



Ministry  
of Justice

# Offender Accommodation Pilot

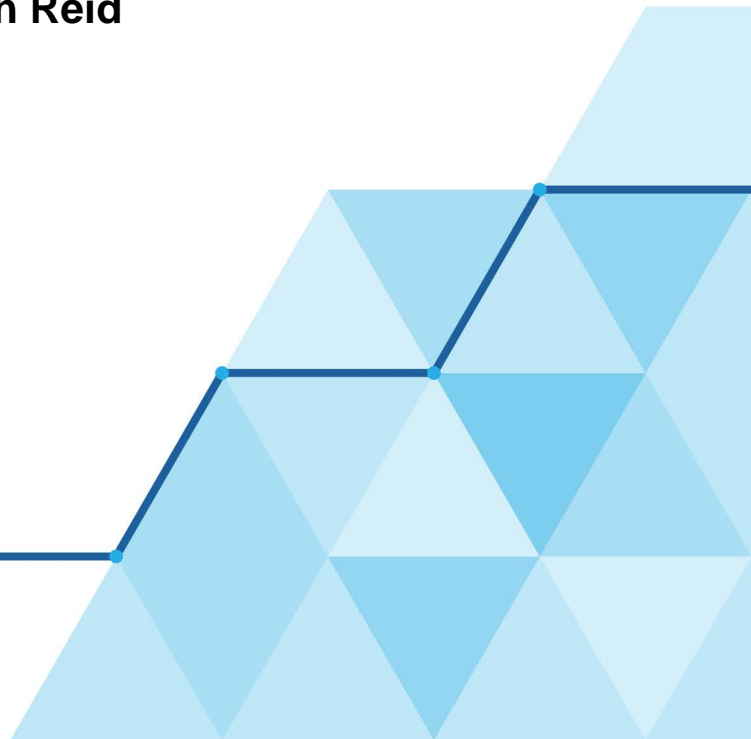
## Process evaluation report

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## **The authors**

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# 1. Summary

The Offender Accommodation Pilot (OAP) aimed to reduce homelessness and reoffending among prison leavers. It offered stable accommodation for adult males on sentences of less than 36 months released from three resettlement prisons (HMP Bristol, HMP Leeds and HMP Pentonville), alongside other tailored wrap-around support. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)<sup>1</sup> commissioned a mixed-method evaluation of the OAP to understand its implementation and impact. This included a feasibility study (completed in 2020), a qualitative process evaluation delivered over the pilot, and an impact evaluation.

The process evaluation explored pilot implementation and delivery, the pilot's perceived outcomes, and recommendations for the delivery of similar programmes. Key findings from the process evaluation include:

## **Accommodation and support provision**

The use of temporary accommodation ensured prison leavers were housed on release from custody and helped them adjust to living in the community and prepare for independent living. Longer-term accommodation was used successfully when there was commitment from both providers and the private rented sector to house prison leavers. Challenges were identified, for example around the availability of accommodation and when prison leavers struggled to meet advance requirements for private rentals. The provision of tailored and consistent one-to-one caseworker support within custody and the community was seen as a key factor in the success of the pilot. Providers noted that the provision of support had to be flexible, dependent on an individual's needs, but also that some prison leavers were not able or ready to receive the support provided.

## **Partnership working and funding**

Partnerships were felt to be key to the success of the pilot, particularly where there was good communication, common goals, and information sharing. Challenges with partnership working related to communication, resources, and a limited understanding

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

about the pilot among some partners. Funding on the pilot was generally viewed as adequate, and providers valued the flexibility there was over how budgets could be used. However, provider staff also reported that additional flexibility would have been useful and there was evidence from some provider staff that funding from external sources to the pilot had been sought where necessary.

### **Ending of pilot support and pilot withdrawals**

Among provider staff and prison leavers, there was a view that the optimum length of support was largely dependent on an individual's needs and circumstances, however some strategic and provider staff also reported that the pilot needed a cut-off point. Prison leavers who were viewed as being ready for the pilot to end included those managing their own tenancies, those in employment, and those accessing support from outside the pilot. Those who were viewed as likely to benefit from continued support included those still in temporary accommodation, those living independently for the first time, those with ongoing support needs, or those who had not been able to fully engage in the pilot. Challenges around the pilot ending included concerns around the affordability of accommodation for prison leavers, the possibility of prison leavers being evicted, and a lack of support services for onward referral of prison leavers. Across all pilot locations, 68% of prison leavers had been withdrawn from the pilot before completing two years of support as of 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Reasons included not engaging with the support available because the prison leaver did not feel they needed or wanted this level of support, including those who were ready to move forward with their lives more independently, not meeting the eligibility criteria, and being sentenced or recalled to custody.

### **Perceived impacts**

The pilot was perceived to have achieved its key aims of preventing homelessness and reducing reoffending for some participating prison leavers. Other perceived outcomes included improvements to physical health and mental wellbeing, increased engagement with support services, better relationships with others, and a readiness to seek employment. However, for prison leavers with crime and substance misuse entrenched in their lifestyles, provider staff reported how it was challenging to break the cycle of reoffending.

A number of considerations to support the longer-term roll out of OAP or similar accommodation programmes emerged from the process evaluation. These included revisiting the assessment and withdrawals processes to ensure the programme focuses on those who will benefit most, increasing the flexibility of funding arrangements, and reassessing how prison leavers' progress on programmes is measured.



## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Background

The Offender Accommodation Pilot (OAP) aimed to reduce homelessness and reoffending among prison leavers. It offered stable accommodation for adult males released from prison on sentences of less than 36 months, alongside tailored wraparound support, for a period of two years. The pilot was conducted in three resettlement prisons: HMP Bristol, HMP Leeds and HMP Pentonville, through which participants ('prison leavers') were recruited. It began in August 2019 and enrolled participants until July 2020, and then ran until July 2022. The Covid-19 pandemic had a bearing on some aspects of pilot delivery, particularly as it reduced or removed opportunities for face-to-face contact between pilot providers and prison leavers both before and after they left custody. It also impacted on the availability of suitable accommodation for prison leavers through wider changes in the housing markets brought about by lockdowns, including restrictions on sharing accommodation. Further details of the OAP and its background are available in Appendix A.

Research evidence indicates that prison leavers' accommodation status on release influences whether they reoffend. A Ministry of Justice (MoJ) study found that being homeless or living in temporary accommodation shortly after release from prison was associated with a higher chance of reoffending (approximately 66% went on to reoffend, compared with 51% of those living in stable accommodation)<sup>2</sup> (Brunton-Smith & Hopkins, 2013). Furthermore, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (2020) found that those released from custody into unsettled accommodation were considerably more likely to be recalled or resentenced to custody compared with those released into settled accommodation (63% vs 35%). Similarly, the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) found that having stable accommodation reduced the likelihood of reoffending by one-fifth, and that prison leavers with an address on release were three times more likely to be in paid employment than those without, another factor shown to influence reoffending (Harper et al., 2005). May, Sharma, and Stewart (2008) found that the likelihood of reoffending

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<sup>2</sup> This study defined stable accommodation as any accommodation which was not temporary.

increased if prisoners reported that they had no accommodation and no employment in place on release, with 74% of this group and 55% of those who had either accommodation or employment in place on release reoffending within a year, compared with 43% of those with both accommodation and employment in place on release.

In the year ending March 2020, 26% of prisoners were released into homelessness, rough sleeping, or to unsettled accommodation (MoJ, 2020). The OAP was intended to respond to this accommodation need. The pilot aims to test the benefits of providing suitable settled accommodation for prison leavers alongside wraparound support in custody and on release from prison.

## 2.2 Overview of delivery to date

Enrolment onto the programme began in August 2019 and ceased in July 2020. As noted in Table 1, for the week ending 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022, 324 people had been enrolled in total: 179 in Leeds, 101 in Pentonville, and 44 in Bristol.<sup>3</sup> There were 222 withdrawals prior to completing two years of support as of 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022 from the pilot across all three areas; this included both prison leaver-initiated and provider-initiated withdrawals. The data shows withdrawals in Leeds at 129 cases, in Pentonville at 64 cases, and in Bristol at 29 cases as of the pilot ending.<sup>4</sup> Table 1 shows the status of individuals enrolled onto the pilot across the three areas as of the week ending 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022, alongside original enrolment targets to the end of April 2020 and revised enrolment targets to the end of July 2020.

**Table 1: Pilot enrolment status – week ending 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

	Bristol	Pentonville	Leeds	Total
Pilot expiry numbers (i.e. completed 2 years of support)	15	37	50	102
Number withdrawn from pilot (i.e. prior to completing 2 years of support)	29	64	129	222
Total number enrolled	44	101	179	324
<i>Original enrolment target (to the end of April 2020)</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>185</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>420</i>
<i>Revised enrolment target (to the end of July 2020)</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>395</i>

<sup>3</sup> The data in Table 1 is Management Information data supplied by pilot providers on a weekly basis to give a regular update on the status of those enrolled on the pilot.

<sup>4</sup> Reasons for withdrawal are discussed in more detail in section 7.3

## 2.3 Research aims and methodology

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) was commissioned by the MoJ and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to conduct an evaluation of the OAP. The evaluation included three strands:

- **A feasibility assessment** (completed February 2020) to decide which methodological design would be most effective and achievable for the impact evaluation.
- **A qualitative process evaluation** across the three pilot sites to gather a multi-perspective understanding of implementation and delivery, and capture lessons learned.
- **An impact evaluation.** The feasibility assessment recommended a quasi-experimental design to match individuals across prisons using propensity score matching (PSM).<sup>5</sup> This allows for the impact of the pilot to be estimated by comparing the average outcomes in terms of reoffending and homelessness for a treatment and comparison group. This will be published once complete.

This report provides key findings from the qualitative process evaluation.

The aims of the process evaluation were to identify:

- What worked well across the design, set up, and delivery of the pilot;
- Where challenges arose and how they were addressed;
- What the perceived outcomes and impacts of the pilot were; and
- Recommendations for the delivery of future accommodation programmes with prison leavers.

### **Ethical governance, recruitment and data collection**

The project received ethical approval from NatCen's internal Research Ethics Committee (REC). NatCen's ethics governance procedure is in line with the requirements of the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Government Social Research (GSR)

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<sup>5</sup> Propensity score matching (PSM) is a statistical matching technique that attempts to estimate the effect of an intervention or policy by accounting for the covariates that predict receiving the intervention.

Professional Guidance. Data collection occurred at three timepoints.<sup>6</sup> In total, there were 73 research encounters<sup>7</sup> with participants, which included prison leavers, provider staff,<sup>8</sup> partner organisation staff (probation practitioners and housing leads), and MoJ and DLUHC strategic staff. Details are provided in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Overview of completed fieldwork by area**

Number of interviews per case study area	Staff	Prison leavers	Total interviews
Bristol	12	7	19
Pentonville	14	12	26
Leeds	14	7	21
Strategic stakeholders	7	-	7
Total interviews	47	26	73

Potential strategic and operational staff participants were identified by MoJ and pilot managers. Potential prison leaver participants were identified by pilot managers and probation staff. Individuals were purposively sampled based on their pilot involvement. Potential participants were given information sheets explaining the research aims and expectations around participation. Interviews were conducted via telephone or MS Teams.<sup>9</sup> Verbal consent was audio recorded before the interviews. With permission, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to support detailed analysis.

### Analysis and reporting

Interview data were managed and analysed using the Framework approach developed by NatCen and embedded in NVivo. The Framework approach organises data using matrices that enable thematic analysis within and between cases, facilitating descriptive and explanatory analysis (Ritchie et al., 2014). Verbatim interview quotations are provided in this report to highlight findings where appropriate. Care has been taken to anonymise participants as far as possible. Throughout, we differentiate between prison leaver

<sup>6</sup> Wave 1 took place between January to February 2020; Wave 2 took place between September 2020 to January 2021; and Wave 3 took place between August 2021 to December 2021.

<sup>7</sup> This includes some follow-up interviews.

<sup>8</sup> The provider organisation employs staff who are responsible for finding prison leavers suitable accommodation and providing caseworker support in each area. Provider staff included pilot managers and caseworkers.

<sup>9</sup> The original intention was for the prison leaver interviews to be conducted face-to-face. However, there was a greater reliance on remote modes of fieldwork due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

participants, provider staff participants, partner staff participants, and strategic staff participants.

### **Research limitations**

Recruitment of prison leaver participants was the main methodological challenge, and the final sample does not include the full range of views and experiences the evaluation was aiming to include. We were not able to make contact and/or conduct interviews with all prison leavers who had agreed to take part/be contacted by NatCen, despite several varied attempts to contact them.

This might mean that we have not captured the experiences of prison leaver participants who had a less positive experience on the pilot, as those who engaged with the evaluation may have been more likely to have had positive experiences. We did not interview any prisoner leavers who had permanently withdrawn from the pilot, after disengaging with the process who also may have provided a more varied or critical view of the pilot.

Recognising that this group might be particularly challenging to contact, the recruitment procedure involved initial contact being made by probation practitioners. However, this approach did not prove successful as most of these individuals were no longer in contact with the Probation Service when the interviews were being conducted.

An incentive for taking part in the evaluation was not offered. The MoJ's ethical guidance on offering incentives to offenders for taking part in research does not permit the use of cash incentives. Due to the remote nature of the interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic, other incentives (such as refreshments) were not appropriate. It is possible that offering an incentive like this could have facilitated participation. However, eligible prison leavers' individual circumstances, needs and attitudes may have also acted as a barrier to their participation in the research.

## 3. Accommodation provision

This chapter discusses the accommodation provision for those on the OAP, including the use of temporary accommodation on release from custody and longer-term accommodation, such as private rented sector (PRS) accommodation. It outlines the key successes of temporary and longer-term accommodation provision on the pilot, before discussing the key challenges that were faced when providing or securing accommodation.

### 3.1 Temporary accommodation provision

The provision of temporary accommodation immediately after release from prison helped to ensure that all prison leavers on the pilot were housed on release. The temporary provision was not initially envisioned within the published specification for the pilot but was proposed by two of the providers during the tendering process. Temporary accommodation included accommodation (including that with 24/7 support) managed and owned by either the provider or external housing associations; local authority emergency accommodation; shared housing; local hotels, hostels, and bed and breakfasts.

Providers reported that temporary accommodation helped prison leavers adjust to living in the community and allowed those who needed additional support post-release to prepare for independent living. The supplier models in both Leeds and London were based on providing temporary accommodation for all prison leavers on the OAP, albeit for different durations, while in Bristol the provider adopted this approach during the pilot. Temporary accommodation was felt to be particularly beneficial for prison leavers who needed additional support post-release, including those who lacked budgeting skills and those who could not manage their day-to-day needs or a property on their own. The additional support for prison leavers in temporary accommodation included financial support, such as paying the prison leavers' bills, service charges, and council tax, or writing tenant references for them when moving into PRS accommodation, a pre-requisite for many tenancies.

I think the staging post initial place of entry has been great. I think that all prison leavers need this type of accommodation. I think it's made such a difference to them, to clients coming out and knowing that they've got somewhere to go... There were staff on site. It wasn't 24-hour support, but the clients managed, there were not any serious incidents. They kind of just cracked on with what they needed to do.

(Provider staff)

Temporary accommodation also allowed provider staff to get to know the prison leaver and assess their engagement with the pilot to inform the subsequent support that they received.

### 3.2 Longer-term accommodation provision

Discussions about the type of longer-term accommodation that an individual wanted sometimes began while the individual was still in custody. Provider staff felt that this early engagement and an element of choice were key to maintaining prison leavers' engagement in the pilot. When prison leavers were ready to move into longer-term accommodation, the providers' caseworkers worked with them to find accommodation that met their needs in terms of affordability and location (for example, being close to friends and family). Provider staff attended property viewings with prison leavers to help ensure properties were of a suitable standard and would meet their needs.

Five factors were identified among provider and partner agency staff as key in the successful provision of longer-term accommodation:

1. **Commitment of provider staff.** Providers built and maintained good relationships with accommodation providers in local authorities, housing associations, and the PRS. One provider created a specific staff role which involved searching for properties, engaging landlords, and revisiting the financial package and assurances provided to landlords to ensure prison leavers could compete with other prospective tenants. Where provider staff worked with a good landlord or agency, they did everything possible to ensure the tenancies went well so the landlord or agency would be open to housing prison leavers in the future.
2. **Wraparound support.** The wraparound support provided as part of the OAP was felt among provider staff to have given it an advantage over other accommodation

schemes and helped gain buy-in from landlords. It mitigated landlords' concerns about renting to a prison leaver as provider staff could mediate situations and liaise with the landlord if needed.

[The landlord] loved so much that we were just there....She wanted to come back with us because she was like, 'The level of support you give and how you've been able to help, and things haven't turned out with that person but I'm more than happy to rent it out to you again to someone else. (Provider staff)

3. **Buy-in from the PRS.** Provider staff felt some landlords had been particularly receptive and committed to the pilot, for example by not requesting a deposit, rent in advance, credit checks, or tenant references, and keeping tenancies open if prison leavers were recalled to prison. Provider staff noted that this commitment was often cemented if the landlord spoke directly to the prison leaver to understand their experiences, as this provided reassurance that the prison leaver would not damage the property or cause problems in the local community.
4. **Flexibility of the pilot budget.** The increase in budget for deposits was felt to be particularly beneficial, although there was also some concern among provider staff that the 6-week deposit which could be provided to landlords upfront might not be adequate.
5. **The shift to virtual viewings** due to Covid-19 restrictions was felt to be beneficial among provider staff as it reduced the pressure on prison leavers to present well in front of landlords.

### 3.3 Accommodation provision: key challenges

Both temporary and longer-term accommodation were used by providers depending on the needs of the prison leavers. As described above, both provided suitable accommodation which, alongside the wraparound support, led to some prison leavers enrolled onto the pilot staying out of prison and moving forward with their lives. There were, however, challenges which provider staff, partner agency staff and prison leavers identified with the provision of accommodation. Many reflect enduring issues which were not overcome during the pilot.



- One challenge faced by providers in all three geographical areas was the lack of suitable temporary accommodation from housing associations, local authorities or the PRS to house prison leavers. This was felt to be exacerbated by Covid-19 due to the closure of B&Bs and hotels. Provider organisations did manage a limited amount of suitable temporary accommodation which was used to increase the pool of suitable housing available on the pilot. Providers believed that increasing the number of properties they managed would help to address the lack of suitable temporary accommodation and facilitate prison leavers' access to support. However, it was not possible for providers to extend this type of accommodation provision within the pilot budget. Partner agency staff highlighted that the challenges of finding appropriate longer-term accommodation led to some prison leavers staying in temporary accommodation for longer than expected. This created bottlenecks in the system, leading to less temporary accommodation being available for prison leavers joining the pilot.
- Even where suitable temporary accommodation could be found, its use raised some concerns among provider staff. For example, there was a view that staying in temporary accommodation could set unrealistic expectations for prison leavers around the longer-term PRS accommodation that it was feasible for them to live in on the budget available to them.
- There were challenges around securing suitable longer-term accommodation for prison leavers, either directly on release from prison or after a stay in temporary accommodation. One issue was around the availability of affordable longer-term housing as rents were generally high, particularly in London and Bristol. Participants felt that state benefits and allowances (such as Personal Independence Payment benefits or exemptions from the benefit cap for medical reasons) were not sufficient in these cases to cover the rent.
- Partner agency staff reported that there were high levels of competition in the housing market leading to providers competing with others, such as local authorities, professionals and students, to find accommodation. Some prison leavers were described as not being ready to make the move to longer-term accommodation; this was often linked to substance misuse issues and/or mental

health difficulties. Some prison leavers were felt to lack the skills and experience to manage money in a way that would enable them to sustain their tenancies, putting them at risk of losing their housing. This sometimes led to the prison leavers not feeling ready, or provider staff feeling prison leavers were not ready, to move on from their temporary accommodation.

There were several reasons given for why some available accommodation, both temporary and longer-term, was not suitable for housing prison leavers. Some longer-term accommodation was in a poor state of repair or the cost of living in the area was too high. Prison leavers mentioned negative experiences when living with others in shared accommodation, for example if other residents were involved in substance misuse. There was the potential for prison leavers to be housed in unsuitable locations, such as in areas with high levels of substance misuse, if provider staff lacked knowledge of the local area.

One of our early releases went to [town] and viewed the property, all good. Our worker wasn't familiar with the area. That street for the landlord was probably a hard to let property because it was...known for drinking and drug use ... after a week of being there he realised that this was where everyone is attracted to. There were people knocking on his door and he expressed that he didn't want to live in there. (Provider staff)

- Living in unsuitable accommodation could negatively impact prison leavers' experiences of the pilot and meant that some left their accommodation and were willing to be homeless for a short period of time before being re-housed by the provider.
- The availability of accommodation was not the only challenge prison leavers faced in securing somewhere to live. Prison leavers faced being stigmatised within the PRS by landlords who did not want people with criminal convictions or those on benefits as tenants, or who did not want properties to remain vacant while waiting for the individual to be released from prison. Managing their relationship with landlords was sometimes challenging for prison leavers. For example, landlords would sometimes communicate only with providers and not directly with prison leavers who had the tenancy. This meant prison leavers were

unable to take responsibility for communication with the landlord and led to more input than expected being needed from provider staff. Provider staff described the unrealistic expectations that some landlords had of the pilot, for example believing that the provider would cover any financial losses landlords made, such as those due to property damage. Additionally, some landlords had limited knowledge of housing law and procedures and therefore failed to follow correct processes for eviction.

- The advance requirements needed to secure a tenancy were challenging for prison leavers. These included difficulties viewing properties while in custody, not having access to a suitable financial guarantor, and not being able to provide tenancy references or bank statements, as prison leavers often did not have bank accounts. Foreign nationals faced additional barriers such as having to first prove eligibility for Universal Credit and, for some, the EU Settlement Scheme. Finally, prison leavers did not always have the money available to cover a deposit, and deposits from providers took too long to get ready, so prison leavers struggled to secure a property in a fast-moving housing market.
- There were ongoing challenges due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Provider staff were not able to visit prison leavers in custody which they felt had an impact on their understanding of the prison leavers' accommodation needs. Sourcing temporary and longer-term accommodation became more challenging during the pandemic as there was less movement in the temporary and longer-term rental markets. In addition, there were some limitations placed on the type of accommodation that was available during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Tenants could no longer share rooms and some forms of temporary accommodation (for example, hotels) closed or were prioritised for other groups, such as key workers. Prison leavers' ability to access technology was also affected by lockdown measures, for example, public libraries were closed.

## 4. Support provision

An integral part of the pilot was the provision of wraparound support. This equated to approximately 260 hours of support per individual over the two-year period of the pilot to address underlying needs and to help access and sustain accommodation. Support from caseworkers varied depending on the prison leaver but included practical and financial support, emotional support, accommodation support,<sup>10</sup> as well as referrals to education, training, and employment. This chapter discusses the key successes and key challenges regarding support provision, including support provided in custody, through-the-gate support on release from custody, and wraparound support provided alongside accommodation for two years after release.

### 4.1 Support provision: key successes

Caseworkers worked for the providers in the three pilot areas and provided support to prison leavers while in custody, upon release ('through-the-gate' support), and for two years post-release. The provision of tailored and consistent one-to-one support was viewed as a key success of the pilot by both provider staff and prison leavers. Where prison leavers were able to engage with a caseworker while still in custody, this allowed trust and rapport to be built, increasing the likelihood that they would engage with the pilot on release. Having the same caseworker from pre-release until the end of the two-year pilot was also seen as a key contributory factor to the success of the pilot, due to the trust it allowed to be built between prison leaver and caseworker. Prison leavers reported that the honest and non-judgemental approach of caseworkers allowed them to talk openly about their support needs. Prison leavers felt that being able to contact caseworkers by text, email, or phone, in addition to face-to-face contact, was helpful for less formal and more immediate contact.

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<sup>10</sup> Practical and financial support included supporting prison leavers to set up Universal Credit claims; provision of personal budgets, grants, and vouchers; sourcing personal documents; and signposting to external organisations. Emotional support included tailored advice. Accommodation support included informing prison leavers of their rights; supporting them to manage and maintain a tenancy; and liaising with landlords where needed.

There were several aspects of the support provision that were seen by provider staff, partner staff, and prison leavers as working particularly well. Prison leavers were provided with information about what would happen on release from custody which helped to reduce anxieties around becoming homeless on release. This helped to develop a trusting relationship between caseworkers and prison leavers to encourage ongoing engagement. This was reinforced by caseworkers meeting the prison leaver at the gate on release from custody. Both provider staff and prison leavers felt this was crucial in managing a 'risky moment' where those with substance misuse issues might have been tempted to buy drugs.

Provider staff felt that offering practical support prior to emotional support helped build the prison leavers' trust that the caseworker would follow through on commitments. This contrasted with prison leavers' previous experiences of support organisations or probation services. Offering practical support or having a support plan with specific goals was also viewed as beneficial as it allowed the prison leaver to view progress over time, assisting in keeping them engaged with the pilot.

The level of experience and commitment of the provider staff was viewed among provider and partner agency staff as a key factor in the success of the pilot. Examples of their commitment included caseworkers travelling to visit prison leavers during Covid-19, even when the processes for visits were complicated and required additional effort to comply with the Covid-19 regulations. Caseworkers also encouraged individuals to re-engage with the pilot if they had become non-responsive or missed meetings. Provider staff's connections with support services from previous roles were seen as valuable as they knew who would be available to contact when many services were closed during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Additionally, London provider staff's knowledge of housing laws was beneficial as they were able to hold landlords and agencies accountable if they did not follow the relevant law around letting properties.

Staff from external support services reported that knowing the prison leaver had an OAP caseworker increased their confidence in taking them on as a client, as the caseworker could be contactable if there were any problems. Provider staff also noted that caseworkers could contact services on behalf of prison leavers and provide details about

the individual's background, so prison leavers did not have to repeatedly describe their trauma to new staff.

I'm not sure we would have accepted the client had they not been on the pilot, because of the level of risk that they may potentially bring to the service or have around themselves on a regular basis... there is a safety net around that person which is useful to them but is also essential to me in terms of managing risk.

(Partner staff)

## 4.2 Support provision: key challenges

As described in section 4.1, the provision of tailored and consistent one-to-one support within custody and in the community was a key success of the pilot. However, three challenges were reported in relation to support provision. First, provider staff noted that some prison leavers, even though they fitted the pilot criteria, were not able, or not ready, to accept support to address their needs and change their lifestyle. Prison leavers with mental health issues sometimes struggled to live in one place long-term, which led to some deciding to sleep rough rather than in their pilot accommodation. Additionally, provider staff noted that pilot support was not suitable for all prison leavers. This was felt to be exacerbated by constraints of the national lockdown limiting the extent to which support could be tailored. Some prison leavers were also described as having experienced significant trauma which provider staff felt could not be successfully addressed within the two years of pilot support provision.

Some of the offending, we recognised it was trauma-fed behaviour, and unless we were really, really serious about addressing the trauma and recognising that some people's trauma was going to take longer than two years, it wasn't ever going to happen. (Provider staff)

- Some prison leavers disengaged with the pilot once their accommodation had been secured because they felt that they did not need or want the additional wraparound support being offered. One provider staff participant described how this could be because the individual was in a 'good place' and wanted to move forward with their life. However, this presented challenges for case management

as the contract with the providers stated that caseworkers were required to have contact with prison leavers every two weeks in the first six months of the pilot.

- Secondly, provider staff noted that the needs of individual prison leavers changed over time which required the support provided to be flexible. This was particularly noted for those prison leavers with a history of addiction or for those leading chaotic lives. Providers felt that prison leavers' needs when assessed in custody may seem to be much lower than their needs on release. This could be due to the structure provided by the prison environment which means challenges prison leavers face when living independently are minimised, for example difficulties cooking for themselves or paying bills on time.
- The support that the caseworkers could offer was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The limited face-to-face contact with prison leavers due to social distancing restrictions was reported as a challenge. Face-to-face communication was key to the original delivery model and perceived to be important in building relationships with prison leavers. It was important for sustaining prison leavers' engagement, particularly for those with more complex needs. Providers felt that being able to have ongoing visual assessment of the prison leavers was essential to adequately assess their health and identify if they had relapsed into substance misuse.
- An overarching challenge was the reduced availability of referral opportunities to additional support services during the pandemic, including drug and alcohol support services. This applied particularly during the first national lockdown. Caseworkers across pilot areas attempted to address this by providing structure and interest to prison leavers' days. For example, one provider ran a support session about how to keep mentally well and remain as active as possible, while other providers created 'isolation packs' for prison leavers which contained puzzles and magazines.

## 5. Governance, partnership working and funding

This chapter discusses key successes and challenges around governance and contract management on the pilot; how partnership working between providers and other organisations was managed; and the funding and resources available to providers.

### 5.1 Governance and contract management

The overall governance of the pilot was managed by a project board co-chaired by the Deputy Directors from MoJ and DLUHC, who had overall responsibility for the pilot. This ensured both departments felt engaged in the process and that their goals regarding the pilot were aligned. The MoJ were responsible for the operational management of the pilot and provider staff felt supported by MoJ throughout. There was regular communication between MoJ and the provider staff, who noted that the pilot objectives were clear, although there was some uncertainty around some of the procedures for the pilot which are described below.

Some challenges regarding the governance and contract management of the pilot were reported by provider and strategic staff. Firstly, provider staff reported that there were sometimes differing expectations between MoJ and the providers, particularly a lack of certainty around the procedure for withdrawals when prison leavers were recalled or reoffended. Secondly, providers were unclear on the expected level and frequency of reporting to contract managers regarding the progress of the pilot. This was exacerbated in some cases by requests for additional information, which was not being routinely collected, within short timeframes.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the level of strategic staff turnover was noted as a challenge by provider staff. This led to a lack of consistency in senior leadership on the project board and provider staff having to get to know and work with multiple contract managers throughout the pilot.

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<sup>11</sup> Collection of Monitoring Information had not been specified in the contract with providers.



## 5.2 Partnership working

Providers worked with a range of different partners including housing organisations, private landlords, prison and probation services, and local support agencies such as substance misuse and employment services. Provider staff felt that these partnerships played a key role in delivering the pilot, allowing it to address prison leavers' needs holistically. Partnerships were viewed as working particularly well when partners were committed to delivering common objectives and were responsive and maintained regular contact. This allowed effective information-sharing about individual prison leavers. Provider staff reported that prison staff had been a key link during Covid-19 while providers were unable to visit individuals in custody themselves.

Various challenges with partnership working were identified relating to communication, resources, and the level of understanding of partner agency staff regarding the details of the pilot. Provider staff noted that it took time to build trust due to some partners' previous negative experiences of offender-focused community-based initiatives.

Prison and probation staff's high workloads resulted in them not having time to engage with provider staff to the extent providers would have liked. For example, probation staff were not always able to check prison leavers' risk profiles in a timely manner and did not always inform providers if a prison leaver returned to custody.

Probation and prison staff were reported to sometimes have a limited understanding of the OAP, with one example being prison staff continuing to refer individuals in custody to the pilot after enrolment had ended. Finally, there was felt to be a lack of information sharing around when prison leavers would be released from custody and late-evening releases proved challenging as it meant provider staff had to wait at the prison gate all day.

## 5.3 Funding and resources

Pilot funding was generally considered to be adequate. Provider staff particularly valued the flexibility in some areas, including the ability to move funding between accommodation and support and between years. During restrictions due to Covid-19, providers were able to supply prison leavers with phones to facilitate communication when meeting face-to-

face was not possible. Over the course of the pilot, the funding was amended so that it was possible for providers to fund advance rents, deposit payments, and rent top-ups.

There were certain reported challenges regarding funding and resources. While there was a level of flexibility with how the funding could be spent, provider staff felt additional flexibility would have been useful to fund. For example, travel to appointments or property viewings or essential items such as clothing or white goods. Additionally, provider staff felt funding for personalisation and adding value to prison leavers' pilot experiences would have been helpful, for example funding qualifications. Provider staff reported applying for grants and other funding to supplement pilot funding where necessary.

Provider staff noted that the difficulties with funding in the wider voluntary and charity sectors, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, made resources, such as laptops, more difficult to access through charities. There were difficulties recruiting provider staff due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the temporary nature and variable hours of the job. The range of skills required meant that few people were qualified for the role.

There was felt to be a need for additional funding related to accommodation in some specific areas. This included increased funding for advance rent and deposits, as eight weeks' rent was the standard ask for private properties. It was reported that some properties were deemed to be in too poor a state to house some prison leavers so it was felt that additional funding to cover maintenance work would have increased the pool of appropriate accommodation available to prison leavers. Incentives for landlords to take on prison leavers were viewed as something that would also have been helpful to enable the pilot to compete with offers provided to landlords by the local authority. Finally, provider staff reported that more expensive accommodation was less accessible for prison leavers under 35 years old due to them receiving lower payments for the housing element of universal credit, making finding accommodation for this age group more challenging.

## **6. Ending of pilot support**

This chapter provides findings on the plans for pilot support ending, including approaches used by providers; prison leavers' perceived readiness to cease involvement; and identified challenges with the ending of pilot support and how providers addressed these.

### **6.1 Plans for support coming to an end**

The intention of the pilot was that the level of support provided would taper off over time in line with prison leavers' needs, and end two years after their release from custody. Among strategic and provider staff, there was a view that the pilot needed a cut-off point. The view of both provider staff and prison leavers was that the optimum length of support was largely dependent on an individual's needs and circumstances.

Discussions around the pilot ending between caseworkers and prison leavers focused on developing a strategy in the form of an exit plan, which included referrals and/or signposting onto support for a range of issues and any anticipated longer-term needs. This included information about the benefits system; services for drug, alcohol and mental health and wellbeing needs; accommodation support needs; and homelessness support.

### **6.2 Prison leavers' readiness to cease pilot involvement**

Provider staff felt that some prison leavers would be ready to cease their involvement with the pilot when it ended, and this was reiterated by some prison leavers. This was seen as largely due to the support and accommodation provided by the pilot meeting the needs of those prison leavers. Prison leavers who were viewed as ready to cease their involvement in the pilot included those who were managing their own tenancies in affordable and stable accommodation; those who were currently in employment; and those who were accessing other forms of support, or who were felt to know how to do so in the future.

Those who were viewed as more likely to need, or who might benefit from, continued support included those prison leavers still living in temporary accommodation close to the end of the two years' support; those living independently for the first time; those with

ongoing support needs; and those who had not been able to fully engage and benefit from the pilot because of extenuating circumstances, for example, ill health.

I wish it [pilot length] was longer...Only where everything got put on hold where I was [unwell]...I'd probably have my own flat by now. (Prison leaver)

### 6.3 Challenges to pilot support ending

Providers felt it would be challenging to stop engaging with prison leavers when they left the pilot. There were concerns that some prison leavers would find living in the community without pilot support particularly challenging, including those with entrenched and complex support needs. There were also concerns around the ongoing affordability of accommodation, for example, when pilot rent top ups were removed,<sup>12</sup> and concerns that those in temporary accommodation may face eviction. There was some uncertainty among prison leavers around whether any ongoing contact would be possible, and providers' plans for ongoing support after the pilot did vary, with some not providing any and others envisaging offering 'light-touch' support.

Other challenges for prison leavers exiting the pilot were thought to be, in part, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. One concern was the perceived lack of support services for onward referral at the end of the pilot. Provider staff also felt that there was a lack of continuity of support on the pilot, due to a high turnover of pilot delivery staff and challenges recruiting for vacant posts.

Providers employed measures during the pilot to address some of these concerns including trying to ensure that prison leavers' rents would be affordable in the longer term. They did this by reviewing the income and expenditure of those who were using rent top-ups; speaking with landlords to try and reduce rent payments; and considering what other affordable accommodation options might be feasible to move prison leavers into before the pilot ended.

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<sup>12</sup> As stated in the OAP guidance a rent top up is available if required to the provider to bridge the gap between the Housing Benefit payment and the market rent. The provider must ensure that the prison leaver is aware of the top up and provide support to help them to be able to cover this cost by the end of the 2 years through access to employment or effective budgeting support.

## 7. Pilot engagement and withdrawals

This chapter provides findings on the extent to which prison leavers were considered suitable for the pilot, re-engaging prison leavers who were not engaging with the pilot and reported reasons for pilot withdrawals.

### 7.1 Suitability of prison leavers

The eligibility criteria for OAP were generally thought to work well in referring suitable individuals to the pilot. There were specific groups of offenders who some provider staff felt might additionally benefit from the pilot. These included men in category D prisons with longer sentences; and low-risk (Level 1) MAPPA offenders.<sup>13</sup> For these groups to be included in the pilot, some provider staff felt that they should be properly assessed on a case-by-case basis in terms of their level of risk and the reasons that they were under MAPPA. Provider and partner staff participants highlighted that landlords might be more reluctant to engage with individuals who have certain offending histories (for example, violent crimes and sexual offences) which may need to be considered. There were, however, also prison leavers accepted onto the pilot with high support needs who could not be supported effectively and were subsequently withdrawn (see section 7.3).

### 7.2 Experiences of re-engaging prison leavers

When prison leavers were not engaging with the pilot,<sup>14</sup> provider staff felt that it was important for them to have the opportunity to re-engage, although this could be challenging. There was careful consideration before a disengaged prison leaver was withdrawn from the pilot and might include input from the provider, MoJ, staff from other

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<sup>13</sup> MAPPA stands for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and it is the process through which various agencies such as the police, the Prison Service and the Probation Service work together to protect the public by managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders and those who have committed terrorism-related offences living in the community. Each individual under MAPPA has a risk management plan which might include accommodation at an Approved Premises where the offender can be monitored. Individuals subject to MAPPA were not eligible for the pilot.

<sup>14</sup> As noted in section 4.2 the contract with the providers stated that caseworkers were required to have contact with prison leavers every two weeks in the first six months of the pilot. In the second six months, the contract specified contact once a week, and then in the second year, the contract specified contact once a fortnight.

services (such as the Probation Service and housing), and, if possible, the prison leaver themselves. A wide range of factors were considered to inform decision-making around whether a prison leaver should be withdrawn from the pilot, including their behaviour and engagement on the pilot, alongside their individual needs and circumstances. Prison leavers with sustained periods of disengagement were generally withdrawn from the pilot. Prison leavers returning to custody for less than two months would continue receiving support from their caseworker while in custody. In some cases, prison leavers were seen as becoming more committed to staying on the pilot after being recalled, as they viewed it as a 'second chance'. Some provider staff felt that prison leavers should have been able to re-engage regardless of the length of time that they had returned to custody as these individuals may have benefitted significantly from the continued support.

### 7.3 Pilot withdrawals

Across all pilot locations, 222 (68%) had been withdrawn from the pilot before completing two years of support as of the week ending 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022. 118 of these withdrawals were due to disengagement, 97 as a result of being ineligible, and 7 for other reasons. One reflection among strategic staff was that this relatively high number was somewhat unexpected as they felt the pilot's focus on accommodation provision and support would have helped maintain engagement. There were a range of reasons for withdrawals reported. Prison leavers were withdrawn if they were not ready to engage in the support offered by the caseworkers. Challenges in adjusting to life outside prison and trying to find things to occupy their time could also play a role in them re-offending or not engaging with services, such as the Probation Service.

Those kinds of clients would often disengage from the service or lose multiple phones or be caught up in the chaos of that lifestyle again of using... some of them would then miss probation appointments because they're on drugs and they're not remembering and then be recalled. (Provider staff)

However, some prison leavers did not want to engage with the support because, for example, it was not felt to be needed. As stated previously, some prison leavers disengaged with the pilot once their accommodation had been secured because they felt that they did not need or want the additional wraparound support being offered. One

provider staff participant described how this could be because the individual was in a ‘good place’ and wanted to move forward with their life. However, this presented challenges for case management as the contract with the providers stated that caseworkers were required to have contact with prison leavers every two weeks in the first six months of the pilot.

Individuals who behaved inappropriately or were not complying with the rules and regulations of their accommodation were also withdrawn from the pilot. The OAP guidance also stated that prison leavers who returned to custody for over two months were removed from the pilot.

There was felt to have been some initial confusion over individuals’ MAPPA status which meant that some individuals who were subject to MAPPA were enrolled erroneously and had to later be withdrawn.

These examples reflect further analysis of a second dataset which included more detail<sup>15</sup> on the reasons for withdrawals as shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Reasons for withdrawals<sup>16</sup>**

Reason for withdrawal	Bristol	Pentonville	Leeds	Total
Disengaged – recalled <sup>17</sup>	11	22	17	50
Disengaged – not recalled <sup>18</sup>	7	20	41	68
Ineligible – In custody until enrolment ended <sup>19</sup>	5	5	36	46

<sup>15</sup> At the end of the pilot MoJ analysts were provided with an additional data update which included further detailed Management Information data captured on pilot withdrawals. This data allowed categorisation of withdrawals to include disengagement, high risk/needs, ineligible due to MAPPA status, deceased etc. Providers from each of the three different pilot locations provided these updates at different timepoints (Bristol 30/6/22), Pentonville (02/08/22) and Leeds (28/07/22).

<sup>16</sup> Table 3 - Reasons for withdrawals - does not include those who left the pilot due to having completed the pilot with two years of support.

<sup>17</sup> Participants who disengaged from the pilot and were recalled into custody. In these cases the primary reason for withdrawal was disengagement of some form (e.g. declining the service; avoiding all contact; entrenched homelessness), rather than being ineligible due to being recalled to prison and being in custody at the time the pilot ended.

<sup>18</sup> Participants who disengaged from the pilot, and not classified as also having been recalled to prison.

<sup>19</sup> Participants who had enrolled on the pilot but were subsequently either unable to take up the service or withdrawn due to the length of their custodial sentence.

Reason for withdrawal	Bristol	Pentonville	Leeds	Total
Ineligible – high risk / needs <sup>20</sup>	2	3	2	7
Ineligible – MAPPA <sup>21</sup>	2	6	5	13
Ineligible – prison transfer <sup>22</sup>	1	2	7	10
Ineligible – receiving other supported accommodation <sup>23</sup>	1	1	9	11
Ineligible – receiving local authority accommodation <sup>24</sup>	0	1	3	4
Ineligible – no recourse to public funds <sup>25</sup>	0	3	1	4
Ineligible – owns a property <sup>26</sup>	0	0	2	2
Deceased	0	0	2	2
Other	0	1	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>222</b>

<sup>20</sup> Participants who were withdrawn due to having high risks and/or needs (e.g. mental health concerns; substance misuse issues; complex needs).

<sup>21</sup> Participants subject to a multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA, relating to violent and sexual offenders). Offenders subject to MAPPA were not eligible under the original pilot recruitment criteria.

<sup>22</sup> Participants who enrolled whilst in custody but then transferred to a different prison that was not in the pilot.

<sup>23</sup> Ineligible due to being categorised as a priority need for supported accommodation. Those who were entitled to receive other supported accommodation were not eligible under the original pilot recruitment criteria.

<sup>24</sup> Ineligible due to being provided with Local Authority housing as they were not eligible under the original pilot recruitment criteria.

<sup>25</sup> Participants who enrolled but were subsequently found to be ineligible due to having no recourse to public funds.

<sup>26</sup> Participants who were ineligible due to having ownership of their own property.



## 8. Perceived impacts

This chapter provides findings on the perceived impacts of the pilot on the prison leavers taking part in it. It also describes the wider perceived impacts on staff involved in the delivery of the pilot and on the community. The findings in this chapter are perceived impacts only; actual impacts of the pilot on (i) the likelihood of reoffending 12 months after release, (ii) average time until reoffending, and (iii) accommodation status 12 months after release for different prison leaver groups (in terms of their characteristics and needs), will be assessed via the impact evaluation.

### 8.1 Perceived impacts on prison leavers

The pilot aims to reduce reoffending and homelessness in vulnerable individuals leaving prison, by providing them with appropriate accommodation and other support. Participants perceived that the pilot had achieved one of its key aims of reducing homelessness for people at risk on release from prison. The assurance of accommodation on release was seen to provide prison leavers with a sense of security. Without the accommodation provided through the pilot, there was a view among all participant groups that many of the prison leavers enrolled would have been homeless on release. The second key aim of the pilot was to reduce reoffending, which was also perceived to have been achieved.<sup>27</sup> Provider staff, partner staff, and prison leavers explained that accommodation was a fundamental factor in breaking the ‘revolving door’ cycle of reoffending, as having no fixed abode puts prison leavers at risk of reoffending and returning to custody.

You can’t live a normal life when you’re on the streets. You just can’t do it. You’ve got no choice when you’re on the streets to commit crime in order to survive sometimes, but that’s just how it is, you just do, and when you’ve got a roof over your head, you’re able to take care of yourself. (Prison leaver)

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<sup>27</sup> This has not yet been validated through statistical analysis. The impact evaluation, due to be published in 2023, will assess whether the OAP had a statistically significant impact on one-year reoffending rates.

However, provider staff reported that not all prison leavers had shared in this success as, for prison leavers with crime and substance misuse entrenched in their lifestyles, it was challenging to break the cycle of reoffending.

Other perceived impacts on prison leavers were improvements to physical health and mental wellbeing; increased engagement with support services; better relationships with others; and a readiness to seek employment.

Two factors were identified by provider staff and prison leavers as underpinning the success of the pilot. First, whether a prison leaver felt ready and/or able to change their lifestyle was considered essential to their success on the pilot. Second was the intensity and frequency of support they received, which was viewed by provider staff as being limited for some prison leavers by the Covid-19 pandemic. The change in the intensity and frequency of support due to Covid-19 was reported as having affected pilot delivery and progress towards longer-term goals for some prison leavers. Social distancing restrictions resulted in more limited face-to-face support and there was a perceived lack of available support from other agencies to refer prison leavers on to. However, there were also some prison leavers who felt that the pandemic had not affected their experiences of the pilot.

## **8.2 Perceived impacts on staff and the wider community**

A range of perceived impacts on provider staff and partners were identified. These included managing a challenging workload leading to burn out; experiencing personal fulfilment from supporting prison leavers; and developing knowledge and skills from working with the range of partners involved in pilot delivery.

Provider and partner staff described different ways the pilot may have impacted on the wider community. Perceived impacts included safer communities for residents and businesses, and perceived potential cost savings for other services associated with a reduction in reoffending from the support available through the pilot. It was felt that prison leavers were more conscious of how their behaviour impacted others in the local area. One view among strategic staff was that the OAP also theoretically had the potential to have a generational impact on children of prison leavers, who would be less likely to offend in the future.

## 9. Conclusions

The findings from this process evaluation have implications for policymakers as well as strategic and operational staff working to deliver a system that supports prison leavers to have stable housing and to not reoffend upon their release. This section summarises the key findings arising from the research.

The eligibility criteria for OAP were generally thought to work well in referring suitable individuals to the pilot, with the exception of withdrawals occurring due to confusion around individuals' MAPPA status as discussed in Section 7.3. Participants reflected that without the OAP some prison leavers would have probably been homeless or in prison. It was felt that consideration should be given to widening the eligibility criteria to include females and prisoners who may be particularly difficult to house and support on release, such as those with longer sentences and low-risk (Level 1) MAPPA offenders.

Some individuals with higher levels of risk/need, for example those experiencing mental health challenges or with substance misuse needs, who could not be supported on the pilot and those who returned to custody for a sentence of over two months were generally withdrawn from the pilot. One view among provider staff was that the pilot should have allowed prison leavers to re-engage regardless of their time back in custody. This widening of the eligibility would help to ensure that resources and support are targeted at those who will benefit the most from this type of programme and could help to alleviate some of the challenges associated with working with prison leavers who have serious substance misuse issues. It could also highlight when individuals may need to be referred onto other pathways to ensure that support is not removed from those who could benefit from it.

- Although not initially envisioned within the specification of the OAP design, staged/temporary accommodation was used effectively to help prepare individuals for independent living. The use of staged/temporary accommodation in a future accommodation programme to support prison leavers would help to ensure that prison leavers can be settled in the most appropriate accommodation for each individual, and that they can be housed immediately upon release.

- Providers worked with prison leavers to find longer-term accommodation that met their needs and the pilot successfully helped prison leavers to do this. However, challenges were identified around a lack of affordable and suitable accommodation for prison leavers both during the pilot and after the pilot support ended. Provider staff and prison leavers spoke about the importance of having a trusted network of landlords working with the pilot, where prison leavers were not at risk of exploitation.
- The pilot might have benefitted from a dedicated staff role to liaise directly with landlords, which might also have helped to alleviate pressure on busy caseworkers. In addition, this type of programme could be made more attractive to landlords, for example through exploring the potential use of financial incentives. More could potentially be done to engage with the private rented sector to alleviate any fears about renting to prison leavers and the perceived risks of this.

Caseworkers provided support to prison leavers from their time in custody and for two years post-release. This support was felt to be particularly effective when provided by the same caseworker over the duration of the pilot. Provider staff and prison leavers felt that the optimum length of support was largely dependent on an individual's needs and circumstances, suggesting that introducing some flexibility in the timeframe of support provided to individuals would be beneficial. This might mean some prison leavers receiving less than two years of support and some longer, ensuring that resources are used more effectively among the prison leavers taking part. However, this would need to be balanced with all prison leavers being treated equally and having equal opportunity to engage in the pilot.

Funding was generally considered to be adequate and provider staff particularly valued the flexibility in some areas, for example the ability to move funding between financial years. However, providers described how they had accessed funding resources outside the pilot budget to help support prison leavers on their release from prison and to rebuild their lives. Greater flexibility in how the funding can be used would allow the programme to be more individually tailored, which could be particularly beneficial for prison leavers with more complex needs. There was a specific suggestion that providing eight weeks' rent in total for deposits and advance rent should be made standard, rather than having to apply for this on a case-by-case basis.

- Providers worked with a range of different partners to deliver the pilot and address prison leavers' needs holistically. They included housing organisations, private landlords, prison and probation services, and local support agencies such as substance misuse and employment services. An emphasis on multi-agency working between organisations would help to address multiple needs, drawing on a wide range of experience and expertise.<sup>28</sup> For this to be effective, suitable processes for sharing information and allocating funding would need to be in place, and joint commissioning of services could also be considered.
- Provider staff also noted that it would be beneficial to have specialists on the pilot team in a range of areas to provide both practical and emotional support, including mental health, alcohol and substance misuse, and domestic violence. Being able to provide practical support in areas such as using digital technology, managing finances, seeking employment, and life skills was also viewed as important. Drawing on a wider range of partners could help ensure that the wraparound support provided by the pilot is sufficiently tailored to meet individuals' needs.
- Among provider staff and prison leavers the pilot was perceived to have achieved its key aims of reducing homelessness in people at risk on release from prison and reducing reoffending. Alongside this, provider staff described a range of other successful outcomes of the pilot, such as some prison leavers spending their longest time out of prison whilst on the pilot. There was a view that a wider range of successful outcomes from the pilot should be recognised and that some form of recognition for prison leavers who achieve their own personal key goals, and whether these correspond to the key goals of the pilot, would be a beneficial addition to pilot delivery.
- There was no formal mechanism to share good delivery practice between providers. This could have helped to maximise learning and improve provision, for example, by setting up meetings between different providers' leads.

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<sup>28</sup> Including providers, external support organisations, prison services, and probation.

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## Appendix A

### Background to OAP

#### Aims

The OAP was jointly run by MoJ and DLUHC and aimed to reduce homelessness and reoffending through offering two years' stable accommodation and wraparound support to prison leavers. It was conducted in three resettlement prisons: HMP Bristol, HMP Leeds and HMP Pentonville, through which participants ('prison leavers') were recruited. It began in August 2019 and ran until July 2022. The Covid-19 pandemic had a bearing on some aspects of pilot delivery, particularly as it reduced or removed opportunities for face-to-face contact between pilot providers and prison leavers both before and after they left custody. It also impacted on the availability of suitable accommodation for prison leavers through the wider changes in the housing markets brought about by lockdowns, including restrictions on sharing accommodation. The process evaluation explored pilot implementation and delivery, the pilot's perceived outcomes, and recommendations for the delivery of similar programmes.

#### Eligibility Criteria

The pilot accepted male adult prison leavers who had received custodial sentences of up to 36 months,<sup>29</sup> who were not subject to MAPPAs (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements)<sup>30</sup> and were at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping on release from custody. In total, 324 people were enrolled onto the pilot: 179 in Leeds, 101 in Pentonville, and 44 in Bristol.

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<sup>29</sup> The original eligibility criterion of having a custodial sentence of 24 months or less was expanded to 36 months during the pilot.

<sup>30</sup> MAPPAs stands for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and it is the process through which various agencies such as the police, the Prison Service and the Probation Service work together to protect the public by managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders and those who have committed terrorism-related offences living in the community. Each individual under MAPPAs has a risk management plan which might include accommodation at an Approved Premises where the offender can be monitored. Individuals subject to MAPPAs were not eligible for the pilot. See more at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-guidance>

## Key features

The pilot in each area was run by a provider organisation: St Mungo's in London, ARA (Addiction Recovery Agency) in Bristol and Foundation in Leeds. These are third-sector organisations with experience working with offenders and sourcing accommodation for those at risk of homelessness. Each provider employed staff to work on the pilot, including a pilot manager, caseworkers and sometimes a specialist housing role.<sup>31</sup>

The accommodation support provided included the provision of temporary accommodation, if needed, for two years after prison leavers were released from custody, such as accommodation managed and owned by either the provider or external housing associations (including that with 24/7 support); local authority emergency accommodation; shared housing; local hotels, hostels, and bed and breakfasts. The providers also supported prison leavers in sourcing and maintaining a tenancy for longer-term accommodation, for example PRS properties.

The tailored wraparound support totalled approximately 260 hours over two years after release from custody. This was a tapered model, with support decreasing from five hours a week for the first six months after release from custody to one hour per week for the second year of support. Support from caseworkers included practical and financial support, emotional support, accommodation support (detailed above), and referrals to education, training, and employment. The types of support that were included are detailed in Table A1 below.

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<sup>31</sup> Pilot managers generally managed the pilot day-to-day, including risk management, supervising and providing support to staff, and communicating with partner organisations. Caseworkers work with prison leavers in custody and on release, including providing support in finding accommodation, managing tenancies, identifying support needs, and encouraging prison leavers to be more independent. Specialist housing staff's responsibilities included managing the identification of potential accommodation for prison leavers, for example liaising with landlords, supporting caseworkers to assist with tenancies, and managing any issues that arose with landlords.



**Table A1: Overview of caseworker support**

Practical and financial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help to set up Universal Credit claims</li> <li>• Provision of small personal budgets, grants and vouchers for food, clothing and furniture</li> <li>• Sourcing personal identification documents such as birth certificates and passports</li> <li>• Signposting to external organisations, such as mental health or substance misuse services to support or maintain recovery</li> </ul>
Emotional support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored advice, viewed as important for individuals who were feeling ‘down’ or struggling with a potential substance misuse relapse</li> </ul>
Accommodation support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informing prison leavers of their rights regarding housing and renting</li> <li>• Support to manage and maintain a tenancy</li> <li>• Liaising with landlords when needed</li> <li>• Sourcing accommodation</li> <li>• Attending viewings with prison leavers</li> </ul>
Referrals to education, training and employment (ETE) opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referrals to gain industry accreditations, for example the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS)</li> <li>• Sourcing volunteering opportunities and supporting individuals to attend interviews for formal employment</li> </ul>