discharge ex-offenders into your Local Authority?
5. How many ex-offenders do you deal with on an annual basis?
6. Do you request information from prisons on prisoners who will be homeless upon release?  
If so, who is your contact within the prison?
7. Do prisoners have the opportunity to present to the housing team prior to release?
8. What accommodation is available for ex-offenders who are homeless upon release? (Please include all temporary and longer term options).
9. What is your 'intentionality' policy for this client group?
10. Do you have a dedicated member of staff working with ex offenders?
11. How does this person liaise with prisons and prisoners/ex-offenders?
12. What are your protocols for dealing with various risks of prison leavers? (e.g. MARAC, links with probation, social services, community safety etc.)
13. What specific issues of risk do you have with prisoners on release?
14. Can you identify any good practice taking place in prisons which discharge into your Local Authority?
15. What other services are available for prisoners when leaving prison?
16. Where are these services available?
17. Who commissions and pays for these services (if known)?
18. Do you have a policy for engagement with prisoners?
19. If you are aware that an offender has a tenancy or mortgage upon sentencing, what mechanisms do you have for retaining this accommodation for the duration of their sentence?
20. How do you work with Prison Link Cymru?

## **Prisons**

1. What is your definition of homeless upon release?
2. What services do you provide for dealing with prisoners who will be homeless upon release?
3. What information is gathered on prisoners' housing situation on reception and pre-release?
4. What do you do with this information?
5. To which Local Authorities do you discharge prisoners?
6. Please give an approximate figure of the number of prisoners discharged to each Welsh Local Authority per year
7. How long is the average stay of prisoners in your prison?
8. Of the ex offenders leaving your prison, how many are MAPPA cases?
9. Can you identify any good practice taking place between Local Authorities and your prison that you know of?
10. That you know of, what other services are available for prisoners when leaving prison?
11. Where are these services available?
12. Who commissions and delivers these services (if known)?
  - b) How long is this service run? When might it be expected to end?
13. How many ex-offenders leaving your prison are of no fixed abode (NFA)
14. What proportion of NFA prison leavers, also have issues with substance misuse, mental health or potential suicide?
15. What proportion of NFA prison leavers would be classed as high risk of harm to others using the Oasis screening tool?
16. What proportion of people leaving your prison are 'tagged'?
17. Please list the prison locations of all Welsh offenders in custody.
18. Identify their length of sentence and time left to serve

## Appendix 6



# PRISONER RELEASE HOMELESSNESS PRO-FORMA

- Prisoners Name:-

Date of Birth:-

Prison Number:-

Prison:-

Reception into custody:-

Release date:-

Current Offence:-

Sentence:-

Probation Officer *(if applicable)*:-

Licence:-

Any Other relevant info:-  
*(include details of previous offences, if known)*

Completed by:-  
Resettlement Officer/Housing

Signed:-

Date:-

## Housing Information

### **Address prior to custody:-**

*(for Local Connection)*

Landlord details:-

Is this Friend/Family/Private rented

*(delete as appropriate)*

Able to return:- Yes/No (if no please give reason and dates this was checked)

### **Release address:-**

Landlord details:-

Is this Friend/Family/Private rented

*(delete as appropriate)*

Verified:- Yes/No

Date(s) of contact:-

Outcomes:-

*(insert name of Prisoner)* is able/unable *(delete as appropriate)* to stay at *(insert release address)* for *(insert length of stay)* therefore he will/will not *(delete as appropriate)* be Homeless within the next 28 days.

*(insert name of Prisoner)* will be reporting as No Fixed Abode on day of release as he will need to access Temporary accommodation.

Completed by:-

Resettlement Officer/Housing

Signed:-

Date:-

Please return 28 days prior to release to:

Deborah Davies

High Risk Case Officer - Housing Options

[Deborah.davies@bridgend.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.davies@bridgend.gcsx.gov.uk)

Tel no: 01656 643658

### ***Notes for completion of Housing Information***

This form should be completed as fully as possible as it will form the basis of a risk/needs assessment and can direct how best we are able to assist with the housing need.

If the Prisoner has accommodation to go to on release could you ring the named person/landlord, and detail outcome of call as follows.

- confirm if Prisoner will have their own room or will be sleeping on the sofa.
- confirm if living as lodger (paying rent) or living as part of the family.
- confirm how long they will be able to stay i.e indefinite, permanent or fixed term accommodation etc.