

Homelessness prevention and meeting housing need
for (ex)offenders
A guide to practice

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The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), Centre for Housing Policy (University of York) and Nacro

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Section 1

Introduction

This guide to practice in homelessness prevention and meeting housing need for (ex) offenders was commissioned by Communities and Local Government and overseen by a steering group including representatives from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Home Office and Youth Justice Board (YJB). It is based on research undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) in collaboration with Nacro and the Centre for Housing Policy (University of York). The guide is intended to help local authorities and their local partners address the housing needs and prevent homelessness of (ex)offenders.

This guide should be read alongside the *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities* (Communities and Local Government, 2006a) issued by the Secretaries of State, which local authorities must have regard to by law when exercising their homelessness functions, and *Homelessness Prevention: A Guide to Good Practice* (Communities and Local Government, 2006b) which provides non-statutory, good practice guidance for preventing homelessness through a range of activities commonly operated by local authorities. Also of relevance to this guide is non-statutory guidance published by Communities and Local Government and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), *Joint working between Housing and Children's Services: Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people* (Communities and Local Government & DCSF, 2008). This includes specific guidance on joint working to prevent and tackle homelessness for 16 and 17 year olds and young people leaving care.

This guide is intended to complement existing guidance by providing further detail on promising practice relating to assistance for (ex)offenders.

This introductory chapter provides:

- a brief overview of the policy **context** for the research
- a description of the research **methodology**
- an outline of the **structure of the guide**

1.1 Context

The homelessness legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996) places a range of duties and powers on local authorities to assist people who are homeless or likely to become homeless within 28 days. For example, local authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for households who are eligible for assistance, homeless through no fault of their own and

have a priority need for accommodation. The priority need categories set out in the 1996 Act (and extended by Order in 2002) include:

- a person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside
- a person aged 16 or 17 who is not a 'relevant child' or a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- a person under 21 who was (but is no longer) looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18
- a person who is vulnerable as a result of having served a custodial sentence, having been committed for contempt of court or having been remanded in custody
- a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or other special reason.

With regard to vulnerability, paragraph 10.13 of the *Homelessness Code of Guidance* (Communities and Local Government, 2006a) states that 'it is a matter of judgement whether the applicant's circumstances make him or her vulnerable'. The key test of vulnerability is set out in the case of *R v Camden LBC ex parte Pereira [1998] 30 HLR 317* as follows: 'Whether the applicant when homeless is less likely to fend for himself than an ordinary homeless person so that injury or detriment to him will result when a less vulnerable person would be able to cope without harmful effect.' Where a local authority finds an applicant eligible, homeless but not in priority need, the authority must ensure that the applicant receives advice and assistance to help the applicant find accommodation for him or herself.

Under the *Homelessness Act 2002*, housing authorities must also have a strategy for preventing homelessness and ensuring that accommodation and support will be available for people in their district who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These strategies must be based on a review of homelessness in the district. One effect of the 2002 Act is that both the statutory and voluntary sectors are now directing more resources into the prevention of homelessness and repeat homelessness rather than focusing mainly on crisis intervention. *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable* (Communities and Local Government, 2007) also calls on local authorities to play a stronger role in addressing the housing needs of all residents¹. As part of this, authorities are expected to assess and plan for the current and future housing needs of all local people, including vulnerable groups such as (ex)offenders.

¹ The statutory guidance, *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities*, published by HM Government on 9 July 2008, reaffirms that, where possible, housing strategies and homelessness strategies should be incorporated within Sustainable Community Strategies, whilst allowing local authorities discretion about how this should be achieved.

At a national level, the Socially Excluded Adults Public Service Agreement (PSA 16) and the Make Communities Safer Public Service Agreement (PSA 23) set out the Government's commitment to increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and education, training and employment, and to reduce re-offending. The indicators for these PSAs form part of the single set of 196 national indicators (NIs). At a local level, Local Area Agreements (LAAs) set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area, drawn from the single set of national indicators according to local needs and priorities. Addressing the accommodation needs of offenders is likely to help delivery of a range of these local agendas including preventing homelessness, reducing re-offending and improving community safety, and thereby help delivery of a range of national indicators, including:

- NI18 – adult re-offending rates for those under probation supervision
- NI19 – rate of proven re-offending by young offenders
- NI 30 – re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders
- NI 38 – drug related (class A) offending rate
- NI 40 – drug users in effective treatment
- NI46 – young offenders access to suitable accommodation
- NI 141 – number of vulnerable people achieving independent living
- NI 142 – number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living
- NI 143 – offenders under probation supervision living in settled and suitable accommodation at the end of their order or licence

Addressing the housing needs of offenders are also important parts of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) *National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan* (NOMS, 2005), the *Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending* (Home Office, 2006) and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) strategy to prevent homelessness among young people who have offended and to improve access to suitable accommodation (YJB, 2006). These strategies emphasise the importance of settled housing in contributing to reducing re-offending.

The prison service and probation service both have targets in respect of helping offenders into accommodation. NOMS (2008) sets out the following targets for the prison and probation services in 2008-09:

- 90 per cent of sentenced prisoners and those on remand in local prisons have an initial housing assessment, undertaken within four days of reception
- 80 per cent of offenders move into settled accommodation on release from custody
- 70 per cent of offenders at the end of their order/licence have an OASys assessment which shows them living in settled and suitable accommodation.

Specifically in relation to young offenders, the *Youth Crime Action Plan* (Home Office, 2008), which sets out the Government's plans to further tackle youth crime, includes commitments to improve resettlement through policies to:

- reinforce the role of Children's Services in overseeing resettlement provision
- develop a more comprehensive package of support for young people leaving custody
- ensure suitable accommodation for all young offenders leaving custody.

A range of reports and policy documents remark on the importance of effective multi-agency and partnership working in meeting the resettlement needs of (ex)offenders in the community (LGA, 2005; ODPM & Home Office, 2001; Stephenson, 2006). For example, the Local Government Association (LGA, 2005) report *Going Straight: Reducing re-offending in local communities* states that criminal justice agencies alone are not able to provide or guarantee effective resettlement for (ex)offenders and stresses the need for criminal justice agencies, local authorities and other housing providers to work effectively together to help (ex)offenders access and sustain accommodation. The role of the local authority is important in encouraging, coordinating and contributing to joint working with the probation service, the prison service, YOTs, and other local partners in providing a joined up multi-agency service (Alexander, 2000; Lewis et al, 2003).

The purpose of this guide is to provide clear and replicable examples of partnership working that are effective in preventing homelessness and meeting housing need for (ex) offenders and helping to reduce re-offending. This guide is not, however, exhaustive, and details of other relevant resources and guides to practice are provided in chapter 5.

1.2 Methodology

The programme of research undertaken to inform the development of this guide to practice involved three distinct phases:

- a literature review to map existing evidence on meeting the housing and related support needs of (ex)offenders
- case study research involving a range of multi-agency projects or initiatives aimed at homelessness prevention and meeting housing need for (ex)offenders
- strategic workshops bringing together housing and criminal justice practitioners to consider the research findings and assist the research team in prioritising and refining the key messages.

A total of 10 initiatives were included in the case study research. Figure 1 below provides a profile of the case study initiatives by their involvement at different stages in the criminal justice or housing process. Further details of the methodology for each phase of the research, and copies of research instruments used, are provided in the appendices (A to C).

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Figure 1: Profile of case studies by involvement at stages in the criminal justice/housing process

Case study	Pre-sentence	In custody	Following release	Move on
Yorkshire and Humberside Bail Support Scheme				
Erimus Housing (Middlesbrough)/Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol (HARP)				
Newcastle Young Offenders Housing and Resettlement Protocol (YoHARP)				
Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People				
Housing Support and Advice Service in HMP Doncaster				
P3 Link Worker and Supported Housing Scheme (Derbyshire)				
Pyramid Project (DePaul Trust in the North East)				
Re-Unite (London)				
Avon and Somerset MAPP Dangerous Offenders Housing Protocol				
Stockport Floating Support Service For (Ex)offenders (Manchester Tenancy Support)				

* From short-term (eg supported housing) to longer-term independent settled accommodation

Caveats to findings

There are a number of caveats which should be taken into account when considering the findings presented. First and foremost, due to the lack of robust outcome evaluations in this area, this guide necessarily relies on literature and case study information which appear to provide consistent information that indicates what *might* be relevant to preventing homelessness and addressing housing need for (ex)offenders.

Limitations associated with the literature review conducted for this guide include the following:

- most of the material reviewed that contained information about projects or services were articles in practitioner publications; these were mainly descriptive and provided very little detail about the interventions
- although research reports tended to provide more detail about interventions and processes, they generally lacked depth and tended to focus on the problems experienced by (ex)offenders rather than on practical examples of interventions and outcomes
- the remaining documents included protocols, good practice guides and various strategy and policy documents and it was not always clear to what extent these were evidence-based
- the information sourced tended to describe the work of a single agency, rather than a multi-agency approach, although the importance of effective multi-agency working was stressed in protocols, good practice guides and strategy and policy documents
- evidence concerning outcomes was limited: often only basic details of accommodation status following an intervention were recorded, and it was usually unclear what type of accommodation the individual had been helped to access and indeed whether they actually moved into the accommodation
- there was also a dearth of longitudinal research to measure outcomes
- evidence from the literature mainly relates to custody-based initiatives for homelessness prevention and meeting housing need because of a paucity of information in relation to community-based interventions.

With regard to the case study initiatives, although some had been evaluated (or were under evaluation at the time of fieldwork), such evaluations were usually short-term in scope, and therefore unable to provide evidence of long-term outcomes. Also, due to financial constraints, such evaluations were also often limited in their ability to provide robust measures of outcome (for example tracking clients to assess impacts of initiatives on offending behaviour). Where outcome data were available, information on outcomes is provided.

1.3 Structure of the guide

Through the literature review and case study research, three key activities have been identified which appear to constitute promising practice in relation to preventing homelessness and meeting housing need for (ex)offenders. These activities are:

- partnership working to increase capacity and diversity in housing provision for (ex)offenders
- multi-agency approaches to early assessment and planning
- the provision of comprehensive and continuing support.

The following chapters (2 to 4) discuss each of these activities in turn, presenting suggestions for practice based on evidence from the literature and case study research.

Finally, chapter 5 provides details of useful additional resources which can be accessed by practitioners and others involved in preventing homelessness and meeting housing need for (ex)offenders.

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Section 2

Partnership working to increase capacity and diversity in housing provision for (ex)offenders

A core element of practice to emerge from the literature review and case study research as being potentially promising in homelessness prevention and meeting housing need for (ex)offenders was partnership working to increase capacity and diversity in the housing options accessible to (ex)offenders. This chapter presents evidence from the literature review and case study research which highlights the importance of the development of strong links at a local level between criminal justice agencies, other agencies working with (ex)offenders (and people involved in the criminal justice system) and housing providers in order to increase capacity and diversity in housing provision for (ex)offenders.

2.1 Challenges and solutions: evidence from the literature

There is a considerable body of evidence that describes the challenges (ex)offenders face in accessing settled accommodation (eg Allender et al, 2005; CAB, 2007; Delamaide, 2006; James et al, 2004; Maguire et al, 2007; Rowlingson et al, 1997; Stothart, 2005). The literature sets out a range of structural, procedural, financial and attitudinal barriers to meeting housing need for (ex)offenders, including:

- a shortage of accommodation per se, with demand for social housing outweighing supply
- (ex)offenders not meeting the criteria to be owed the main duty under the homelessness legislation (for example, found not to be in priority need², or found to be intentionally homeless³)
- difficulties accessing private rented sector accommodation because of cost (for example, higher rents, requirement for rent deposits and rent in advance, inadequacy of the discharge grant and delays in receiving benefits for offenders released from prison, single room rents for under-25s)

² As outlined in chapter 1, the 'priority need' groups specified in the homelessness legislation include people vulnerable as a result of a custodial sentence. The local authority has to make a judgement and often those released from prison are found not to be vulnerable (James et al, 2004).

³ Where someone is found 'intentionally homeless' it means the local authority has determined that the person became homeless as a consequence of a deliberate act or omission on his or her part (which was not made in good faith in ignorance of a relevant fact). The duty owed to someone who is eligible for assistance, in priority need but intentionally homeless, is limited to securing accommodation for long enough to give the applicant a reasonable opportunity to secure accommodation for him or herself and ensuring he or she is provided with advice and assistance. (If such a person had been found unintentionally homeless, the duty would have been to ensure they had suitable accommodation until a settled home became available). The courts have held that where homelessness could reasonably have been foreseen to be the likely result of committing an offence, the local authority can take this into account when deciding whether an applicant is intentionally homeless. However, each case must be considered on its own merits.

- social and private landlords' perceptions of (ex)offenders as risky or undesirable tenants
- sometimes limited accommodation options for (ex)offenders with complex needs.

Overcoming these barriers requires the building of links between criminal justice agencies, other agencies working with (ex)offenders and housing providers from the social, voluntary and private sectors at a local level in order to increase capacity and diversity in the housing options accessible to (ex)offenders.

The NOMS *Reducing Re-offending Housing and Housing Support Resource Pack* (NOMS, 2008) emphasises that improving housing outcomes for offenders (with associated benefits in terms of reducing re-offending and enhancing public protection) can be achieved through the development of local partnerships and agreements between relevant stakeholders. The resource pack acknowledges the difficulty that housing advice workers within the criminal justice sector have in accessing settled accommodation for offenders, in many cases due to a shortage of available property. The resource pack also acknowledges that the diverse needs of offenders around ethnicity and gender, and the need to take into account risk of harm and community safety, may also impact on the availability of appropriate housing creating further challenges for advice workers.

Partnership working is assisted through recognition of challenges faced by all partners in meeting the housing needs of (ex)offenders and the development of strategies to help ameliorate these challenges. For example, research suggests that housing providers are willing to accept timely referrals and accommodate (ex)offenders if appropriate risk assessments have been made and if sufficient funding is made available to ensure adequate support and supervision (Adams, 2001; Atkinson et al, 2005; Maguire et al, 2007). Transparency and openness around information sharing and risk assessments to ensure the right level of support is in place leads to the building of trust between criminal justice agencies and housing providers. To this end, access to housing in either the social or private sectors is assisted by accurate risk assessments by the relevant agency, robust support and/or supervision arrangements, and information sharing between criminal justice agencies and other agencies and landlords (Pleace et al, 2007).

Agencies working with (ex)offenders (both statutory and non-statutory) need, therefore, to develop good communication with housing providers and demonstrate ongoing commitment and continued support when an (ex)offender is placed in housing. Additional strategies are required to encourage good quality private rented sector involvement. For example, Maguire et al (2007) suggest provision of the following:

- rent deposit and rent guarantee schemes
- guaranteed tenancies (including leasing arrangements)⁴

⁴ Ensuring properties are occupied by guaranteeing to find tenants for them, or having a leasing arrangement whereby rent is paid whether the property is occupied or not.

- support mechanisms for landlords if problems arise
- linking incentives for landlords to the meeting of defined standards of accommodation, security of tenure and property management practice.

Activities which increase capacity and diversity in housing provision are equally important at the move-on stage from short-term to longer-term settled housing to ensure that the 'silting up'⁵ of short-term accommodation is minimised. For example, tenancy support workers can establish relations with local housing providers and help negotiate access to independent settled housing. Once a client is re-housed they may continue to work with the client to maintain the tenancy and liaise between clients, housing providers and, for those under statutory supervision, the probation service (Allen & Barkley 2002; SEU 2002).

2.2 Promising practice: evidence from the case studies

Evidence from the case studies also suggests that, in order to overcome the barriers highlighted above, it is important that a range of housing options are available to (ex) offenders themselves and to the agencies involved in helping offenders to access housing. Key to achieving this was strengthening the links and developing relationships *at the local level* between criminal justice agencies and other agencies working with (ex)offenders to address housing need, and housing providers.

Key ways in which diversity and capacity were achieved in housing provision for (ex) offenders included:

- criminal justice agencies and other agencies working with (ex)offenders overcoming reluctance of housing providers to work with this client group by working in partnership with them, for example by managing tenancies or supporting (ex)offenders in managing their tenancies, in order to reduce anxieties about actual and perceived risks associated with housing this group
- development of move-on initiatives to ensure capacity in short-term supported housing
- criminal justice agencies helping landlords understand the local social benefits of engaging with (ex)offenders and the role they can play in reducing re-offending and ensuring community safety (for example, through housing potentially dangerous (ex)offenders)
- supporting housing providers in revising their evictions procedures to incorporate early alerting of relevant criminal justice and support agencies so that tenancies can be preserved if possible (considered especially important for assisting young (ex)offenders in sustaining tenancies)

⁵ 'Silting up' refers to the blocking of spaces/beds by clients who could be moved on from short-term accommodation (eg supported housing) into independent settled housing.

- multi-agency involvement in planning and commissioning the provision of accommodation for (ex)offenders with complex needs.

Table 2.1 below provides a summary of promising practice from the case study initiatives, outlining the aim of the practice, how that aim is achieved (process) and the benefits for partners and (ex)offenders that result from that practice. Readers should refer to the associated case study examples for further details.

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Table 2.1: Summary of promising practice involving partnership working to increase capacity and diversity in housing provision for (ex)offenders				
Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex) offenders	Case study example(s)
To increase capacity and diversity in housing provision by facilitating/encouraging involvement of registered social landlords and the private rented sector in the provision of housing for (ex)offenders/ others involved in the criminal justice system	Development of formal agreements such as leasing arrangements and service-level agreements between criminal justice agencies or agencies working with (ex)offenders and private rented sector housing providers which guarantee rental income and provide full tenancy support packages (eg management of tenancies and/or tenancy support for (ex)offenders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ability to ‘hold open’ tenancies ensures immediate access to settled accommodation for (ex)offenders/others involved in the criminal justice system allowing community resettlement work to begin – Landlords benefit from the expertise and support of agencies experienced in working with the particular (ex)offender client group being housed – Increased social profile/responsibility of landlords as they make an active contribution to the reducing re-offending agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Allowing community resettlement work to begin across the reducing re-offending pathways as early as possible – Maintain motivation and engagement, and support offence-free lifestyle 	<p>Case study 1 (Yorkshire & Humberside Bail Support Scheme)</p> <p>Case study 4 (Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People)</p> <p>Case study 8 (Re-Unite)</p>

Table 2.1: Summary of promising practice involving partnership working to increase capacity and diversity in housing provision for (ex)offenders (*continued*)

Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex) offenders	Case study example(s)
To maximise capacity in short-term housing provision (eg supported housing)	Multi-agency working supported through protocol agreements to develop pathways to enable (ex)offenders to access, sustain, and move on from supported accommodation into independent housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Planned approach to meeting housing need which ensures capacity in supported accommodation so that spaces are available for new clients – Preserving tenancies in supported housing by supporting changes in eviction procedures (particularly relevant for young people) 	– Support independent living thereby increasing independent living skills amongst individuals	<p>Case study 2 (Erimus Housing/Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol)</p> <p>Case study 4 (Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People)</p> <p>Case study 8 (Re-Unite)</p>

Table 2.1: Summary of promising practice involving partnership working to increase capacity and diversity in housing provision for (ex)offenders (*continued*)

Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex) offenders	Case study example(s)
<p>Overcome barriers to housing high risk (eg potentially dangerous or prolific and other priority) offenders in order to increase range of housing options for 'hard to place' (ex)offenders, assist tenancy sustainment and reduce re-offending</p>	<p>Development and implementation of protocols outlining responsibilities of relevant agencies (eg prison service, probation service, police, local authorities) in housing high risk (ex)offenders to ensure smooth transition into settled housing and support tenancy sustainment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improved risk management and surveillance of high risk offenders – Increased scope for finding settled accommodation – Reduced likelihood of concentration of high risk offenders in one area – Tenancy sustainment increases cross pathway opportunities for high risk groups and supports reducing re-offending (ie education, training and employment opportunities, financial independence – address allows access to benefits and so on) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tenancy sustainment supported through floating support provision and signposting/referral to other agencies/services for wider support needs which may interrelate to housing support needs – Facilitate continued engagement with statutory providers 	<p>Case study 3 (Avon and Somerset Dangerous Offenders Housing Protocol)</p> <p>Case study 10 (Stockport Floating Support Service)</p>

Table 2.1: Summary of promising practice involving partnership working to increase capacity and diversity in housing provision for (ex)offenders (*continued*)

Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex) offenders	Case study example(s)
Multi-agency involvement in planning and commissioning the provision of accommodation for (ex) offenders with complex needs	Development of housing and support specifications for complex needs provision	– Increased diversity in housing options to improve ability of criminal justice agencies to access accommodation for ‘hard to place’ (ex)offenders with complex needs	– Opportunity for settled living arrangements for (ex)offenders whose accommodation histories are characterised by impermanence and frequent periods of homelessness	Case study 4 (Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People)

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Case study 1: Yorkshire and Humberside Bail Support Scheme

Operating since:

2006

Partners:

- Foundation Housing
- Yorkshire & Humberside Prison Service Area
- Nacro (crime reduction charity)
- SOVA (Supporting Others through Volunteer Action) – national volunteer mentoring organisation working in the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales
- Yorkshire and Humberside Consortium (comprised by four National Probation Service Areas: Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire)

Aims/objectives:

Although an absence of settled accommodation is not a criterion for denial of bail under the Bail Act 1976, it will be reflected in concerns about non-appearance in court at a future date and further offending. Consequently, a lack of settled accommodation may contribute to the likelihood of a custodial remand. Conditions of bail often include electronic monitoring, which requires a suitable address to go to and the agreement of family members or the housing provider to electronic monitoring equipment being installed and monitoring arrangements. YOTs have a statutory duty to consider whether a bail supervision and support programme can be offered to the courts as an alternative to remand in custody and the Yorkshire and Humberside Bail Support Scheme offers a similar option for adults.

The scheme operates in courts across the region including Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Hull, York, Scarborough, Keighley and rural areas of North Yorkshire. The aim of the scheme is to reduce the numbers of custodial remands, breaches of bail and failures to attend court among people involved in the criminal justice process at the pre-trial stage. The scheme offers early intervention at the first court appearance and targets cases where bail is not expected to be granted because of a lack of (settled) accommodation and/or other support needs. In the longer-term, through stabilising offenders' lives, the scheme also hopes to encourage greater use of community sentences for offenders where the likely efficacy of community supervision can be supported through evidence from engagement with the scheme.

Case study 1: Yorkshire and Humberside Bail Support Scheme (*continued*)

How aims/objectives are met:

The scheme is promoted to the courts as offering a robust alternative to custodial remand. In each site there is a bail support team which consists of a Bail Information Officer, Bail Support Officer and Bail Accommodation Officer. The Bail Information Officer (seconded from the probation service) carries out an initial assessment based on information from CPS summaries and probation records regarding previous convictions and orders. They will also talk to solicitors and CPS about the likelihood of a custodial remand. They will use this information to assess eligibility of that defendant based on the individual's risk of being remanded in custody and will then discuss with the defendant and their solicitor the conditions of agreeing to the scheme and carry out a risk assessment. The risk assessment looks at whether the scheme can effectively supervise the individual in the community and takes into account risk to the scheme, public and other service users. The magistrate will ultimately decide whether bail under the conditions of the bail support scheme is suitable for that individual.

A full needs assessment (involving other agencies as necessary) is carried out by the Bail Support Officer for those accepted by the scheme. This informs a support plan to address identified needs (including support needs relating to accommodation, substance misuse, mental health problems, employment and training, family relationships, violence and sexual abuse). The support package involves a weekly programme of appointments with other relevant agencies. Clients must attend a minimum of three appointments a week, with non-attendance resulting in a breach of their bail conditions. Volunteer mentors are also matched to clients to support their engagement with the scheme.

Clients without settled accommodation who are granted bail are referred to the local bail accommodation officer (BAO) for that court. The BAO will make arrangements so that an address can be provided to the court. This may involve temporary accommodation in the first instance, but following a full housing needs assessment and housing options interview, the accommodation officer is responsible for finding settled (usually short-term) housing and negotiating access on behalf of the client. During the bail period, the BAO will continue to work with an individual to secure settled housing if a full housing assessment identifies this need, they will also negotiate on their behalf and provide support with repayment plans if there are rent arrears, assistance with applying for social housing or making other housing applications, securing financial support for bonds and deposits and referral to floating support services.

Case study 1: Yorkshire and Humberside Bail Support Scheme (*continued*)

The scheme accesses a range of accommodation for the bail period, including hostels, supported housing and the private rented sector. In order to ensure diversity and maximise capacity in available housing the scheme has an accommodation coordinator whose role involves supervising the scheme's local BAOs, coordinating accommodation available to the scheme and also exploring new opportunities for accessing housing. The scheme has diversified its housing options by securing agreements with private sector providers to access properties dedicated for use by the scheme in order to provide clients with tenancies secured for six months. Although landlords were initially reluctant to engage due to concerns around potential risks associated with people involved in the criminal justice system, the scheme has encouraged involvement of private landlords, by:

- Acting as the property guarantor – the scheme is financially responsible for the rent and cost of repairs for any damage to property; the scheme also continues to pay rent if there is no one in the property.
- Providing on-going tenancy-related support for tenants housed through the scheme (for example with finances and benefits, and keeping the property in good order).
- Building relationships between local BAOs and landlords with BAOs being a named contact for landlords should problems arise.

Measured outcome:

- Two-thirds of clients had successfully completed the bail period prior to sentence.
- The scheme has met its own internal target to find accommodation for a quarter of those on the scheme (which has a case load of around 85 clients) and strong links have been established with housing providers:

“Thirty-four per cent of all cases have needed accommodating. So a third of the work that we do is with people we’ve accommodated through the scheme. So it is an important element... [having] an accommodation officer on the ground in each of the areas who can do that kind of... relationship building and maintaining it, it’s much more effective in terms of having a named contact for the landlord so you know, [he/]she knows if there is a problem, they’ve got someone they can speak to.” (Project Manager, Bail Support Scheme)

Challenges:

Balancing the need to have tenancies immediately available for those granted bail through the scheme with the need to maximise occupancy rates of accommodation dedicated for use by the scheme has proved difficult. Challenges have included:

- Placement issues where two person units have been occupied by one person because their risk assessment indicated it was not considered suitable for them to share accommodation.

Case study 1: Yorkshire and Humberside Bail Support Scheme (*continued*)

- Delays in securing move on accommodation where people's bail period ends before six months have elapsed results in 'bed blocking' as individuals on the scheme have a six-month assured shorthold tenancy. To address this, the accommodation coordinator was working with one local authority to develop a joint assessment form to speed up the assessment process for social housing, and another local authority had appointed a housing officer for (ex)offenders, through which the local BAO could access housing options advice and assessments. It remains to be seen how successful these joint assessment arrangements might be.
- Finally, there is also a need to monitor housing outcomes beyond the bail period and clients' six-month tenancy on the scheme in order to measure longer-term impacts.

Further information:

An update on the scheme can be found at
http://noms.justice.gov.uk/news-publications-events/publications/newsletters/YH_External_0408?view=Binary

Archive

Case study 2: Erimus Housing (Middlesbrough)/Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol (HARP)

Operating since:

November 2005

Partners:

- Erimus Housing
- Nacro Housing Advice Team (HMP Holme House)
- Supported housing providers including English Churches Housing Group (ECHG), Stonham Housing and Community Campus (for 16 to 25 year olds)

Aims/objectives:

To assist returning prisoners and vulnerable clients in accessing and sustaining short-term accommodation and to support move-on to longer-term settled accommodation to avoid 'silting up' of supported accommodation.

How aims/objectives are met:

Following a transfer in 2004, Middlesbrough Council's former housing is owned and managed by Erimus Housing, a not-for-profit social landlord. Middlesbrough Council have also contracted out their homelessness service to Erimus Housing. Erimus Housing is not only responsible for considering applications for assistance under the homelessness legislation but also for advising on access to a range of housing options including housing association, private rented and supported housing schemes.

Erimus Housing has a one-stop property shop (Homechoice) in which the homelessness service, choice based lettings team and disabled persons housing service are co-located. The homelessness service has a vulnerable person's officer (VPO) whose role is to support vulnerable clients in accessing the necessary services to improve their housing prospects. This client group mainly includes probation clients, offenders (including violent and sexual offenders) and people at risk of substance misuse and sexual exploitation. The VPO is also responsible for dealing with referrals made through the Housing and Returning Prisoners protocol (HARP). Upon receipt of a HARP referral, the VPO makes an initial assessment of which housing option(s) might be best to pursue as part of a planned approach to meeting housing need. HARP referrals which meet the criteria for social housing are supported in bidding through the choice based lettings system. Other clients may be assessed as suitable for referral to a supported housing scheme. The VPO will negotiate with supported housing providers to book places, or advise the individual to make a housing application so they can register with the choice based lettings scheme.

Case study 2: Erimus Housing (Middlesbrough)/Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol (HARP) *(continued)*

Erimus has strong links with local supported housing providers and works in partnership with them, making referrals, and then offering access to settled accommodation when clients are ready to move on. For example, Erimus works with ECHG to deliver a move-on initiative. Stage 1 involves assessment under the programme to determine individual needs and the client is offered a hostel bed by ECHG. The client is allocated a key worker and supported to engage with other agencies as well as develop life skills that will help them to maintain accommodation (such as housekeeping and budgeting skills). Stage 2 involves living in self contained accommodation provided by ECHG, before becoming eligible for Stage 3, which is delivered through Erimus Housing's Vulnerable Persons Procedure Protocol (VPPP).

The VPPP enables vulnerable clients in supported accommodation who are assessed as being ready to live independently to move on to settled housing. The protocol includes a requirement for the tenant to have a support plan and the VPO will liaise with other agencies to ensure that an appropriate package of support is in place prior to re-housing. The protocol allows for information-sharing between the homelessness service, criminal justice agencies and housing providers to ensure support is tailored to individuals' needs to help them set up home and sustain their tenancy. Individuals are referred through the protocol to the choice-based letting scheme and are supported in registering an application. Following eligibility checks and upon fulfilling criteria set out in the VPPP they are then allowed to bid for properties with the support of their key worker and the VPO. Once a bid has been successful, the individual is assisted in buying basic essentials to move into the tenancy (by ECHG) and provided with a furniture pack (by Erimus). All agencies involved in the support plan, along with the VPO, are invited to attend the tenancy sign up and contact details are shared. Any agency, or the estate officer, can call everybody together should the tenancy arrangement deteriorate in order to determine what additional support may be required. Finally, the individual also signs a Supported Behaviour Agreement.

Measured outcome:

Erimus Housing states that 98 per cent of tenancies provided through the VPPP move-on initiative are sustained.

Challenges:

Previously HARP referrals received by the VPO from the Nacro Housing Advice Team at Holme House prison were not always made early enough to ensure that settled accommodation could be set up prior to release. Also, where HARP referrals were only partially completed, it made initial assessment more difficult and required chasing on the part of the VPO to obtain the relevant information which could delay planning.

Case study 2: Erimus Housing (Middlesbrough)/Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol (HARP) (continued)

In order to address these issues Nacro and Erimus Housing met in March 2008 to discuss the challenges and solutions to making early HARP referrals for prisoners wishing to live in Middlesbrough and requiring housing options advice. They also discussed the possibility of Erimus Housing being involved in Nacro's 'Good Tenants' training course run in the prison. Suggestions included Erimus providing general housing advice as part of the course and also working individually with prisoners to identify housing options (including in the private rented sector through Erimus Housing's rent deposit scheme). This would ensure that prisoners have a direct link with the VPO from an early stage.

The VPO and Nacro now meet face-to-face on a regular basis in order to discuss referrals and share information. Nevertheless, it is not always possible for Nacro to make HARP referrals at an early stage because prisoners' circumstances may change, they may have been recently transferred from another establishment or they have simply declined assistance until the last minute. In such cases (with the offender's consent), Nacro provides contact details for the offender's probation officer and CARAT (Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare) worker to the VPO so that they can obtain further information as required.

Further information:

Further information is available from Erimus Housing:

Email: homechoice@erimushousing.co.uk

The HARP protocol is available at:

www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/files/pdf/HARP%20Protocol.pdf

ARC

Case study 3: Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP) for Avon and Somerset Dangerous Offenders Housing Protocol

Operating since:

July 2003

Partners:

- All local authorities within the region (Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Mendip District Council, North Somerset Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Gloucestershire Council, South Somerset District Council, Taunton Deane District Council, West Somerset District Council)
- Avon and Somerset Constabulary
- Avon and Somerset Probation Area
- HMP Bristol
- Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and Housing Associations (South Somerset Homes RSL, North Somerset Housing RSL, Mendip Housing RSL, Kennet and Guinness Housing Society, Sovereign Housing Association, South West Housing Society, Somer Housing Trust, English Churches Housing Group, Homes in Sedgemoor)

Aims/objectives:

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) have been a statutory requirement in England since 2000⁶. Various community agencies have a duty to cooperate with MAPPA under the 2003 Criminal Justice Act. They include: local authority children's and adults' services; local authority housing departments; registered social landlords (RSLs); and health services. The MAPPA duty on housing authorities is to cooperate with the police, probation and the prison service (the "responsible authority") in establishing arrangements to assess and manage the risks posed by sexual and violent offenders. Although there is no duty on housing authorities to provide accommodation, housing authorities are expected to consider carefully all housing options, including an appropriate allocation within their own stock or nomination to an RSL. Cooperation could include providing information on the availability, type and location of housing, and offering advice on the suitability of available accommodation.

The Avon and Somerset MAPPA Dangerous Offender Housing Protocol (DOHP) helps to formalise this duty for local authorities and RSLs to cooperate with the responsible authority to assist in housing this group of (ex)offenders. Approximately a quarter of referrals for accommodation of potentially dangerous offenders (PDOs) to the Avon and Somerset Probation Area Offender Management and Assessment Team (OMAT) are considered unsuitable for private sector placements or other voluntary sector housing schemes because of the high level of risk posed (risk of harm to others and risk of re-offending). The DOHP aims to ensure that this sub-group of PDOs are suitably housed (ie in settled, safe and secure accommodation) on release from custody or approved premises by encouraging local authorities to accept referrals through the DOHP, establish whether a homelessness duty exists, and formally determine priority need within a three-month timescale.

⁶ The four MAPPA principles are to identify those who may pose a risk of harm; share relevant information about them; assess the nature and extent of risk; and find ways to manage that risk effectively.

Case study 3: Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP) for Avon and Somerset Dangerous Offenders Housing Protocol (*continued*)

Referrals are made where an initial assessment by the Probation Area Accommodation Officer (AAO) indicates that the PDO is likely to be in priority need (for example, as a result of institutionalisation together with other factors which may make them vulnerable). Where applicants have made themselves intentionally homeless then the local authority will actively work with the AAO to find an alternative housing solution in the private sector or elsewhere.

Additional aims of the DOHP are to increase the scope for finding settled accommodation, share the burden for prioritising PDOs for housing across the region and reduce the likelihood of undesirable over-concentration of PDOs in one location. These aims are achieved via a regional cross-boundary agreement to facilitate moves between local authorities within the region.

How aims/objectives are met:

The probation service Area Accommodation Officer was proactive in publicising and promoting the protocol to local authorities. This involved:

- Promotion of the protocol as an important tool in improving community safety and the safety of service providers through allowing for improved risk management of offenders on licence and improved surveillance of (ex)offenders in the community.
- Presentations and training sessions involving the police for local authorities and, latterly, registered social landlords (RSLs) to outline the rationale for, and processes involved in, the implementation of the protocol.
- Agreeing procedures for information sharing between the probation service and local authorities and RSLs.
- Provision of floating support to assist (ex)offenders in sustaining their tenancies.
- Monitoring and publication of figures indicating how many referrals are made to each local authority area and how many referrals result in the offer of a tenancy to help ensure that the distribution of referrals is seen as 'fair' and that the protocol remains high on local authorities' agendas.
- Reviewing the DOHP every two years, giving all parties the opportunity to recommend amendments to the protocol in line with developing best practice and changes in legislation. Recommendations at the last review included a defined timescale (48 hours) within which police checks on identified accommodation should be carried out to minimise void periods for RSLs.

Measured outcome:

In 2006/07, 21 cases were referred by the OMAT to local authorities under the DOHP. Of these, 18 cases were formally accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need, and an offer of accommodation was made within three months of referral. Accommodation offers were made by eight of the nine local authorities in the region, indicating that the cross-boundary agreement was operating effectively.

Case study 3: Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP) for Avon and Somerset Dangerous Offenders Housing Protocol (*continued*)

Challenges:

- Implementation of the protocol has been challenging in relation to getting all the necessary partners to work together, particularly as it has involved adapting existing systems, training of staff, and many months of negotiations and consultations with key stakeholders. The implementation process also has to be on-going:

“It has to be a process that is continuously worked on and unless [there] is a person in every authority who is committed to making it work, it will just be another document on somebody’s desk that says ‘We’re in agreement to this’ but nobody [is] making it happen.” (Probation Service Area Accommodation Officer)

- Information sharing protocols need tightening to ensure the appropriate and secure sharing of relevant information between agencies.
- Longer-term outcome evaluation is needed to measure impact of successful placements through the DOHP.
- Although referrals involve cases assessed by the AAO as ‘likely’ to be in priority need and this has to be formally determined by the local authority receiving the referral, there is a lack of consistency across local authorities in their assessment procedures.

Further information:

The protocol can be accessed at
www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/download/asset/?asset_id=630002

ARC

Case study 4: Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People⁷

Operating since:

March 2005

Partners:

- Connexions Wiltshire
- Housing Associations (West Wiltshire Housing Association, Sarsen Housing, Westlea Housing, Ridgeway Housing Association, Bromford Housing Association)
- Local authorities (Kennet District Council, West Wiltshire District Council, Salisbury District Council, North Wiltshire District Council)
- Voluntary sector housing and support providers (Alabare Christian Care Centres, Beacon Youth Trust, Amber Foundation)
- Wiltshire County Council Children & Families Service, Aftercare Service, Emergency Duty Care (EDS) Service and Youth Development Service
- Wiltshire Youth Offending Service

Aims/objectives:

Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People (as4yp) was originally funded as a Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA). The project had two key aims or targets to:

- Eradicate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation as temporary accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.
- Significantly reduce the numbers of 16 and 17 year olds in unsuitable accommodation.

How aims/objectives are achieved:

The project involved both senior managers who had the ability to commit resources, and experienced staff who understood the operational issues. The project benefited from the ability and willingness to commit funding and resources from Wiltshire Youth Offending Service, Salisbury District Council and latterly Supporting People. The aims were achieved through the following strategic and operational activities:

Strategic

- Multi-agency agreement about, and sign-up to, the goals of the project and the common referral process.
- Monthly project board meetings chaired by the CEO of North Wiltshire District Council.
- Development of a Housing and Support Standard for use by all the partners as a common standard, setting out criteria by which the suitability of accommodation and support for young people can be assessed.

⁷ Formerly Wiltshire Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) multi-agency homeless and support project for 16 and 17 year olds.

Case study 4: Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People⁷ (continued)

- Establishment of multi-agency sub-groups to foster partnership working and take the work of the project forward in the following four areas: communication and awareness raising for internal and external stakeholders; service user involvement; alternative accommodation options; and route mapping and revisions to protocol for the project.
- Production of bi-annual newsletters and a website to promote the project and keep partners informed of progress and developments.
- Representation of the project on other groups in the region concerned with housing and homeless options for young people.
- The ability to share the burden for dealing with challenging situations and clients across organisational and geographic boundaries.
- The involvement of non-statutory agencies that provide housing and support.
- Involvement of service users in the production of two DVDs used for promoting the project and educating stakeholders and other agencies about the needs and experiences of young people facing homelessness.
- Annual multi-agency regional conferences.

Operational

- Recruitment of a Young Persons Housing Support Officer, based within the Youth Offending Service, with a remit (and 'emergency fund') to provide support for 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, place young people in appropriate, sustainable accommodation, and co-ordinate adequate support packages with relevant providers – this role included involvement in pre-remand and pre-sentence plans and community resettlement planning for young people in custody.
- Mentoring, advocacy and practical support for young people to help them sustain tenancies and licences provided via accommodation mentors and/or the housing support officers.
- Training of housing providers in restorative approaches to reduce evictions and influence change in housing providers' eviction procedures so that key partner agencies are aware of problems which could lead to eviction at an earlier stage and can provide additional support as required.
- Inclusion of the work of the housing support officer in a two-day training programme provided by the Youth Offending Service to resettlement/throughcare officers from Young Offender Institutions in the region.

Case study 4: Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People⁷ (continued)

"In Wiltshire, the LPSA has broken down quite a few barriers. Because people attend [the sub] groups together, because everybody knows what everybody does, people are more open to change... The LPSA has helped refocus the fact that actually we're talking about young people...in crisis...and we have a duty to them...and it has to be somebody's [duty] who [is] around this table because th[ese] are all the agencies... Before [LPSA] that was missing, because there was space...for nobody to pick up [young] people in crisis because people would have a way of saying 'Well it's not my responsibility'." (Housing provider)

Measured outcome:

Cumulative targets were set to measure the success of the project. These were that no more than 16 young people should have been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in the final year of the project, and that the number of young people aged 16 to 17 living in unsuitable accommodation should be reduced to 45. (Figures from the start of the project were 132 young people living in bed and breakfast accommodation and 225 in unsuitable accommodation).

The project accepted between 60 and 80 referrals per year through the Housing Support Officer, and met its targets relating to numbers of young people placed in bed and breakfast and other unsuitable accommodation.

Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme was awarded Regional Centre of Excellence status for providing services to young homeless people by Communities and Local Government, and additional funding was secured for continuation of the initiative, including funding for a second young people's housing support officer who came into post in January 2008.

Challenges:

A challenge was identified in finding suitable accommodation for young people with complex needs. The subgroup set up to explore alternative accommodation options for hard-to-place young people with complex needs has designed a specification for new complex needs accommodation provision, and developed a proposal for funding which has been submitted to Supporting People.

Further information:

Further information is available from the scheme's website: www.as4yp.com/

Section 3

Multi-agency approaches to early assessment and planning

The previous chapter outlined the important role that partnership working between criminal justice agencies, voluntary sector services and housing providers can play in increasing capacity and diversity in housing provision for (ex)offenders. However, the circumstances and complex needs of (ex)offenders mean early assessment and planning are also crucial in ensuring access to settled accommodation, particularly on release from custody.

Developing and implementing a successful action plan that ensures settled accommodation on release is a challenging task for agencies to take on in isolation. Evidence from the literature review and case study research emphasised various dimensions of multi-agency working that may underpin successful early assessment and planning strategies to prevent homelessness and meet housing need.

3.1 Challenges and solutions: evidence from the literature

For offenders in custody, assessment of housing need was previously commonly undertaken as part of pre-release preparation towards the end of the custodial period. There is now general acknowledgement that the assessment of housing need should start in prison at entry and also be undertaken at review points (James et al, 2004; NOMS 2008). Challenges to early assessment and planning include variations in local authority practices, their willingness to consider applications for housing assistance earlier than 28 days prior to release and the ability of other social and private sector housing providers to assess applications for assistance from offenders in custody (Stothart, 2005). Pre-release planning is also hampered by a lack of certainty about timing of release from custody and prisoner transfers.

In order to overcome these challenges, Allender et al (2005) recommend that planning should begin at induction to address housing need, prevent homelessness and to ensure all prisoners have settled accommodation to go to on release. They suggest that effective housing advice and support should be an integral part of resettlement. Early assessment of housing need achieves three key aims (Communities and Local Government & DCSF, 2008; ODPM, 2005; Revolving Doors, 2002):

- identifying those requiring assistance in maintaining, transferring or closing down tenancies in order to prevent unplanned accommodation loss

- identifying those who will need help in finding accommodation so that accommodation can be arranged for release
- identifying practical and other support required to enable offenders to access and sustain accommodation on release.

Effective housing advice and support for offenders in custody involves two key groups:

- prison-based housing advice services and criminal justice sector partners
- local authorities and other housing providers.

Role of prison-based housing advice services and criminal justice sector partners

NOMS (2008) has set a target for the prison and probation services in 2008-09 that 90 per cent of sentenced prisoners and those on remand in local prisons have an initial housing assessment, undertaken within four days of reception. Determining housing status, assessing housing and housing-related support needs and providing housing advice in prisons is undertaken by a diverse range of personnel. This includes prison officers, probation officers, voluntary sector staff and peer advisors. Findings from a NOMS survey, conducted to identify what is provided where, indicate that most probation services and prisons offer some form of accommodation advice service and around one fifth of these services are provided by the voluntary sector (Richardson, 2007).

A number of sources (Ambrosi, 2003; Communities and Local Government and DCSF, 2008; Eagle and Gammampila, 2005; Harding & Harding, 2006; HMIP, 2001; James et al, 2004; NOMS, 2008; Pawson et al, 2007) identify several practical actions that prison-based housing advice services and their local partners can consider undertaking pre-release to assist in ensuring settled accommodation is in place for prisoners upon release. These activities are focused around two key areas and are outlined under these headings below:

- prevention of accommodation loss
- finding accommodation for release.

Prevention of accommodation loss

Pawson et al (2007) suggest actions at reception to custody should be to prevent the loss of accommodation, including through assistance with housing benefit claims, addressing debt issues such as rent arrears, securing unoccupied properties, and, for young people, identifying issues relating to their ability to return to the parental home on release and any family support and/or mediation work required to support this.

MacKenzie (2003) indicates that working closely with the local council and liaising directly on behalf of an individual can help to maintain a tenancy. For example, tenancies can be maintained by ensuring housing benefit continues to be paid. Housing benefit is payable for 52 weeks for remand prisoners, and for 13 weeks for convicted prisoners where the

length of time spent in prison is unlikely to exceed 13 weeks. Reid-Howie Associates Ltd (2004) identify that (in a small number of cases) a tenancy can be maintained by transferring it to a family member or partner meeting the costs for the period of imprisonment.

If the prisoner has a mortgage, the lender can be contacted to re-negotiate re-payment terms or to suspend them (Allender et al, 2005). Home-owners may also be able to maintain ownership by letting their home or having a family member who resides there apply for housing benefit if they are eligible. If the prisoner is single and on remand and has been receiving mortgage interest payments as part of their Income Support or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, they can continue to receive this, but need to complete an application form and send it to their local Jobcentre Plus. For remand prisoners who were receiving contributions-based Jobseeker's Allowance, a new claim for Income Support (housing costs only) can be made (Allender et al, 2005).

Where it is not possible to retain a tenancy, actions need to be agreed about ending it. This prevents the accrual of rent arrears and the landlord assuming that the tenancy has been abandoned. Proper termination of tenancies may take four weeks, and making arrangements to pay the rent over the notice period is important. This may involve liaison with the local council, as housing benefit remains payable during the notice period (for up to four weeks) (Reid-Howie Associates Ltd, 2004). Gilliver (2000) comments that coming to some agreement at the start of the remand period or sentence (generally around the termination of a tenancy) with housing authorities can also include discussing whether they will take previous tenants back or provide future offers of accommodation, and where appropriate starting the process of re-applying to the authority to join their waiting list.

Finding accommodation for release

Where accommodation needs to be found for release, and depending on the responsibilities of relevant statutory agencies and the arrangements that exist in a given prison, the YOT, probation and/or voluntary sector resettlement service will be involved in drawing up a housing action plan as part of the sentence plan. This may include, for example, any agreement to pay rent arrears, appealing an exclusion, or participation in programmes intended to have a positive impact on housing options (such as attending a course on tenancy sustainment skills).

As part of this action plan, the prison-based housing advice service and/or other partners will be involved in starting the process of providing housing options advice and making applications to the local authority and other housing providers (such as supported housing providers and registered social and private rented sector landlords) as early as possible, depending on the length of sentence and likely date of release (Eagle & Gammampila, 2005; Pawson et al, 2007). This would include exploring whether the prisoner could return to any previously held accommodation and whether any options exist within family and other networks. In addition, referrals should be made to services which can meet the

prisoner's housing-related support needs (eg floating support services) identified through the initial assessment of housing need. For prisoners being released under statutory supervision, the supervising officer may be able to offer support in finding housing or signposting to other sources of housing advice, and is likely to work with the prison-based resettlement service if there is one.

Where relationships have been established with local housing providers (as described in the previous chapter) these links will assist the application and assessment process. In addition to developing strong links with housing providers, other actions to consider include whether a void can be funded (for example by probation or the YOT) for a short period to hold a bed open, whether release on temporary licence (ROTL) is possible so that the prisoner is able to attend housing interviews and/or view properties, assisting prisoners in securing grants and other financial support for bonds and deposits, and arranging short-term accommodation to bridge any gaps between release and settled accommodation becoming available (Eagle & Gammampila, 2005; Pawson et al, 2007). Any referrals made to meet an offender's housing-related support needs should also be shared with prospective housing providers.

Where applications for housing are unsuccessful, the prison-based housing advice service or criminal justice agency officer should identify alternative housing options and, where appropriate, consider the possibility of appeal and offer support to assist with this. This process is helped by landlords responding promptly to housing applications from prisoners, and informing the prisoner or named advice worker/officer whether the application has been accepted or rejected, with reasons for the rejection explained and indications of any changes expected of the individual which might alter the decision (Harding & Harding, 2006).

Role of local authorities

NOMS (2008) suggests that local authorities can help prevent homelessness and address the housing needs of offenders by ensuring that housing advice is available and accessible to offenders prior to release, considering applications for housing assistance in good time before release and making timely decisions on applications to prevent last minute homelessness. For example:

- anyone without a realistic prospect of accommodation on release should be encouraged to apply for assistance to the local authority homelessness officer (ideally a nominated person from the prison-based housing advice service should liaise and work with the officer)
- wherever possible, arrangements should be made for those likely to be homeless on release from prison to be interviewed by the local authority (face-to-face, or by telephone or video link) before their release date

- wherever possible, the homelessness department should notify the prisoner of their decision on the application prior to release and, in particular, advise whether they will be able to arrange accommodation and, if so, provide details
- as a minimum, where the prisoner is found to be eligible for assistance and homeless but not in priority need and/or found to be intentionally homeless (and therefore not owed the main homelessness duty), the local authority must provide advice and assistance to help the prisoner in any efforts he or she makes to find accommodation for him or herself
- where the local authority provides a housing options service, the authority should try and find accommodation for the prisoner through this service.

A number of different local approaches that can help to provide flexibility and facilitate the involvement of local authorities in early assessment and planning to meet housing need for offenders being released from prison have been identified from the literature (Hay, 2003; HMIP, 2001; James et al, 2004; Pawson et al, 2007):

- having a single point of contact within the local authority housing advice service for communication with prison, probation, YOTs and other relevant partners
- provision of a regular in-reach service from the local authority housing and homelessness advice section to provide assistance with housing advice, housing applications and benefit claims
- conducting telephone or video link assessments (although face-to-face assessment is preferable)
- cross-boundary agreements between local authorities in the prison catchment area to help (ex)offenders to move from one area to another, with nominated contacts in each of the housing or homelessness departments that facilitate this⁸.

Protocols

Multi-agency involvement in early and effective assessment of housing need can be successfully underpinned by protocol agreements. A number of protocols⁹ exist which outline the processes that can be undertaken to address housing need among (ex) offenders and share responsibility for this amongst the relevant agencies (for example, the prison service, probation service, YOT, statutory and voluntary sector housing providers

⁸ Cross-boundary agreements can assist individuals on release who do not wish to return to an area where they were previously living (and have a local connection). They may wish to stay in the area of the prison or move to another area to start afresh and/or avoid peers who might lead them into further offending. In either case they may not have a local connection with their chosen area and this could result in them being referred back to their 'home' area if they were accepted as owed the main homelessness duty by the local authority in their chosen area. However, not having a local connection with an area is not a barrier to applying for housing assistance in that area. Local authorities must consider all applications for help and can only take account of local connection once they are satisfied that an applicant meets all the criteria for the main homelessness duty. In such cases the local authority dealing with the application must provide help even if they refer the case to another local authority. They must secure accommodation until such time as the question of referral is resolved, and if the referral is not agreed the local authority that received the application must discharge the full duty. Where any other homelessness duty is owed (eg a duty to ensure advice and assistance is provided in a case where the applicant is found homeless but not in priority need) the local authority dealing with the application must discharge the duty and cannot take account of whether or not the applicant has a local connection.

⁹ Cumbria Joint Protocol for Housing Offenders (2006), Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol (HARP) (2004), Young Offenders Housing and Resettlement Protocol (YoHARP) (2007). See chapter 5 for information on obtaining copies of these protocols.

and other agencies with which there are specific local arrangements). The efficacy of these arrangements has not been evaluated, but they would appear to point to potentially promising practice for several reasons:

- they broadly take each stage of the criminal justice process and identify the actions that might be necessary to either secure any existing accommodation, bring a tenancy to a close or to start the process of finding accommodation
- they specify which agency is responsible at what stage and what actions they might undertake (this is particularly important in relation to young people where confusion can arise regarding which legislation is applicable in individual cases¹⁰)
- they minimise the impact of changes in personnel across the agencies involved
- they provide practical guidelines for information sharing
- they formalise processes and timing for reviews of the effectiveness of protocol agreements and procedures, and partnership working.

3.2 Promising practice: evidence from the case studies

Evidence from the case study research emphasised various dimensions of multi-agency working that may underpin successful early assessment and planning strategies to prevent homelessness and meet housing need. These encompassed:

- partnership working between housing advice services offered within prisons and local authorities
- protocols outlining the actions that can be undertaken to address housing need and assign responsibility for these between the agencies which are signed up to the protocol.

Table 3.1 below provides a summary of promising practice from the case study initiatives, outlining the aim of the practice, how that aim is achieved (process), and the benefits for partners and (ex)offenders that result from that practice. Readers should refer to the associated case study examples for further details.

¹⁰ For homeless young people under the age of 18 other legislation may apply, specifically the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Table 3.1: Summary of promising practice involving multi-agency approaches to early assessment and planning

Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex) offenders	Case study example(s)
<p>To ensure prison-based housing advice services and local authorities can work in partnership to facilitate early assessment and planning to prevent homelessness and meet housing need</p>	<p>– Local authority provides a prison in-reach service and works closely with prison-based housing advice workers to identify housing solutions both for offenders with existing accommodation and those in need of accommodation on release</p>	<p>– Early assessment of housing status and joint-working between relevant agencies can prevent accommodation loss where offenders in custody have accommodation to return to on release</p> <p>– Accommodation is planned for release so that last-minute applications for assistance to the local authority are minimised</p> <p>– Triggers for re-offending can be proactively managed from point of discharge</p>	<p>– Offenders are assisted in maintaining tenancies while in custody where this is possible and appropriate</p> <p>– Offenders without accommodation to go to on release are assisted in identifying appropriate (and realistic) housing options and arranging accommodation for release</p>	<p>Case study 2 (Erimus Housing/Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol)</p> <p>Case study 5 (Housing Support and Advice Service provided in HMP Doncaster)</p>

Table 3.1: Summary of promising practice involving multi-agency approaches to early assessment and planning (*continued*)

Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex) offenders	Case study example(s)
<p>To develop protocols which outline actions to be undertaken to address housing need and assigning responsibility for these actions between agencies signed up to the protocol</p>	<p>Relevant agencies work in partnership to develop a protocol which will operate successfully <i>at the local level</i> and which all agencies involved have a sense of ownership over and commitment to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fostering inter-agency understanding of agencies’ different roles, responsibilities and constraints in relation to meeting (ex)offender housing need – Clarifying particular agencies’ specific or statutory responsibilities (for example, in relation to 16 and 17 year olds) – Minimising duplication of assessment and facilitating the coordinated, targeted and intelligent use of resources to meet housing need 	<p>– (Ex)offenders’ housing needs are met through a coordinated multi-agency approach which ensures early assessment and planning</p>	<p>Case study 2 (Erimus Housing/Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol)</p> <p>Case study 4 (Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People)</p> <p>Case study 6 (Young Offenders Housing and Resettlement Protocol)</p>

Case study 5: Housing Support and Advice Service provided in HMP Doncaster

Operating since:

2003

Partners:

- Action Housing & Support Ltd
- HMP Doncaster
- Jobcentre Plus
- Local authorities (Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Sheffield City Council)
- South Yorkshire Probation Area
- Sheffield Homes

Aims/objectives:

To reduce the number of prisoners released without settled accommodation and applications to local authorities for homelessness assistance by providing proactive and early intervention for offenders whilst in prison.

How aims/objectives are achieved:

HMP Doncaster has a resettlement team, called the Community Re-Entry Team (CRT), which includes a housing section, employment section and the CARAT team. Other external agencies also provide information, advice and guidance relating to various resettlement challenges, including Jobcentre Plus, social services (for prisoners with children) and Nacro, which runs a housing course at the prison.

The CRT's housing advice workers interview all new receptions and undertake an initial housing needs assessment within 48 hours (prisoners requiring drug or alcohol detoxification are assessed within seven days). The prison's induction programme also includes information on all services available at the prison and the induction pack has an information sheet for prisoners with housing needs which advises them to self-refer to the CRT if they require housing advice or support.

Prevention of accommodation loss is prioritised at the reception to custody stage. Jobcentre Plus attends the prison five days per week to ensure that housing benefit claims can be reviewed and updated within two days of reception. If the period of imprisonment will exceed the housing benefit entitlement and there are other household members who could claim housing benefit, a housing advice worker will contact other household members to provide advice about claiming benefits so that the tenancy can be maintained. If the tenancy cannot be saved then it is closed down appropriately. This ensures that the offender is not penalised for defaulting on a previous tenancy when they make a new application on release.

Case study 5: Housing Support and Advice Service provided in HMP Doncaster *(continued)*

To assist prisoners who do not have settled accommodation arranged for their release, the prison has partnership agreements with local authorities and housing associations. These partnerships function in a range of ways. For example, Sheffield City Council (CC) funds a prison visiting team (PVT) through which a homelessness (housing solutions) officer from Sheffield CC conducts housing advice/housing options interviews, followed where applicable by an application for homelessness assistance in Doncaster prison. (Doncaster and Rotherham have followed this model and also conduct homelessness assessments in the prison.) By attending the prison the housing solutions officer can conduct early assessments to determine whether a full homelessness assessment is appropriate. If so, the officer will explore circumstances in depth to establish whether the offender meets the criteria for support (for example, because of mental health issues or a lack of statutory support for which the individual was eligible which led to a failed tenancy). Where an offender is eligible for an allocation of social housing they are assisted with bidding for accommodation through Sheffield's choice-based lettings scheme run by Sheffield Homes. The housing solutions officer works in partnership with Sheffield Homes' Home Finder Support Team to start the bidding process prior to release. The housing solutions officer works primarily with short-sentenced prisoners, but also works with probation to assist them in fulfilling their responsibility for finding accommodation for prisoners sentenced to 12 months or more. The housing solution officer also acts as a point of contact for (ex)offenders post release.

For offenders where a homelessness assessment is not appropriate, other routes into accommodation are explored. Early planning is assisted by:

- Housing providers accepting telephone referrals from the visiting homeless officers or CRT housing advice workers.
- Housing providers attending HMP Doncaster to do their assessments.
- Having four prisoners who have received training to help complete housing forms to speed up the referral process.

Sheffield CC has also set up a direct payment scheme with Doncaster prison so that offenders can begin to repay rent arrears. Prisoners can also open a bank account (with Barclays Bank) in order to start saving for a bond in order to access private rented accommodation. The Credit Union will match savings to contribute towards a bond. The CRT encourages prisoners to identify accommodation themselves and will go and visit addresses to assess their suitability.

The prison funds outreach workers who support prisoners post release, so that housing providers know there is additional support in place provided by the prison. Post release support includes helping (ex)offenders set up home and linking them in with other agencies to support education, training and employment and life skills development.

Case study 5: Housing Support and Advice Service provided in HMP Doncaster *(continued)*

Measured outcome:

The CRT and PVT record all referrals to housing providers and responses. Of 153 prisoners discharged in January 2008, 125 went out to settled accommodation, 15 were discharged as No Fixed Abode and six to temporary accommodation. The perception of Sheffield CC is that the PVT is an important contributor to the successful reduction in applications for homelessness assistance. It is also considered important in reducing the use of temporary accommodation, as many prison leavers had been remaining in bed and breakfast accommodation for too long. However, these impacts have not, as yet, been measured or evaluated.

Challenges:

The prison is trying to overcome the shortage of local accommodation by:

- Meeting with local authorities and other housing providers (including in the private rented sector) to explain the work of the CRT and to understand housing providers' concerns and try and persuade them to allocate accommodation for (ex)offenders. The CRT has built up relationships with housing providers and established a directory of contacts. It also holds copies of providers' housing application forms.
- Holding group meetings for voluntary sector agencies working with the prison. These meetings provide an opportunity for networking and to help open up new accommodation opportunities since voluntary sector agencies may provide multiple services, including housing, which the prison can access.

Further information:

Serco Home Affairs, HMP & YOI Doncaster

Tel: 01302 760870

Case study 6: Newcastle Young Offenders Housing and Resettlement Protocol (YoHARP)

Operating since:

April 2007

Partners:

- Leaving Care Team (Newcastle City Council Social Services Directorate)
- Housing Advice Centre and Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Project (Newcastle City Council Strategic Housing Service)
- Newcastle YOT
- Your Homes Newcastle Inline (homelessness prevention and support service for young people)

Aims/objectives:

To reduce re-offending and assist Newcastle City Council in meeting the YJB requirement that all young people at risk of homelessness are housed in suitable accommodation. The protocol was developed alongside a number of homelessness prevention initiatives by the Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Project (NHPP) in consultation with a working group of key agencies involved in housing young (ex)offenders. Development of the protocol was funded through a three-year grant for NHPP from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. YoHARP has three key aims, to:

- Improve joint working and planning to prevent young people aged 16 to 17 years leaving custody without suitable accommodation to go to.
- Avoid the use of custodial remand for young people where suitable accommodation would make bail appropriate.
- Reduce crisis placements in accommodation that is not ideal for young, vulnerable people.

How aims/objectives are achieved:

The protocol clarifies and formalises the responsibilities of relevant agencies that are committed to it. YoHARP identifies how the partner agencies can work together to ensure that housing needs are met at different stages of the criminal justice process. For example:

Pre-trial: To avoid a young person being held in custody on remand because of a lack of suitable accommodation, the YOT will check whether he/she has somewhere suitable to stay and, if not, will explore available options such as moving in with family/friends or into supported accommodation. Where a young person has been remanded in custody and because of a lack of suitable accommodation, the YOT will find accommodation as soon as possible in preparation for the next court hearing to support a bail plan. Where a custodial sentence is likely, the YOT will explore whether a return to the parental home after release is possible and, if not, what the alternatives are. If the young person currently holds a tenancy, the YOT will ensure that it is either terminated or held, and that any practical arrangements, such as the removal of possessions, are made.

Case study 6: Newcastle Young Offenders Housing and Resettlement Protocol (YoHARP)

During custody: A training plan will be agreed for the young person within 10 days of their imprisonment and will include plans for accommodation, as per the National Standards for Youth Justice. These plans will depend on individual circumstances prior to custody and the length of sentence. The YOT will ensure that applications for accommodation are made before release and Inline will conduct a support needs assessment.

Upon release and in the community: On the day of release, the YOT (with the assistance of other agencies, such as Inline) will arrange the practicalities of moving into the new accommodation. This includes support with transport, moving in possessions and shopping for food. Inline will maintain regular face-to-face contact and ensure that the young person is progressing through his/her support plan and their support needs are being met. Inline will also continue to monitor and ensure that the accommodation is suitable. Review meetings involving the young person and all relevant agencies are also arranged.

Partner agencies attributed the successful implementation of the protocol and its practical application to the following activities:

- Staff from partner agencies being involved in the working group designing the protocol – respondents commented that the process had given them a sense of ownership and made them more committed to its delivery.
- Training on YoHARP, delivered by the NHPP through workshops involving the use of case studies to show how it could improve joint working – this was perceived to have helped clarify the responsibilities of different agencies and partners, and to have fostered a sense of working together towards a shared goal.

Development of the protocol and associated training had also assisted interagency understanding of the difficulties and constraints faced by all agencies in housing young (ex)offenders which was perceived to have led to increased interagency cooperation.

“There’s a difference... in the relationship with [other agencies]... [It’s] more positive... [there’s] a willingness on behalf of the people that were involved in drawing [up the protocol] to... try and help and support [the aims of the protocol]... We’ve seen a definite improvement in the response we’ve had... I think... it’s about everybody working together, because... the problems are beyond one agency.” (YOT Accommodation Manager, YoHARP)

Measured outcome:

- At the time of the research, no young person was in bed and breakfast or other unsuitable accommodation, and since YoHARP’s introduction only one young (ex) offender had presented at the HAC in need of emergency accommodation.
- Partner agencies felt that YoHARP had led to improved information sharing and risk management planning to ensure that accommodation was suitable and support was tailored to meet young people’s needs and help them sustain tenancies.

Challenges:

Although YoHARP ensures that young people are released from custody with appropriate support in place, it was felt that there was a lack of accommodation suitable for young people with complex needs who had been barred from multiple types of accommodation. To this end, partners were exploring the possibilities for creating provision for this hard-to-reach group.

Further information:

The protocol can be accessed at
www.newcastle.gov.uk/wwwfileroot/regen/nhf/YoHARPProtocol.pdf

Archived

Section 4

The provision of comprehensive and continuing support

The previous chapters have presented practice in relation to increasing capacity and diversity in housing provision, and early assessment and planning to prevent homelessness and meet housing need for (ex)offenders. However, accessing accommodation is only the beginning of the resettlement process. This chapter looks at the third key activity for meeting housing need: the provision of comprehensive and continuing support.

4.1 Challenges and solutions: evidence from the literature

There is a great deal of evidence in the general homelessness literature about the importance of resettlement support for formerly homeless and/or vulnerably housed people¹¹. Broadly, this helps vulnerable people to sustain tenancies, to reintegrate into society and to avoid repeated episodes of homelessness (see for example DTLR, 2001; Jones & Quilgars, 2004; Communities and Local Government, 2006b; Pawson et al, 2007). Although not all (ex)offenders will require support, some will have experienced a lifetime of social exclusion, often associated with having poor basic skills and high levels of need relating, for example, to mental health problems and drug or alcohol misuse (Allender et al, 2005; McKenzie 2003).

Support needs relating to financial, employment, addiction and family issues can all impact on housing problems, and vice versa (Bullock & Cremin, 2001; Reid-Howie Associates Ltd, 2004). (Ex)offenders often have problematic housing histories (including having rent arrears and/or abandoned tenancies, previous evictions or being barred from certain types of accommodation). This can be exacerbated by difficulties accessing benefits, housing and employment services, for example due to their locations, or the length of time it can take services to process applications (CAB 2007). (Ex)offenders may lack family and social support because they have been in care or have troubled family backgrounds (Farrant, 2006), and are therefore reliant on other agencies to assist them in finding and maintaining accommodation. Young people who have never lived independently may have additional practical and emotional support needs and require assistance to develop the independent living skills necessary to sustain a tenancy. Education and training is likely to be a key area of support for young people, especially those aged under 18 (Communities and Local Government & DCSF, 2008).

¹¹ In the general homelessness literature the term 'resettlement' is used to describe the process of settling into accommodation and reintegrating into the community following a period of homelessness, whilst in criminology literature 'resettlement' usually refers to preparation for release undertaken in custody.

Evidence from the literature suggests that effective provision requires:

- holistic assessment processes which identify the full range of (ex)offenders' housing-related and wider support needs
- signposting of (ex)offenders to relevant advice and support agencies at an early stage to ensure tenancy sustainment.

There appears to be an increasing shift towards acknowledging the valuable role that 'link' schemes can play in ensuring provision of comprehensive and continuing support. 'Link' schemes work with prisoners in custody and on release providing 'through the gate' and sustained support (Hamilton and Fitzpatrick, 2006; Lewis et al, 2003; Northern Rock Foundation, 2006; Solomon, 2005). 'Link' schemes can also play an important advocacy role for individual (ex)offenders, and there is evidence from the literature that advocacy by such schemes can make a difference to an (ex)offender's ability to access and sustain housing. Advocates can be youth offending or probation practitioners, members of voluntary organisations that are assisting with housing or resettlement, or tenancy or floating support workers. Delamaide (2006), in a study of the housing and support needs of offenders in Bedfordshire, reported that backing and support can help to:

- navigate the housing system and work through the options
- convince a housing provider to consider accommodating someone they would not otherwise, by helping to overcome the fact that offenders are often seen as unsuitable tenants (community-based link workers can reinforce this and build up a rapport with local providers)
- provide the connection to other services that may interrelate to the housing need.

Sources also indicate that advocates can be effective in challenging unsuccessful housing decisions and supporting appeals against them (Delamaide 2006; Eagle & Gammampila, 2005; Shelter, 2006). In addition to the role that 'link' schemes play, NOMS (2008) also emphasises the importance of (ex)offenders being encouraged to take personal responsibility for their past and current actions as tenants to help them sustain tenancies.

4.2 Promising practice: evidence from the case studies

The case studies demonstrate that a joined-up multi-agency approach to addressing (ex) offenders housing-related and wider support needs in a comprehensive and sustained way can help (ex)offenders to establish a more settled lifestyle in the longer-term. Support required by (ex)offenders, and provided through the case study initiatives, ranges from that which is immediately practical, to support with broader, longer-term needs in order to promote independent living. Immediate practical support needs which case study initiatives were involved in meeting included:

- assistance with benefit claims
- provision of 'moving in packs' containing toiletries, kitchen items, bedding and food
- help with accessing furnished tenancy schemes or grants to furnish properties
- transport (for example, to the accommodation at the start of the tenancy and/or transport to first appointments with local services)
- registering with a GP.

Longer-term support needs, which also impact on (ex)offenders' abilities to sustain tenancies, were also met by the case study initiatives and involved assistance with the following:

- developing independent living skills to maintain and sustain tenancies (for example, budgeting and housekeeping skills)
- accessing education, training and employment opportunities
- specialist substance misuse and mental health support
- linking in with other sources of support in the community
- family mediation (particularly for young people).

Evidence from the case studies suggests that there is an association between (ex)offenders sustaining tenancies and a project's ability to meet (ex)offenders' wider support needs. The features of comprehensive and continuing support (as opposed to crisis intervention) demonstrated by the case studies include:

- providing continuity of support from custody through to the community to assist (ex)offenders in accessing housing and support, ensuring immediate practical support needs are addressed, and linking (ex)offenders in with the variety of services required to meet their support needs, develop key life skills, and help them work towards greater independence and self-sufficiency
- conducting holistic assessments to develop individually tailored support plans which can be regularly reviewed
- assistance and advocacy to find independent settled accommodation where (ex)offenders are in, or are ready to move on from, short-term accommodation
- sustaining (ex)offender engagement through the use of volunteer mentoring schemes.

Table 4.1 below provides a summary of promising practice from the case study initiatives, outlining the aim of the practice, how that aim is achieved (process) and the benefits for partners and (ex)offenders that result from that practice. Readers should refer to the associated case study examples for further details.

Table 4.1: Summary of promising practice involving the provision of comprehensive and continuing support

Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex)offenders	Case study example(s)
To provide continuity of support from custody through to the community	Through attendance of a community-based officer at community resettlement planning meetings (for young offenders) and/or visiting the offender in custody prior to release and the same officer (or scheme/initiative) continuing to work with the client in the community	A scheme or initiative can take a lead role in ensuring the (ex)offender is able to access and sustain accommodation following release through provision of continuing support and facilitating engagement with other statutory and non-statutory agencies providing supervision or support, thereby encouraging stability	(Ex)offender is able to develop a rapport with a key officer who can provide both immediate practical and longer-term support (both directly and through signposting or referral to other agencies), and advocate on their behalf, to help them access housing and other services	<p>Case study 2 (Erimus Housing/Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol)</p> <p>Case study 4 (Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People)</p> <p>Case study 7 (P3 Link Worker and Supported Housing Scheme)</p> <p>Case study 8 (Re-Unite)</p> <p>Case study 9 (Pyramid Project)</p>

Table 4.1: Summary of promising practice involving the provision of comprehensive and continuing support (*continued*)

Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex)offenders	Case study example(s)
To undertake holistic assessments of (ex) offenders housing and wider support needs (which may interrelate with their housing needs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – An holistic assessment is carried out as early as possible to identify an (ex)offender’s range of support needs – This assessment forms the basis for an individually-tailored support plan which can be regularly reviewed to ascertain progress and ensure changing needs can be met 	Holistic assessment processes help ensure (ex) offenders are receiving the support they need to help them sustain tenancies and establish a more settled lifestyle so that engagement with services is maintained and offending behaviour is tackled effectively	Holistic assessment helps ensure that a comprehensive support package is in place to assist the (ex)offender in avoiding offending, stabilising their life and working towards independence and self-sufficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study 1 (Yorkshire & Humberside Bail Support Scheme) Case study 6 (YoHARP) Case study 7 (P3 Link Worker and Supported Housing Scheme) Case study 8 (Re-Unite) Case study 9 (Pyramid Project) Case study 10 (Stockport Floating Support Service)

Table 4.1: Summary of promising practice involving the provision of comprehensive and continuing support (*continued*)

Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex)offenders	Case study example(s)
To assist (ex)offenders who are ready to move on from short-term accommodation to longer-term independent settled housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Through providing continuity of support to (ex)offenders to help them achieve move on – Developing relationships with housing providers so that appropriate accommodation can be accessed at the move on stage – Advocating on behalf of (ex)offenders to help them realise move on, through providing reassurance to housing providers about arrangements for continuing support and an (ex)offender's ability to sustain a tenancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Helps maximise capacity in short-term accommodation (see also chapter 2) – Helps ensure smooth transition into independent settled accommodation and assists (ex)offenders in sustaining new housing arrangements so that the risk of tenancy break-down and return to re-offending can be minimised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourages (ex)offenders to move towards independence, a more successful life (including education, training and employment), and continue to avoid offending behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study 1 (Yorkshire & Humberside Bail Support Scheme) Case study 2 (Erimus Housing/Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol) Case study 7 (P3 Link Worker and Supported Housing Scheme) Case study 8 (Re-Unite) Case study 9 (Pyramid Project) Case study 10 (Stockport Floating Support Service)

Table 4.1: Summary of promising practice involving the provision of comprehensive and continuing support (*continued*)

Aim	How achieved (process)	Benefits for partners	Benefits for (ex)offenders	Case study example(s)
To sustain (ex)offender engagement through the use of volunteer mentoring schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Volunteer mentors act as an additional, independent, source of support and encouragement – Mentors can work with (ex)offenders on a broader range of support needs, including accessing community and leisure activities and establishing social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Can help to sustain an (ex)offender’s engagement with statutory and non-statutory services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Can assist an (ex) offender in setting and working towards personal goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study 1 (Yorkshire & Humberside Bail Support Scheme) Case study 4 (Wiltshire Accommodation Support Scheme for Young People) Case study 9 (Pyramid Project)

Case study 7: P3 Link Worker and Supported Housing Scheme (Derbyshire)

Operating since:

Spring 2007

Partners:

- HMP Foston Hall
- P3 (voluntary sector agency)

Aims/objectives:

The aim of the P3 project is to establish stability in women's lives and support them towards move on into independent settled housing. P3 secured funding from the local PCT to provide a three-bed supported housing scheme for single women released from HMP Foston Hall. This initiative builds on a previous link worker initiative which ran for two years at the prison (funded by Revolving Doors Agency). The supported housing unit opened in Spring 2007 and offers supported accommodation for up to two years for women released from prison who:

- are experiencing accommodation difficulties;
- have mental health and/or substance misuse issues;
- may have been involved in street sex work; and,
- require support in accessing and sustaining engagement with appropriate services.

How aims/objectives are achieved:

Strong relationships were built up with prison staff over the preceding two years when P3 was running a link worker scheme at the prison. This has meant that the strategic and operational links were already in place to publicise the new scheme across the prison and encourage referrals and self-referrals for women who might be suitable for the scheme. Further project-specific relationship-building was fostered through an open day held at the supported housing unit and attended by prison service resettlement staff. The aim was to give prison staff a first-hand and fuller understanding of what the scheme offers. Referrals are accepted from resettlement and healthcare staff working with women in custody on remand or serving sentences at HMP Foston Hall. In addition to receiving referrals, a P3 worker runs a weekly surgery/drop in at the prison that women can attend to obtain information and/or be assessed for the scheme.

The supported housing unit is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week and offers support for women around the multiple needs in their lives. It achieves this by linking women into other appropriate agencies to address specific needs, looking at underlying issues to offending behaviour and providing support with move on to independent longer term accommodation. The scheme liaises with services and facilitates communication between the client and other agencies. This can involve making referrals and appointments and ensuring clients turn up for meetings (for example, accompanying them or putting a note under their door as a reminder). The scheme also provides advocacy and communication on the behalf of the client, for example, explaining the context and underlying issues behind past behaviour or history.

Case study 7: P3 Link Worker and Supported Housing Scheme (Derbyshire) *(continued)*

Support offered includes:

- Holistic needs assessment, reviewed monthly.
- Signposting or referrals to agencies or services to address key needs (eg Jobcentre Plus, mental health support services, substance misuse services, registration with a GP, counselling service, education and training).
- Advocacy in the assessment and application process for other services and agencies.
- Liaison and facilitating communication between services.
- Developing practical skills such as form filling, budgeting and independent living skills.
- Advice and assistance to settled housing and initial move on support.

Measured outcome:

At the time of fieldwork (November 2007) it was too early for the scheme to provide outcome measures. However, the scheme's holistic approach to assessment and support was felt to be benefiting one client who had been linked into local drug and alcohol support services and helped to access training through the Prince's Trust. Her progress was perceived to be positive and her offending behaviour and substance misuse had stabilised.

"[She's on] a 12-week course... learning new skills and obviously she's loved it and she's been there every day and she's meeting new people and it's really built up her confidence; it's been really good for her... She wants to be working in a hairdressers' and she's done a placement already at a local hairdressers; hopefully she might get a job [there] when she's finished." (Supported housing coordinator, P3)

Challenges:

Despite P3's strong links with HMP Foston Hall and experience of working with the client group, the scheme was not operating at full capacity at the time of fieldwork. This meant that only one of the three available tenancies was occupied. There had been a shortfall in the number of referrals expected, with the scheme finding that the location of the supported housing unit (in a smaller town) was an issue with many women not wanting to be re-housed away from their local area. In addition, despite full risk assessment and the high standard of accommodation and support offered through the scheme two tenancies had failed with women being recalled to prison. Other women who were accepted onto the scheme did not turn up on the day of release.

Further information:

Further information is available from P3's website: www.p3charity.com/

Case study 8: Re-Unite (London)

Operating since:

April 2007 (the project went 'live' in September 2007 when the first mother moved into her home)

Partners:

- Commonweal Housing (privately-funded charity)
- Housing for Women (HfW; housing association)
- Women in Prison (WIP; voluntary sector agency providing education and resettlement services for women in custody and post-release)

Aims/objectives:

As outlined in chapter 1, local authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for a woman who is eligible for assistance, homeless through no fault of her own and with whom dependent children might reasonably be expected to reside (and the *Homelessness Code of Guidance*, advises housing authorities to liaise with social services in cases where such a woman's children are being 'looked after' by the local authority). It can, however, be challenging for mothers released from prison to successfully set up home and sustain a tenancy. Re-Unite aims to alleviate some of the problems faced by mothers leaving prison and trying to re-establish a family home. The scheme has three main objectives to:

- Provide mothers leaving prison with stable and safe family accommodation and appropriate support to enable them to be reunited with their children as quickly as possible.
- Work with mothers and their children to achieve readiness to 'move on' from Re-Unite accommodation to independent settled housing within two years of release from prison.
- Provide a blueprint for replication by other multi-agency initiatives.

How aims/objectives are achieved:

Re-Unite is a three-way partnership, with each partner having a particular role and set of responsibilities in relation to the overall project. Roles and responsibilities are underpinned by partnership arrangements and service-level agreements. Commonweal's role in the partnership is to identify and purchase properties for the scheme, which are leased to HfW for an agreed term (7 to 10 years). It also funds an independent evaluation.

The role of HfW is to approve the suitability of accommodation identified by Commonweal for potential use by the scheme. Suitability is assessed in terms of safety and security for women and children, and any work required to bring it up to HfW's accommodation standard is identified and carried out by Commonweal before leasing the property. HfW assesses applications for Re-Unite and then manages the tenancy once a woman is accepted into the project. HfW also provides tenancy advice and support and assists women with plans for 'move on'.

Case study 8: Re-Unite (London) (continued)

HfW has a service-level agreement with WIP which funds a project coordinator whose role is to promote Re-Unite in women's prisons across England. Both self-referrals and referrals through prison staff such as CARAT teams, education staff, probation and resettlement teams are encouraged. Following receipt of an eligible application for the scheme, WIP undertakes a full risk assessment interview and seeks supporting evidence and references from prison and community-based services. If a woman's children are in care, WIP will liaise with social services in order to ensure the best interests of the woman and her children would be met through the scheme. Relevant information is then presented to HfW which makes the final decision on whether a tenancy can be offered.

An important feature of the way in which property is funded for this project is that WIP and HfW have flexibility in 'holding' accommodation for women eligible for the scheme. This allows time for probation service inspections of properties to check their suitability for women eligible for early release on home detention curfew (HDC), as well as the 'holding' of properties for women without a specific or definite release date, for example those awaiting release on HDC or a parole hearing outcome.

For mothers taking up Re-Unite tenancies, WIP provides support and signposting to other services. WIP is responsible for developing and monitoring individual support plans. These are reviewed through an 'assessment wheel' which identifies women's progress towards long-term goals.

When the project started the eligibility criteria for women were that they must have a reasonable prospect of being re-united with their children within six weeks of release from custody. In addition, they were also required to have either a local connection or a need to move to the area to escape domestic violence. Success with this client group (in 10 independent family properties) led to the decision to work with potentially higher risk clients, specifically those who have a reasonable prospect of being reunited with their children but would require evaluation by social services over several months following release to ensure that relevant risk issues, such as substance misuse, were being adequately addressed. Commonweal had purchased two single-bed properties for women in this situation and the project was due to start taking referrals for these at time of fieldwork.

Measured outcome:

It is too early to assess outcomes for the project, but it is being independently evaluated by researchers from Cambridge University. Project partners felt that the provision of accommodation with support to 'link' women in with other agencies was reducing re-offending and helping stabilise women's lives.

Case study 8: Re-Unite (London) (continued)

“One of my clients said to me... ‘I’m only one phone call away from re-offending... if I was having a bad day, if the kids were playing up... [if] something’s gone wrong, you know, I’m frustrated with something... [I’ve] got money worries... I’m only actually [a] phone call away from [contacting] an old associate [and] they will suggest something that’s not legal to sort that out.’ ...But she said... ‘If I am having that sort of day, I’d now have other options to making that phone call; I could phone you if it’s during office hours and... have a bit of a rant. You’ll... listen to me or... come up with a couple of... other ideas and I’ll go and do something else, or I’ll phone up someone from Newpin [support service for parents with mental health problems], or I’ll phone up one of the other women on the project or go and speak to someone who I’ve met at something else that we’ve done... It gives me other options than just going back to the old habits’.” (Project coordinator, Re-Unite)

Challenges:

- HfW is beginning to visit local authorities to discuss establishing pathways into independent settled accommodation from the project. This was felt to be vital in ensuring women are able to move on from the project to independent settled housing when they are ready (and within two years of being housed by the scheme).
- It was felt that children involved in the project would benefit from their own advocate and WIP are seeking funding for and recruiting a Children’s Coordinator to ensure the needs of children involved in the scheme are met.

Further information:

Further information is available via the project website: www.re-unite.org/

Case study 9: Pyramid Project (DePaul Trust in the North East)

Operating since:

2004

Partners:

- Deerbolt and Castington Young Offender Institutions
- DePaul Trust
- Nacro
- Northern Rock Foundation

Aims/objectives:

The ethos behind the project was to develop a model for 'through the gate' approaches to resettlement, whereby housing and support work started within prison is followed through after release. DePaul Trust and Nacro were providing similar and complementary housing support services for young offenders and adult offenders respectively in the North East. The Pyramid project initiative (funded by the Northern Rock Foundation) was intended to sustain and improve these services through encouraging joint working and best practice sharing. The focus of this case study is on the work of DePaul Trust with young offenders and the ways in which the Pyramid project has enhanced this work.

How aims/objectives are achieved:

DePaul Trust provides two main types of provision for 18 to 25 year olds as part of the Pyramid project: Outside Link and the One-to-One project.

Outside Link: Outside Link provides a joined up service from reception to custody, through to the community, supporting young people with their housing needs. Referrals for the service are received by a prison-based resettlement worker who conducts an initial assessment which looks at the young person's offending history, housing history and other related issues and support needs. Housing support offered includes identifying issues with existing tenancies or helping people find settled accommodation. The focus in the first instance is to address immediate needs which could create barriers to accessing housing on release. This includes ensuring tenancies are closed down and housing benefit stopped where appropriate, or maintaining housing benefit and ensuring the safety of the property and belongings.

A community-based resettlement worker will then begin work with the young person prior to their release. There is a transitional period where both workers are involved which allows for a comprehensive handover between the workers and time for the young person to develop a relationship with their new community-based worker. Support through the transition from custody to community comprises:

- Securing accommodation for the day of release.
- Meeting clients at the gate on day of release and taking them to their accommodation or appointment at the local authority housing office.
- Providing advocacy and support with statutory services in relation to housing, for example accompanying a young person to appointments at housing offices and providing evidence of changed behaviour to support housing applications.

Case study 9: Pyramid Project (DePaul Trust in the North East) (continued)

- Supporting clients in accommodation.
- Support for other issues in young people's lives which impact on their housing and wider resettlement needs including: registering with a GP; setting up appointments with Jobcentre Plus; family mediation; and education and training.
- Each young person also has an individual support plan which is reviewed every three months. The support plan includes details of any contact with or services provided by other agencies such as probation. Support is then gradually reduced as the young person becomes fully engaged with services and is moving towards independence.

DePaul Trust has relationships with other agencies or services that provide specialist support for young people both in custody (eg prison resettlement staff, CARAT teams, prison mental health teams, prison job clubs) and in the community (eg YOTs, probation, mental health support services, substance misuse services, social services, anti-social behaviour teams, further education colleges, employment and training organisations). Outside Link can engage or re-engage young people with services and make referrals to specialist agencies.

One-to-One Project (community mentoring scheme): In addition to Outside Link provision, young people can also be matched to a volunteer mentor trained by DePaul Trust. The mentor is introduced to the young person and meets with them two to three times before release to help build a rapport and relationship. The focus of the mentor is on the young person's general interests, goals and other issues in their lives and offering support such as CV writing or helping the young person look for opportunities for involvement in activities within the community. The mentor relationship can also help sustain the engagement of the young person with services, making changes to their lives and successful resettlement.

The Pyramid project was perceived by staff to have enhanced the work of DePaul Trust through joint working with Nacro in sharing best practice for the training and supervision of mentors and risk assessment to ensure safer ways of working for staff. De Paul Trust also felt that they had benefited from their association with Nacro through the Pyramid project in relation to building new links in the community. For example, DePaul Trust had formed a relationship with a training college used by Nacro. Finally, through its promotion of the importance of through-the-gate approaches to resettlement, the Pyramid project was viewed as helping to foster links between key agencies, such as social services, the probation service, prison service, YOTs, local authorities, and voluntary agencies important in the resettlement of young offenders.

Measured outcome:

The project worked with 2,961 prisoners and ex-prisoners over its first three years (DePaul's work involved 314 of these). Results of an evaluation (Northern Rock Foundation, 2006) suggested that the project had some impact on re-offending. Through Outside Link and the One-to-One Project, DePaul Trust had been successful in securing short-term supported accommodation for clients on release and had also worked alongside supported housing providers helping young people to move on to independent settled accommodation. Other outcomes included meeting other important needs such as assisting young people towards successful completion of training and education courses, and rebuilding family relationships.

Case study 9: Pyramid Project (DePaul Trust in the North East) *(continued)*

For example, a young (ex)offender living in bed and breakfast accommodation and estranged from his family approached the local authority, accompanied by a Pyramid community resettlement worker, to request assistance to improve his housing situation. With advocacy and support from the Pyramid project the local authority agreed to provide family mediation. The young person was re-housed with his family and has now started an apprenticeship.

“Because we are evidence-based and we supported this young person through that, ... barriers came down... there was a communication thing there, there was a channel that was opened and... all parties engaged in it and it was a really successful result at the end of it.” (DePaul Trust Project Manager, Pyramid project)

Challenges:

Challenges to service delivery included a lack of accommodation, and financial barriers preventing young people from accessing the private rented sector. The report recommended that the project should have its own supported accommodation and that an effective bond scheme was required.

Further information:

Further information is available via the DePaul Trust website:
www.depaulnightstopuk.org/content/depaul-nightstop-uk-home

A report on the Pyramid project can be downloaded at:
www.depaulnightstopuk.org/content/publications

ARC

Case study 10: Stockport Floating Support Service For (Ex)offenders (Manchester Tenancy Support)

Operating since:

2003

Partners:

- Stockport Community Drugs Team (CDT)
- English Churches Housing Group (ECHG)
- Greater Manchester Probation Area
- Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Social Services
- Stockport Homes

Aims/objectives:

ECHG is funded through Supporting People to deliver a dedicated floating support service to (ex)offenders living in Stockport (the service forms part of ECHG's Manchester Tenancy Support (MTS) service). The service was set up in response to a concern that some (ex)offenders may require a higher level of input than is possible through generic resettlement services in order to assist them in sustaining tenancies. The service aims to support (ex)offenders in sustaining tenancies which in turn could have a bearing on the nature of their engagement with other services and reduce the risk of re-offending.

How aims/objectives are achieved:

The service primarily targets (ex)offenders at risk of losing tenancies, and has a secondary focus working with (ex)offenders with substance misuse issues. Referrals are received by ECHG through the Community Drug Team (CDT), Stockport Homes, social services and probation. Referring agencies are asked to share risk assessment information to allow the service to evaluate risk before taking on the client. A tenancy support worker will conduct a needs and risk assessment which is used to develop a support plan with the service user to look at specific housing needs and related needs such as basic skills, learning and physical disabilities, substance misuse, health and mental health issues which may lead to housing problems. Service users often have immediate needs relating to saving their tenancies on first contact with the service. The service initially concentrates on addressing these needs and advocating and liaising with housing providers, estate officers and landlords on behalf of the service user. This includes:

- Appealing eviction notices.
- Setting up repayment plans to address rent arrears.
- Assistance with benefits claims (eg renewing benefit claim, reviewing benefit entitlements, applying for benefits).
- Support to address non-payment of bills (eg utility bills).
- Reporting damage to property and arranging repairs.
- Addressing anti-social behaviour.
- Support accessing community grants for furnishing accommodation.

Case study 10: Stockport Floating Support Service For (Ex)offenders (Manchester Tenancy Support) *(continued)*

- Re-establishing communication and relationship with estate officers or landlords.
- Assisting with movement from existing area/applying for new accommodation (eg need to move out of existing area due to impact on offending behaviour).

The tenancy support scheme provides floating housing-related support for up to two years to assist (ex)offenders in addressing various housing issues and empowering them with the skills to prevent or successfully manage housing issues in the future. Once immediate housing has been stabilised, the tenancy support scheme will signpost or refer to other services including training and education, social and leisure activities, mental health agencies and substance misuse services with a view to assisting long-term tenancy sustainment. Service users' support plans are reviewed regularly. For service users with complex needs, MTS works jointly with other agencies involved with the client so that support plans are coordinated. This can involve three-way meetings with the client, the tenancy support worker and the other agency (eg Stockport Homes or CDT). Tenancy support workers may also call case conference meetings in order to initiate a faster response from relevant agencies involved and clarify the support each service needs to deliver to adequately support the service user.

Through the Supporting People forum, MTS has strengthened its relationships with referring agencies and fostered new referral routes both to and from the service. MTS has recently established a service level agreement with probation to ensure that it can meet a requirement to include prolific offenders as 10 per cent of its caseload.

Measured outcome:

Outcomes are monitored through quarterly returns made to Communities and Local Government which indicate numbers of positive outcomes (tenancy sustainment) and negative outcomes (housing loss/abandonment and returns to supported housing). Currently 90 per cent of service users are achieving positive outcomes.

Challenges:

- The monitoring tool developed for evaluation of the service does not look at longer-term outcomes. For example, service users with ongoing support needs beyond the two-year service provided through MTS will be referred on to similar initiatives for further support. However, this is usually provided on a short-term basis which can lead to clients with complex needs being continually passed on to different agencies. MTS felt that such clients required a longer-term intervention.
- MTS felt that there was more potential for partnership working with other agencies to support service users. Multi-agency working (with the consent of service users) could facilitate better link-up between agencies in order to address housing needs.
- MTS had experienced difficulties referring clients with low threshold mental health support needs into support services. A lack of provision for this group was seen to impact adversely on effective resettlement. Another challenge is that a shortage of settled housing meant clients were often placed in less than ideal accommodation (for example in areas where risks around substance misuse and offending are high).

Further information:

Service details are available at:
www.b3.manchester.gov.uk/speople/directory/servicedetails.asp?sid=585

Section 5

Resources

Overarching

This guide should be read alongside other guidance published by **Communities and Local Government**, copies of which are obtainable via the website as follows:

Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (Communities and Local Government, 2006a)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnesscode

Allocation of Accommodation: Code of guidance for local housing authorities (ODPM, 2002)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/allocationaccommodationcode

Allocation of Accommodation: Choice Based Lettings – Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities (Communities and Local Government, 2008)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/lettingscodeguidance

Homelessness Prevention: A Guide to Good Practice (Communities and Local Government, 2006b)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnessprevention

Also of relevance are detailed definitions for the single set of **National Indicators (NIs)** as contained in *National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions* (Communities and Local Government, 2008)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/finalnationalindicators

The delivery agreement for **Public Service Agreement 16 (PSA 16)** is available at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr_csr07_psaopportunity.htm

The delivery agreement for **Public Service Agreement 23 (PSA 23)** is available at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr_csr07_psacomunities.htm

The **Supporting People (SP)** programme was launched in 2003 to provide housing related support to vulnerable people, including (ex)offenders, to prevent problems that can lead to homelessness and help people live more independently and maintain their tenancies. The SP programme involves partnership working between local government, probation, health, voluntary sector organisations, housing associations, support agencies and service users. Unitary authorities and counties in two-tier areas are responsible for implementing the programme locally and contracting with providers and partner organisations for the provision of SP services. A Commissioning Body (a partnership of local housing, social care, health and probation) plays a key role in advising and approving a SP strategy. Further information about the programme can be found at: www.spkweb.org.uk/

Information relating to Client Records (information on clients as they enter services) and Outcomes (information on clients as they leave services, including how successful the service was in meeting their identified support needs), can be found at: www.spclientrecord.org.uk

A reporting facility is available (www.spclientrecord.org.uk/webdata/) which allows the analysis of variables collected by the Client Record and Outcome forms. It is possible to analyse how many offenders had an identified need for a particular outcome indicator, and of those, how many achieved it by the different service types.

Of particular relevance to homelessness prevention and meeting housing need for (ex)offenders are outcome indicators relating to staying safe and economic wellbeing. Outcome indicators within these outcome categories include maintaining accommodation and avoiding eviction, complying with statutory orders and processes (in relation to offending behaviour), maximising income through receiving the right benefits and reducing overall debt. Other relevant outcome indicators include participation in employment, education or training, leisure activities and social networks.

General

The **Citizen's Advice Bureau** (CAB) provides an advice guide called *Leaving Prison*, available from www.adviceguide.org.uk and suggests further links to other sources of information for prisoners that the CAB provides such as models of housing advice, support and advocacy, benefits and debt advice, and help with financial literacy. It also offers telephone support for probation officers and face to face case work services in a number of probation service areas. See www.citizensadvice.org.uk for further information.

The **Crisis** website has a section indicating all active rent deposit schemes in England, see www.crisis.org.uk/prs/index.php for further information.

The **Cumbria Joint Protocol for Housing Offenders** (2006) contains a directory of useful housing contacts, including housing authorities, supported housing, the Prison Service, Probation Service, Approved Premises and NOMs across the region. Additionally, it contains a sample letters to write to a landlord to terminate a tenancy. The document can be accessed at:
www.cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/Content/Internet/327/3172/3907211123.pdf

DirectGov is a useful website for information on housing options and how to access them:
www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/SocialHousingAndCareHomes/index.htm

A national database of resettlement information, **EASI** (Easily Accessible Service Information), for probation services is available from Nacro. Telephone 0207 840 6461 or e-mail: easi@nacro.org.uk.

The **HARP** protocol contains several useful appendices which include: letter to provisionally terminate tenancies; letter to formally request accommodation; and an information sharing protocol between probation and housing providers. The protocol can be downloaded at:
www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/files/pdf/HARP%20Protocol.pdf

Nacro has a helpline (Resettlement Plus) for (ex)offenders, their families and friends: 0800 0181 259, also accessible via: www.nacro.org.uk/services/prisoners.htm. It has also produced a number of guides in the 'Sorting Yourself Out' series, these include *Benefits and Debt* and *Keeping your Home*. The latter contains five standard letters: to landlords; to request/accompany housing benefit applications; claiming for income support housing costs; to a building society requesting an interest only payment until sentence or release; and a letter requesting council tax exemption/discount/benefit. Copies can be downloaded from:
www.nacro.org.uk/data/resources/nacro-2005020103.pdf

Shelter produces a number of publications that can be purchased, including a *Housing Rights Guide* (useful for advisors) and *Know your rights: information about housing and homelessness for young people*. Shelter's website also contains useful (free) information and has an advice line that operates from 8am to midnight: 0808 800 4444. See www.shelter.org.uk for further information.

Young (ex)offenders

The **Communities and Local Government** website www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/aboutus/ contains information about working with young people involved in the criminal justice system to prevent homelessness, with some resources under the headings of strategic planning and partnerships, bail and remand, resettlement and prolific/high needs offenders. The Communities and Local Government and DCSF joint guidance, *Joint working between Housing and Children's Services: Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people* (Communities and Local Government & DCSF, 2008), is also available via the Communities and Local Government website at: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/goodpracticeguide

The **Howard League** has a legal advice line for children and young adults (up to 21 years): 0808 801 0308. This service provides legal advice to children in custody about various matters including local authority aftercare. There is also an advice line for practitioners and carers: 020 7249 7373 ext 102. Qualified legal experts are able to answer queries from YOT and social workers on issues such as the applicability of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and the Leaving Care Act 2000 to children leaving prison. See www.howardleague.org for further information.

The national youth charity **Rainer** has produced a manual (**RESET**) to assist those working with young people in custody to help them find accommodation. The associated website at www.equal-works.com/DPDetail.aspx?ety=7462dc64-f347-45cf-989c-a7343fd7e8c2 contains various resources which focus on action planning and goal setting.

The information pack that is part of the **YoHARP protocol** also contains sample letters (to a landlord to terminate a tenancy, to a landlord to notify a stay in custody, to Housing Benefit requesting payment to cover the four week notice period, to Housing Benefit to notify of a stay in custody). It also contains a list of useful websites and contact details of key agencies in the local area (Housing Advice, Homelessness Unit, Housing Services, direct and non direct access accommodation for young people and other relevant agencies). The protocol is available at: www.newcastle.gov.uk/wwwfileroot/regen/nhf/YoHARPProtocol.pdf

The **Youth Justice Board (YJB)** website contains useful information about accommodation issues as they relate to young people who offend and YOTs. This can be found via the practitioners' portal at: www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/Accommodation/

The YJB strategy *Suitable, Sustained, Supported: A strategy to ensure provision of accommodation for children and young people who offend* (YJB, 2006) can be accessed via www.yjb.gov.uk/Publications/Scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=307&eP

Women (ex)offenders

The Corston Report: *A Report by Baroness Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System* (Home Office, 2007) is available at:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/corston-report/

The Government's Response to the Report by Baroness Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System (MoJ, 2007) is available at:

www.justice.gov.uk/publications/gov-resp-corston-review.htm

SOVA (2006) *Strategy and resource guide for the resettlement of women prisoners:* The Women and Young People's Group, HM Prison Service. This guide can be downloaded at www.mediafordevelopment.org.uk/attachments/documents/resettlement%20of%20women%20prisoners.pdf

Women's Link have produced an *Accommodation Guide for Women in Prison and Ex Offenders* – guides for individuals and organisations can be ordered from Women's Link www.womenslink.org.uk/offenders.htm

Drug using (ex)offenders

Various guides to practice for housing drug users are available via the internet:

Homelesslink (2007) *Clean Break: Integrated Housing and Care Pathways for Homeless Drug Users*

www.homeless.org.uk/policyandinfo/research/archive/cleanbreak

Home Office (2008) *Improving Practice in Housing for Drug Users*

<http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/dip/improving-practice-housing/>

This practice paper on improving practice in housing for drug users presents 13 case studies offering examples of how housing, drug and mental health services have worked together to find sustainable and successful housing solutions for drug users. The paper is aimed primarily at informing and helping those involved in commissioning, planning and delivering housing services, related residential rehabilitation and support services for drug users. It will also be of interest to anyone

working with drug users with related housing needs through the criminal justice system or health and social care services. By adopting some of the approaches set out in the paper, local areas can help prevent homelessness, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as help service users tackle their drug use and improve their health and social well-being. Findings and solutions described in the paper highlight the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach to planning, commissioning and delivering housing and related support services for drug users.

Shelter/Steve McKeown (2006) *Safe as Houses: An inclusive approach for housing drug users*

http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/safe_as_houses_an_inclusive_approach_for_housing_drug_users

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Annex A

Research methodology

Literature review

The literature review involved a mapping of existing evidence on meeting the housing and related support needs of (ex)offenders. The review was conducted using the principles of Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA)¹². The key steps of the REA were:

- developing a search strategy and establishing inclusion criteria
- assessing the methodological quality and relevance of the identified articles/reports
- synthesising the evidence across different studies.

Literature (including grey literature¹³) for this review was identified using the following databases: British Library catalogue; Criminal Justice Abstracts; Accompline/Urbanline; ASSIA; Web of Knowledge; International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS); Social Policy and Practice; and Homeless Pages. The following search terms were used: ex-offend* or offend* or prison* or ex-convict* and hous* or accommodation or rent* or resettlement or tenan* or move-on or floating. In order for this guide to present relevant and up-to-date evidence, only articles relating to practice in the UK and published between 1997 and 2007 were included.

As Crow (2006) and Stewart et al (2005) have noted, there is a paucity of evidence on what works in meeting the housing and related support needs of (ex)offenders and this literature review supports this finding. On close examination of the documents identified through the searches detailed above, it was evident that there were few methodologically robust studies of the effectiveness of interventions to address the housing and related support needs of (ex)offenders, and the material tended to be descriptive rather than evaluative. Consequently, evidence was included that related to meeting the accommodation and support needs of (ex)offenders, whether or not any of the interventions mentioned had been evaluated. A total of 67 documents were included in the review. Twenty-seven documents contained useful background information, contextual information or described problems and needs. A further 40 documents contained information about projects or interventions (a total of 82 were identified), some of which had been evaluated.

¹² For details of REA techniques see www.gsr.gov.uk/professional_guidance/rea_toolkit/index.asp

¹³ Material that has not been formally published.

Case study research

The second phase of the research involved undertaking case studies of projects or initiatives involving multi-agency or partnership working aimed at homelessness prevention and meeting housing need for (ex)offenders. Building on initial findings from the literature review, the aim of the case study research was to identify and describe promising practice. Some potential case study initiatives were highlighted directly through the literature review. Others were suggested through a short consultation with relevant national organisations. Ten case study initiatives were purposively selected for inclusion in the research to ensure diversity of coverage across the following criteria:

- type and nature of service provided
- point(s) in the criminal justice process at which the service is provided
- population/(ex)offender groups served
- combinations and range of agencies involved
- multi-agency agreements or protocols underpinning service delivery.

Specific objectives for the case study research were to:

- explore processes of multi-agency working and partnership from a range of perspectives
- describe the mechanisms of service delivery and understand how initiatives engage and work with service users
- examine the benefits and outcomes of the initiatives, both for service users and the agencies delivering service(s)
- identify success factors and barriers to successful service delivery and partnership working.

Fieldwork and analysis

A lead contact from each initiative was approached and provided with information about the research, and invited to participate (see Annex B for a copy of the initial recruitment letter). Once participation had been agreed, the lead contact from each case study was asked to identify the key agencies involved in the multi-agency partnership. Interviews were then arranged with between four and six key professionals across the partnership, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of service delivery and partnership working from a variety of perspectives.

Forty-four qualitative in-depth interviews, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes each, were conducted with a range of strategic and frontline operational staff from statutory and non-statutory agencies across the 10 selected case study initiatives. Several of these interviews were 'paired' (involving two respondents) and a total of 52 key informants participated in the research. A copy of the interview topic guide is provided in Annex C.

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in preparation for analysis using 'Framework', a method developed by NatCen (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). 'Framework' involves the systematic analysis of verbatim interview data within a thematic matrix. The key topics and issues emerging from the interviews were identified through familiarisation with interview transcripts as well as reference to the original objectives of the research. A series of thematic charts were then drawn up and data from each transcript were summarised under each theme. This enabled detailed exploration of the charted data, exploring the range of views and experiences within different themes and comparison within, between and across case study initiatives.

Strategic workshops

The third and final phase of the research was the facilitation of two strategic workshops which were used to 'test' the findings of the literature review and case study research. The workshops enabled the researchers to check that the key messages presented in the guide were considered practical and relevant for housing practitioners and other professionals who work with (ex)offenders, including commissioners or those working at a strategic level to help prevent homelessness and meet housing need among (ex)offenders.

The workshops were held in London and Newcastle and brought together housing and criminal justice practitioners. Each half-day event involved between 10 and 13 participants who were asked to consider the findings and assist the research team in prioritising and refining the key messages.

Annex B

Approach letter to case study initiatives

November 2007

Dear

Developing guidance on homelessness prevention and housing need for ex-offenders

We are writing to ask for your help with an important piece of research that is being carried out to support local authorities and their partners – including the prison service, probation, housing providers and the voluntary sector – in preventing homelessness and addressing the housing needs of ex-offenders. Communities and Local Government (CLG) has commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), Nacro and the Centre for Housing Policy, York University, to develop a guide to practice in this area, which would be read alongside existing generic and statutory guidance on homelessness and homelessness prevention.

The research project

The research so far has involved a review of the literature, which has identified some examples of good practice and has explored what is known about what works generally and for different types of ex-offender. The next stage of the research is to build upon existing knowledge through case study research. This will be based in a range of local areas, reflecting different aspects of good practice and different local contexts. The research will be conducted with the range of agencies and partners involved in order to identify and explore effective practices and the processes of multi-agency working and partnership that underlie them, identifying critical success factors, as well as barriers and experiences of overcoming them.

Using XXXX as a case study

We heard about XXXX through the literature review / a brief consultation with relevant national organisations and think it would make a useful case study for the guidance. We very much hope that you will agree to take part. The research will involve between four and six interviews in total, to be conducted with relevant delivery staff and staff from key partner agencies. Interviews will last no longer than an hour and a half, conducted at times and locations most suitable and convenient for each participant. We would also like to reassure you that whilst the participating case study services or initiatives will be named in the guide, individual staff members and partners will not be identified in the final report and all data will be stored confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act. We will also give all

participating case study services or initiatives the opportunity to read and comment on what is written about them at the draft stage of the research.

Next steps

A researcher will be contacting you soon to discuss your participation in the research. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the study further, please contact Clarissa Penfold on 020 7549 9564 (c.penfold@natcen.ac.uk) or Naomi Day at NatCen on 020 7549 9574 (n.day@natcen.ac.uk). We hope that you will be willing to take part in the research and look forward to speaking to you.

Yours sincerely,

Clarissa Penfold (Lead Researcher)

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Annex C

Interview topic guide

Topic guide: Developing guidance on homelessness prevention and housing need for ex-offenders (initiative providers and partners)

Interview Aims

To obtain:

- Description of initiative aims, delivery and expected outcomes
- The needs of target client group
- Partnership involvement in initiative delivery
- Challenges and successes of partnership working
- Impacts of initiative and the mechanisms by which they are achieved
- The overall critical success factors of the initiative
- Recommendations and key learning

Guidance for interpretation and use of the topic guide: *The following guide does not contain pre-set questions but rather lists the key themes and sub-themes to be explored with each participant. It does not include follow-up questions like 'why', 'when', 'how', etc, as it is assumed that respondents' contributions will be fully explored throughout in order to understand how and why views and experiences have arisen. The order in which issues are addressed and the amount of time spent on different themes will vary between interviews.*

Introduction

- Introduce self & NatCen, Nacro and The University of York
- Introduction to research: commissioned by Communities and Local Government to develop a guide to practice
- Reason for asking them to participate
- Discuss confidentiality and anonymity
- Use of digital recorder and data storage

- Length of interview
- Any questions

Respondent's role in relation to service delivery

- Respondent's role in the initiative
 - current position/job title
 - nature of role, responsibilities in relation to service delivery/partnership
 - how long in role?
 - how long in housing/resettlement sector, and in what capacity, eg specialist or generalist?
 - training required/under-taken

Background to initiative setup and partnership development

- History of initiative and how established?
 - aims and objectives of the initiative
 - why initiative was set up, eg needs assessment/problems or gaps the service aimed to address?
 - how the initiative was set up, eg sources of funding?
 - what helped/hindered the set up of the initiative, if any challenges how they overcame them?
 - how long has the initiative been established?
 - how has the initiative developed since set up?
- Partnership development
 - which organisations involved?
 - how the partnership developed motivations for partnership development, eg what the partnership would bring to the initiative/partners?
 - meeting strategic targets
 - key relationships between certain individuals
 - what helped/ hindered establishing partnerships, if any challenges how they overcame them?

Description of initiative delivery

- Who is their client group?
 - client focus and (why): who included/excluded, eg level of risk, offender type?
 - key issues/needs for client group, eg needs assessments/evidence
 - If a range of clients: any differences/issues around type of client?
 - number of clients: through put/case-load
 - ratio of staff/client

- Access and referral pathways to initiative
 - how clients access service, eg self-selection, referral, protocols, contact channels through partners?
 - at what stage client is at in the CJS?
 - how clients access information about the initiative?
 - barriers/facilitators to initial access to initiative
- What initiative offers?
 - types of initiative currently offered
 - description of how clients might experience the initiative: *Explore stages of projects intervention, protocols/pathways and any range/diversity of these experiences by type of client*
 - how the initiative meets clients needs/issues (case examples)?

Partnership involvement in initiative delivery

- Role of partners in initiative offered
 - brief description of partnership working
 - role and responsibilities of partners
- How and what stage of initiative delivery are partners involved?
 - at what point of the intervention service partners are involved, eg referral/access routes
 - what is the nature of their involvement, eg joint working, joint activities, referral to other services?
 - arrangements/processes for working together with partners
- Why are partners involved?
 - motivations for partner involvement
 - did they have a choice of partners they could work with, if yes why choose the particular partner/s?
 - (if relevant) why partner involvement at particular stages of the initiative intervention?
 - whether there are any other agencies/partners missing or needed, eg lack of services to refer onto?

Outcomes of initiative

- The extent to which project meets clients needs/initiative aims and objectives
 - how effectively the initiative is meeting their aims and objectives?
 - whether clients are moving on in planned way to settled accommodation
 - barriers/facilitators to achieving client outcomes/aims of initiative
 - if barriers, how the initiative has tried to overcome barriers (eg funding issues)?
 - any wider impacts, eg other than accommodation
 - any unanticipated outcomes (positive/negative)
- How important partners' role is to initiative outcomes
 - barriers/facilitators to partners involvement in achieving client outcome/aims of initiative
 - If barriers, how the initiative has tried to overcome barriers
 - perceived positive/negative impacts for partners of their involvement in the initiative
- How happy with current partner working?
 - how could/should partnership working be different, if at all?
- Means of currently measuring effectiveness and outcome
 - what is currently monitored (eg movement onto settled accommodation)?
 - any plans to further develop monitoring processes?
 - whether there are targets in place?
 - (if yes), any issues meeting targets, eg conflicting/differing targets, targets tied to funding streams

Recommendations and learning from initiative

- What is the added value of the initiative?
 - what difference has the initiative made?
 - what difference would it make if this initiative was not currently available to clients?
 - what is distinctive/unique about this initiative compared to similar projects?
 - extent to which the initiative outcomes could be achieved in any other way?
- Critical success factors and key learning from initiative

Probe all

- engaging clients/user involvement
- initiative delivery
- meeting client needs, eg accommodation and other identified client needs
- effective partnership working
- other
- Future plans for the initiative
- Any other recommendations.

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