



# PREVENTING RE-OFFENDING AND HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER INTERIM REPORT FEBRUARY 2011



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Homeless Link is undertaking a piece of action research over the 12 months to June 2011 to explore the links between homelessness and offending behaviour. The research, which is funded by the Monument Trust, is working with a range of stakeholders from across the homelessness and criminal justice sectors to explore:

- How the homelessness sector can play a more active role in supporting clients with offending histories, and in preventing re-offending; and
- Ways to build strong partnerships between the homelessness and criminal justice sectors, in order to reduce the re-offending rate of homeless clients.

Many clients using homelessness services have offending histories - 86% of services in our latest Survey of Needs and Provision (SNAP) reported that they work with clients affected by offending behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

In turn, homelessness increases the chances of re-offending. For example, ex-prisoners who are homeless upon release are twice as likely to re-offend as those with stable accommodation. Offenders who are homeless upon entering prison have a much higher reconviction rate within one year of release, with 79% being reconvicted, compared to 47% who had accommodation.<sup>2</sup>

Until now little formal attention has been given to the role that the homelessness sector can and does play in preventing offending or re-offending. Homelessness services already play a key role in supporting clients with offending histories and this research aims to encourage and improve such services. This is especially pertinent in a climate of widescale changes in both the homelessness and criminal justice sectors following the change in government in 2010.

This project is being undertaken to improve our understanding of the links between offending and homelessness. We seek to highlight the different types of support and interventions which can be developed to prevent offending and reduce re-offending amongst homeless people. As such, the project aims to help bring about positive change in the approaches of homelessness and criminal justice agencies, and ultimately contribute to reducing offending behaviour among this client group.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

This interim report is the culmination of the first six month's work of the project – Phase One. This phase included a literature review, client focus groups and surveys of staff across homelessness and criminal justice services.

The literature review provided an overview of statistics and service provision at the intersection of homelessness and criminal justice and helped us to identify areas to pursue further, such as the experience of short sentenced prisoners and lack of longitudinal data on interventions provided to support ex-offenders. The client focus groups were undertaken to ensure the homelessness and criminal justice staff surveys asked appropriate questions and explored areas of concern raised by service users. The literature review and the client focus groups informed the development of the surveys

and will also support the development of the in-depth qualitative stage of research – Phase Two. Two online surveys were created, one aimed at criminal justice staff and one aimed at homelessness services staff. For more detailed information about the methodology used for the surveys please see section 2.0 below. The responses to the survey will be used to identify which areas to pursue for the research in Phase Two as well as inform the interview questions.

In Phase Two we will conduct interviews with a wide range of criminal justice and homelessness agencies in five areas across England following up on findings from the surveys and identifying challenges and good practice in more detail. The project is guided by a steering group made up of representatives from the Home Office, homelessness services, NOMS, Nacro, Clinks and other services for ex-offenders.

This report includes summaries of the literature review, client focus groups, survey methodology and key findings from the survey of homelessness and criminal justice services staff.

## 1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

As part of the first phase of the Preventing Re-offending and Homelessness Together project we undertook a review of the literature around homelessness and offending, re-offending, cross agency working with offenders, criminal justice agencies and homelessness agencies. Presented here is a brief summary of the literature review; a full copy is available upon request to Homeless Link.

The indicators and experiences which impact upon an ex-offender's likelihood to re-offend are multiple and complex, and include issues around homelessness, substance use, mental health, employment and living skills. Whilst none of these factors can be taken in complete isolation, the literature review emphasised issues around ex-offenders' housing need, and cross sector working between accommodation-based services and criminal justice agencies.

There are no exact figures of the numbers of ex-offenders who are homeless or using homelessness services. "Due to the transient and chaotic nature of the homelessness experience, it is highly difficult to quantify the general homeless population. It is even more difficult to quantify the population of prison leavers within this population."<sup>3</sup>

Despite the gaps in data noted above, existing data shows that people with an offending history are greatly overrepresented in homeless populations compared to the general population:

- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) research states that 23% of offenders under probation supervision are not in settled / suitable accommodation<sup>4</sup>
- In 2010 the Ministry of Justice reported that 15% of offenders were homeless prior to custody and these offenders then had a much higher reconviction rate within one year of release, with 79% being reconvicted, compared to 47% who had accommodation.<sup>5</sup>
- Homeless Link's SNAP 2010 reports that nearly 75% of projects have prison leavers in their service and 10% reported that more than half of their clients are

prison leavers<sup>6</sup>

We specifically identified short and community sentenced offenders, women offenders and older offenders as having specific support needs. For short sentenced offenders we were interested in the lack of interventions and support available as a result of the short period spent in custody and the lack of statutory supervision following release. For women offenders we looked at the results of the Corston Report and the implementation of diversion from custody and women's centres. Older offenders have been identified as the fastest growing prison population (some 10% of the prison population is now aged over 50 years). These groups will be investigated further in phase two of the research project.

The lack of consistent data on quantity, re-offending risk and support needs of ex-offenders in homelessness services makes the development of support programmes difficult. In commissioning processes and applying for grant funding quantitative and qualitative data are required to evidence need and inform the structure of a proposed service. Where programmes do exist, across both sectors, the lack of outcome and longitudinal based studies makes it difficult to evaluate impact.

The criminal justice policy context is changing rapidly at this time. In December 2010 the Government launched a new strategy to reform the criminal justice system – Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders.<sup>7</sup> Of particular interest to this project are the proposals around rehabilitation, sentencing reform, payment by results and working with communities to reduce crime.

The findings of the literature review informed the development of the focus groups and the surveys. A number of matters arising from the literature review will be followed up in the qualitative research in phase two of the project.

### 1.3 FOCUS GROUPS

In August and September 2010 we conducted a small series of focus groups with people who were clients of homelessness services and also had a support need around offending. This provided a valuable snapshot of ex-offenders' experiences across both the criminal justice and homelessness sectors.<sup>8</sup>

Discussion was organised around three themes:

- Discussing and recording information: we asked clients about their communications with staff in homelessness and criminal justice services about their housing needs and offending histories.
- Cross-sector working and communication: we asked clients about their experience of staff from different support services working together to help them, such as probation and their hostel keyworker.
- Effective Support: we asked clients about their experience of support and what had helped them to get the right accommodation and break cycles of re-offending. Participants were also asked what they thought would help to break these patterns.

These themes were planned as being broadly similar to the themes for the homelessness and criminal justice staff surveys.

The clients who participated had great variation in their experiences of the support they received around offending behaviour and homelessness. Many had come out of prison with nowhere to go at some point in their lives. There was inconsistency in the kind of support they received around offending in

homelessness services, with several commenting that staff in such services did not have good specialised knowledge to help them. Some had experience of good cross-sector support which they valued. Others continued to experience a sense of being left on their own, or worse, that different services were impeding each other and thus the client.

There was marked difference between geographic areas in terms of the participants' experience of good joined-up working. One group reported no experience of this taking place and another group, 20 miles away, reported very good links between their support workers in drug and alcohol, accommodation and criminal justice.

"It's a cycle...my probation officer didn't agree with my keyworker, but I need to keep both of them happy. I need to keep my keyworker happy so I can keep my accommodation. But if my probation officer isn't happy, I'll end up back in jail."

Many clients self-reported links between substance use and offending, and that in order to overcome offending they also needed to address issues with drugs. In three of the four groups, participants reported that being homeless upon release from prison greatly increased the likelihood of re-offending. There was a greater chance of returning to people and places these participants had known before prison, which may create an environment where substance use and associated crime were unavoidable. One client volunteered that he had purposely reoffended with the intention of being

returned to prison as he was living in a tent, had an extreme drug problem that he felt he could not escape, and was receiving no support "on the outside". In this instance prison was seen by the participant as an appropriate intervention where he knew he would get help that he did not feel was available to him in the community.

A recurring theme throughout the discussions was the significant impact that committed and persistent individual staff had had on many clients. In such instances the attitude and motivation of the worker appeared to be the factor that resulted in the client improving their sense of self and /or achievement, regardless of whether a specific goal was achieved.

"They ask you a lot about offending and stuff when you arrive, to make sure you're not going to set fire to the place, but that's about it really."

"My keyworker helped me to get a USB stick and I take it with me to all my different appointments and they can save any stuff on there, like support plans, and look at other people's support plans. I basically make sure they all know what the others are doing"

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two online surveys were designed to explore the themes identified above. Questions were designed to specifically understand the following issues from the perspectives of staff across both sectors:

- The data that is collected by both sectors on housing need and offending behaviour
- The relationship between the two sectors, looking at challenges, examples of good practice and solutions to any existing difficulties
- How agencies meet clients needs, looking at the policies and procedures used, levels of confidence in supporting clients, and staff training
- The number of offenders using homelessness services, and the number of offenders that report a housing need.

### 2.2 SAMPLE

The survey was sent to Homeless Link members using our members' mailing list. Our membership contains Community Groups, Client Groups, Voluntary Sector services, Public Sector services and individuals. To distribute the survey to the Criminal Justice sector, a wide range of existing networks were used, including the CLINKS newsletter, Home Office contact lists and probation contacts from across England.

Both samples were self-selecting samples, which has the benefit of having a wider population to draw from. A possible drawback would be that those individuals responding to the survey have an interest in the subject, meaning that the data could be skewed representing only a subset of the intended population, those already wanting to explore and address housing and offending. However, having looked at the responses to the survey, it is clear that a wide cross section of the intended population is represented, and the data is not likely to be affected significantly.

We used Survey Monkey, an online survey tool, to create the survey and collect responses. The questionnaires used for both sectors can be accessed online<sup>9</sup>.

### 2.3 PROCEDURE

The survey questions were piloted with a number of groups, including:

- Clients
- Project steering group members
- Research colleagues within the homelessness and criminal justice sector, and
- Member agencies

The survey was open for 3 weeks and respondents were supported throughout that time to complete the survey via telephone and e-mail communication. After the closing date all the raw data was pulled off the online software and analysed.

### 2.4 ANALYSIS

A number of tools were used for the data analysis, including Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The majority of the quantitative data was explored using frequencies and means. The

qualitative data was analysed using a substantive cross-sectional approach, with thematic analysis. To explore statistically significant relationships between some of the scale data in the survey, several Pearson's Correlations were performed, using two tailed hypotheses.

### 3 KEY POINTS FROM THE SURVEY

We received a total of 389 responses to the surveys, with 163 homelessness services respondents and 226 criminal justice services respondents. Key points from the surveys are presented in the same themes as the questions asked of respondents:

- Client Statistics
- Data Collection and Monitoring
- Addressing Housing and Offending Needs
- Cross Sector Working

The summary of findings below represents the majority of the analysis of data so far, including some exploration of the relationships between variables, with further detailed analysis to be undertaken during the next phase of the project.

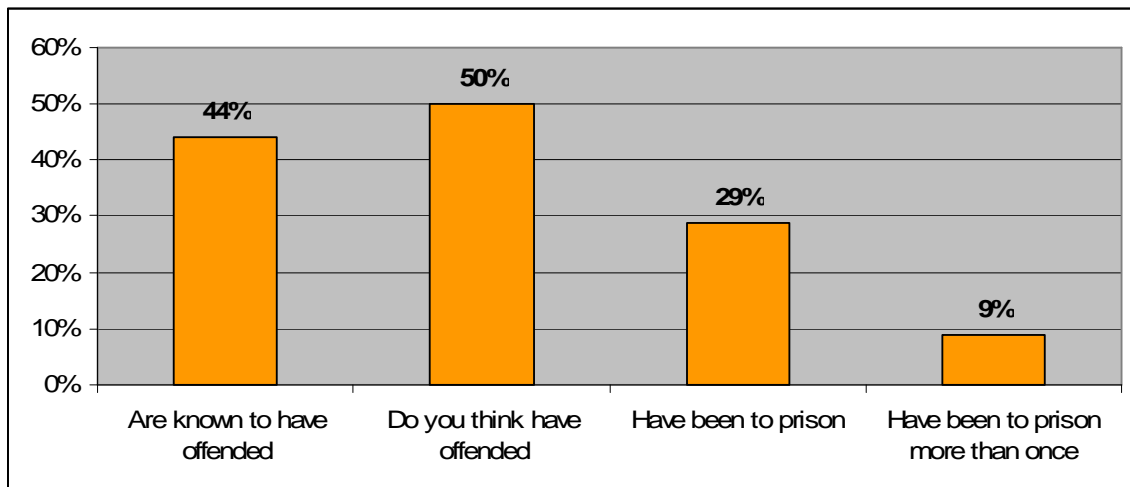
#### 3.1 CLIENT STATISTICS

Across both sectors we asked about the levels of offenders and ex-offenders using their services and about levels of offending and/or re-offending whilst using services.

##### 3.1.1 HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

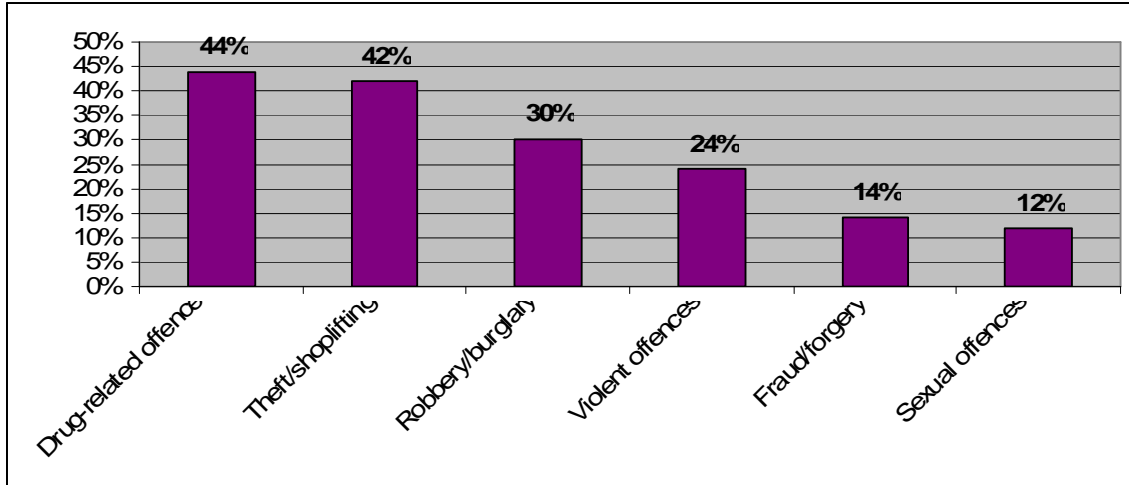
Respondents were asked about the proportions of their clients who had offended or been to prison in the last year. Homelessness services report very high levels of offending and prison sentences among their clients. Homelessness services staff think that slightly more of their clients have offended in the last year than are known to have offended, as the table below shows, at 50% and 44% respectively.

**Graph 1 – Proportion of clients of homelessness services who have offended or been to prison in the last year**

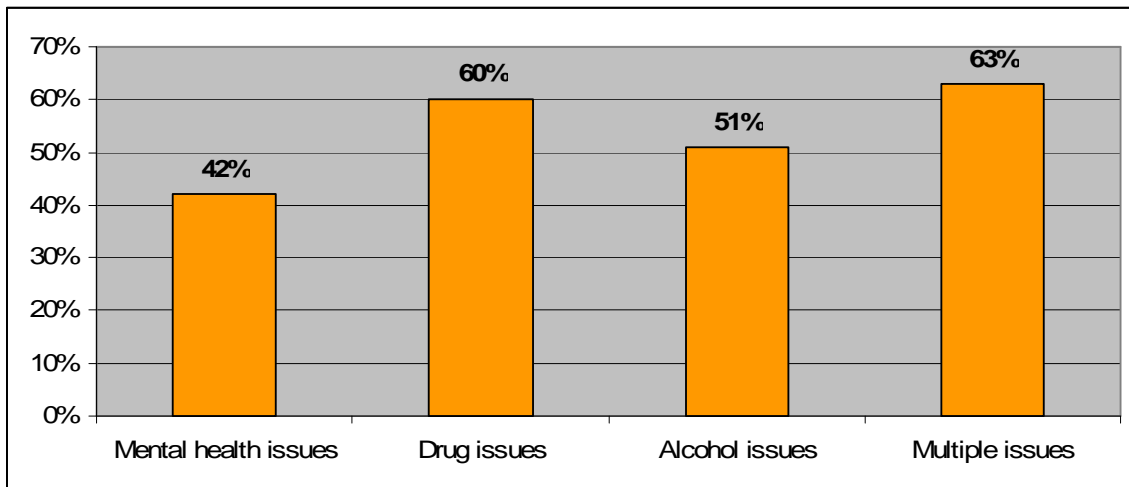


Respondents were asked to indicate the proportion of their current clients who had been convicted of various types of offences. Drug related and acquisitive crime (eg theft, shoplifting) were reported to be more prevalent than other types of crime amongst this client group.

**Graph 2 – Clients of homelessness services convicted of specific types of offences**



**Graph 3 – Other support needs of clients of homelessness services who are known to or thought to be offending currently**



Clients with known offending behaviour have high levels of co-morbidity for mental health, drug and alcohol issues. Respondents indicated that 63% of the clients that are known or thought to be offending currently have “multiple issues” such as a mental health as well as drug issues simultaneous to offending behaviour and accommodation support needs.

### 3.1.2 CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

The criminal justice services respondents indicated high levels of both housing need and repeat offenders in their services, with 67% of those reported to have a housing need identified as repeat offenders. Recent MoJ figures show that there is a relationship between housing need and reoffending. In their cohort 15% of offenders were homeless prior to custody and these offenders then had a much higher reconviction rate within one year of release, with 79% being reconvicted, compared to 47% who had accommodation.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1 – Levels of housing need and repeat offending**

Proportion of offenders with:	In average project:
Housing need	59%
Of those, proportion of:	In average project:
Repeat offenders	67%

### 3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING

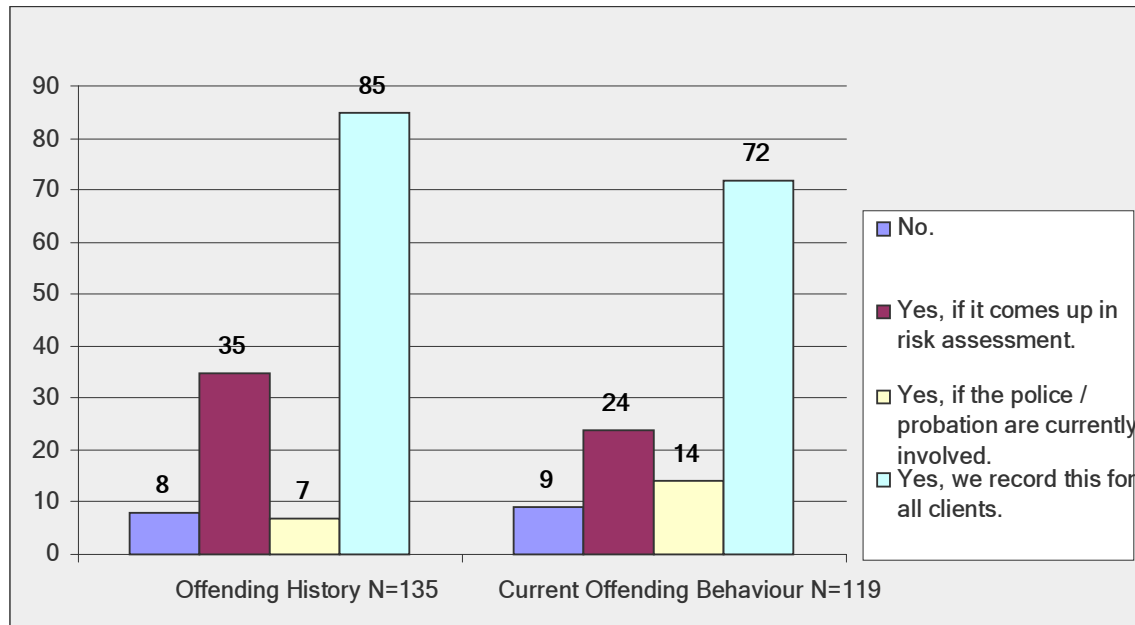
We asked both homelessness and criminal justice services a number of questions about the information they collect and monitor about their clients in relation to either housing or offending support needs. Homelessness services were asked about what specific data they collect and analyse about clients' offending behaviour and support needs. Criminal justice services were asked about what specific data they collect and monitor with regard to the housing needs of their clients.

These questions were asked as the literature review indicated a gap in the homelessness sector in monitoring offending behaviour and in the criminal justice sector a gap in monitoring housing needs. In both sectors this gap was especially evident when we sought longitudinal data. In the client focus groups, participants reported that information about their offending support needs was often only discussed with homelessness services at the booking-in stage and their housing needs discussed in prison or initially with an offender manager, but then not again.

### 3.2.1 HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Slightly more projects collect information on offending history than current offending information:

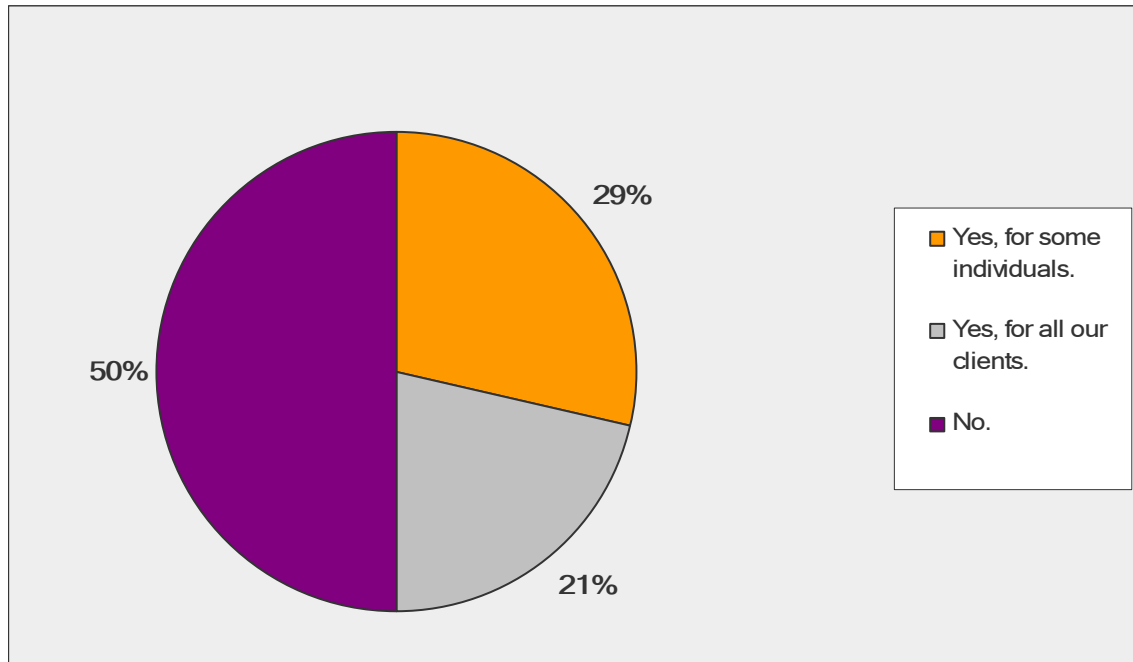
**Graph 4 – Data collection on offending behaviour**



- 94% of projects do collect information on offending histories and 92% collect data on current offending. For the few projects that do not collect this information, the most common reason for not doing so is that it is not something usually collected by the project.
- 80% of projects collect this information in the initial assessment interview
- 82% of projects gather information on offending behaviour through intelligence from other agencies, and 87% get this information through self report from the client.

After asking services if they collected data around offending, we asked if the data contributed to monitoring the offending rates of their clients and if the data were used in any reporting processes. 50% of projects indicated that they do not monitor their clients' offending rates, and the majority of projects do not report for service monitoring purposes on offending rates for any clients:

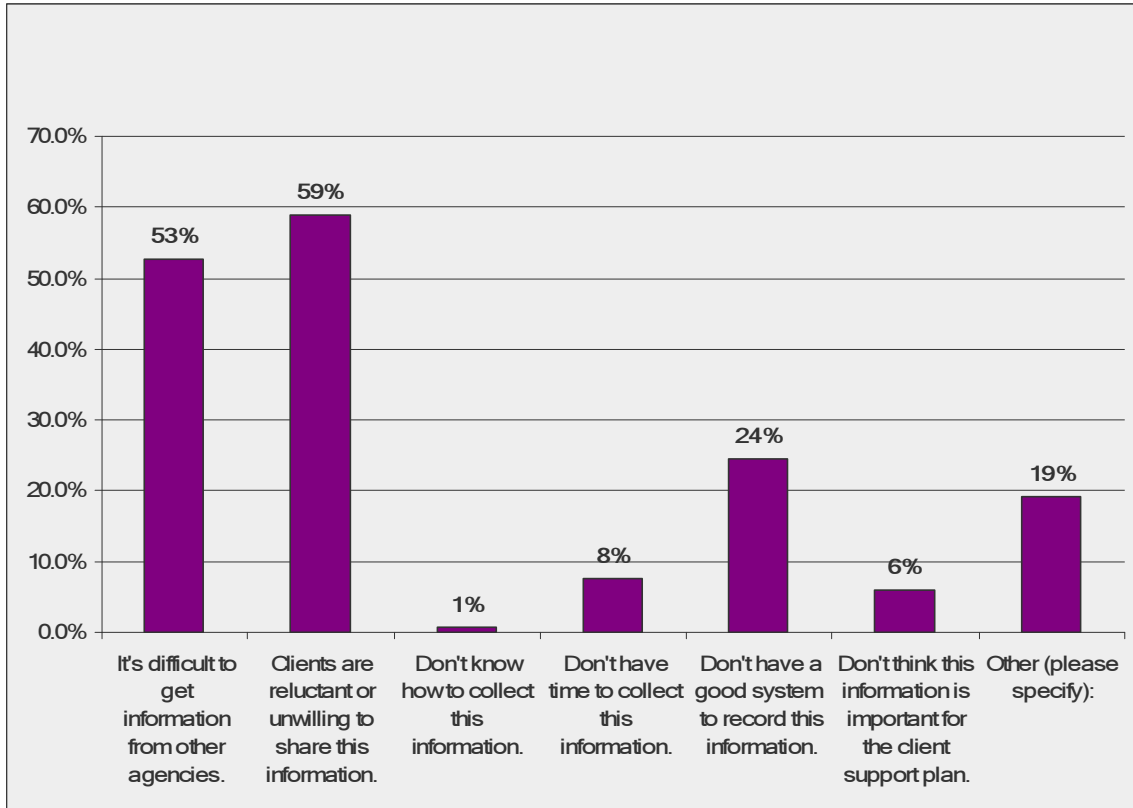
**Graph 5 – Monitoring rates of offending in homelessness services**



- 60% of homelessness service respondents do not report, internally or externally, on clients' offending rates within their services. 25% do so for internal reports and 2% for annual reports. 11% report on clients' offending rates for commissioners
- 39% of projects measure outcomes related to improved / reduced offending behaviour, using tools such as the Outcomes Star (33% of respondents), and the Supporting People Outcomes framework (10% of respondents), or internal tools and 'satisfaction surveys'.

Homelessness services indicated a number of challenges in terms of being able to collect data on their clients' offending behaviour. Difficulty in getting information from other agencies and client reluctance to share was experienced by homelessness services as significantly impacting on their data collection.

**Graph 6 – Challenges to data collection**

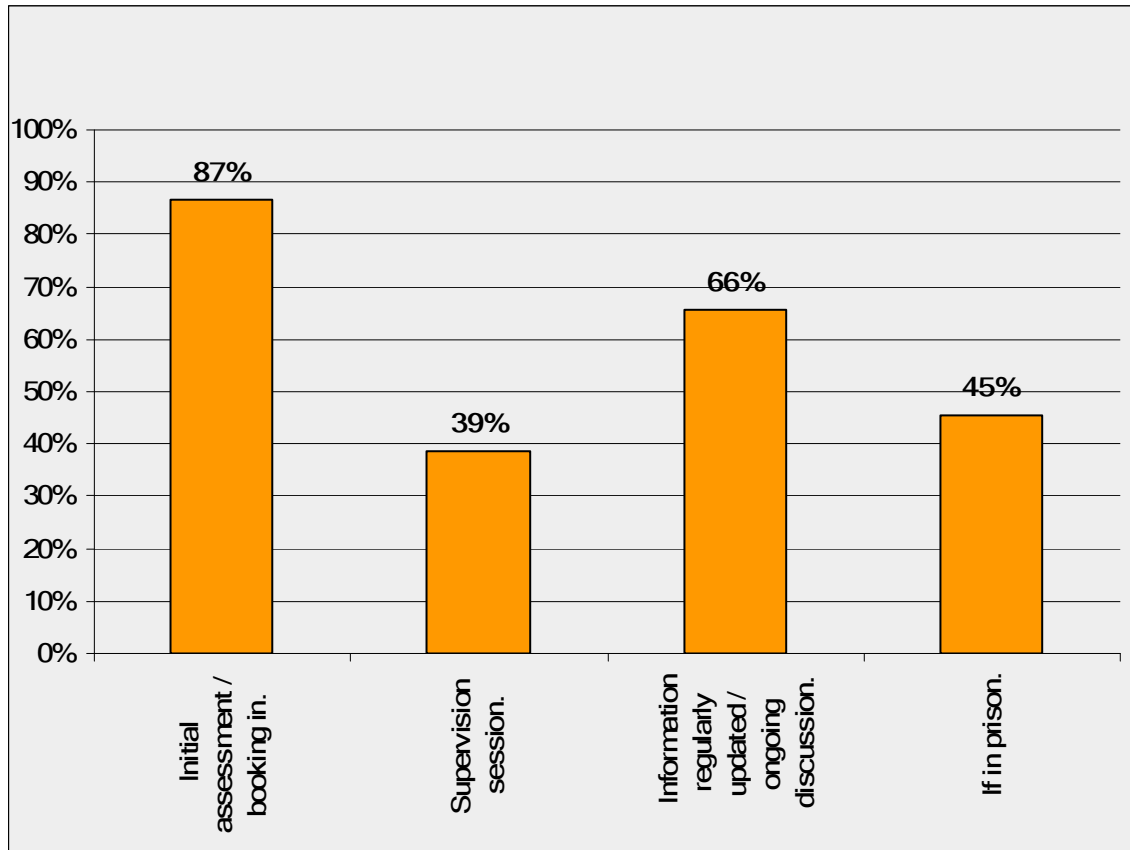


The lack of monitoring of client offending rates and challenges faced in collecting data is helpful in understanding our experience in the literature review of a lack of longitudinal data on offending rates in homelessness services.

### 3.2.2 CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

In criminal justice services 75% of respondents always collect housing needs information for all clients, and 5% never collected this type of information. This information is collected in a number of settings, most commonly during the initial assessment interview:

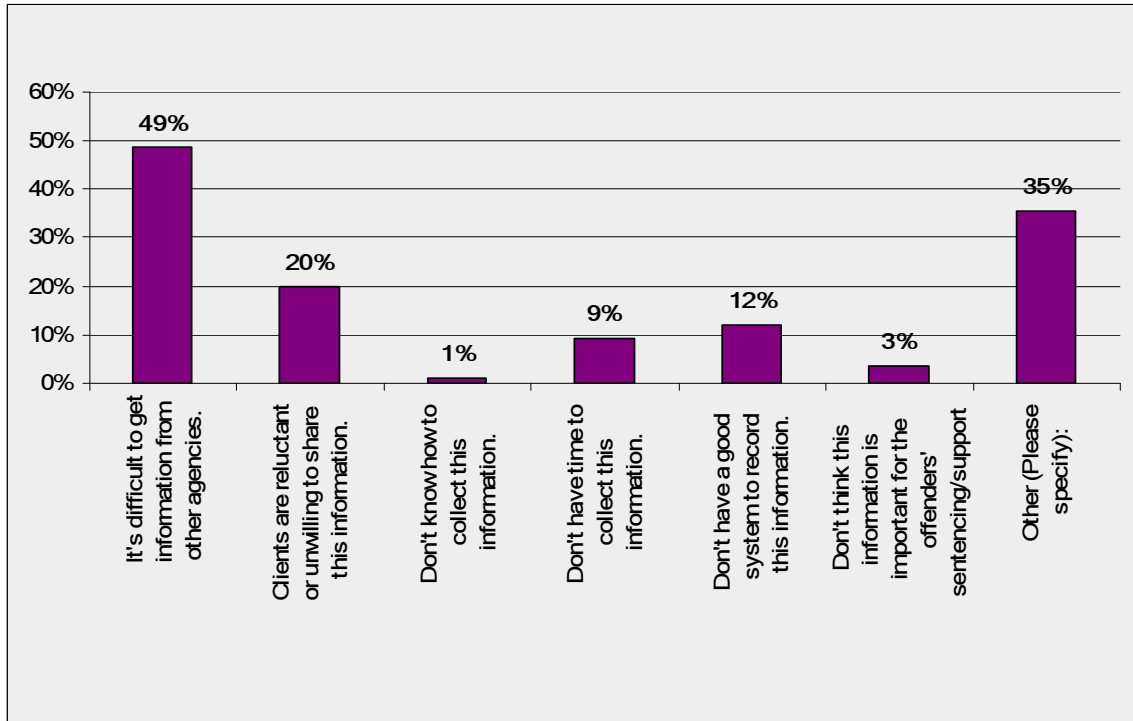
**Graph 7 – Timings of data collection**



Where the information was not collected the most common reason was that it was not something usually collected by the service. 65% of respondents reported that they monitor offenders' housing needs on a regular basis, and a further 29% monitor this as and when necessary.

Similarly to homelessness services, criminal justice staff reported challenges around collecting client information, with 49% of respondents reported difficulties in getting information from other agencies:

**Graph 8 – Challenges to data collection on housing need**



Whilst responses indicate data collection on this need is quite high, detailed comments revealed concerns about the usefulness of this in terms of resolving housing issues:

“Housing needs' data for offenders can simply be collated from Probation systems under their OASys systems. However, what is difficult to monitor is what is done to improve the individuals accommodation status as multiple pathways and data collection points so identifying what works and what doesn't (ie which service can actually deliver for which group of offender and who effective they are at delivering) is hit and miss”.

“Data on need is collected, but not necessarily monitored in a robust way by commissioners. Also, there is currently no system for measuring outcomes in relation to housing, apart from internal local monitoring system”.

### 3.3 ADDRESSING HOUSING AND OFFENDING NEEDS

In this section of the survey we asked homelessness services and criminal justice agencies about how they addressed support needs around offending and housing respectively. This included questions about formal processes, such as policy/procedures and training, and specific actions taken in certain situations, to measuring levels of confidence and the degree of focus of the service in addressing these needs.

#### 3.3.1 HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

##### A. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

We asked homelessness services if they had policies and procedures in place to inform staff how to respond to any offending behaviour of clients using their services.

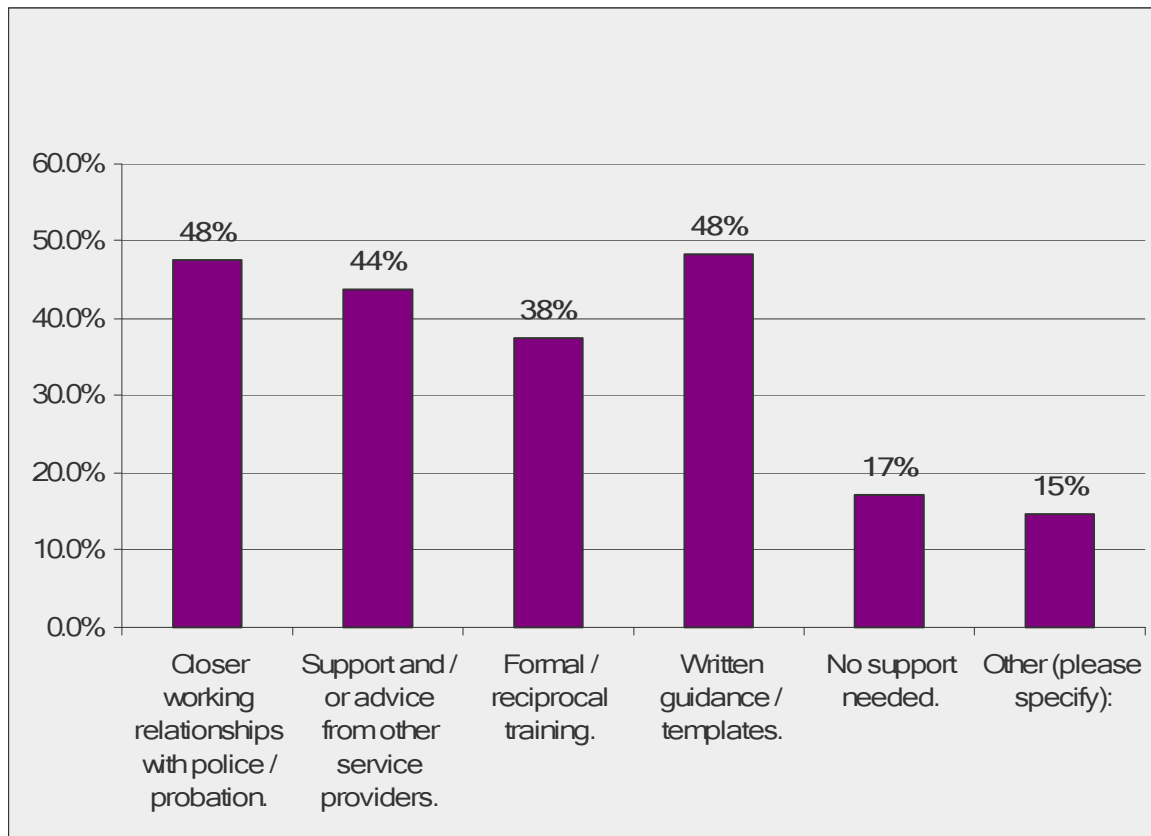
- 60% of projects reported having specific policies and procedures and knowing what they are and when to use them
- 11% had no policies and procedures and did not think they were needed
- 18% had no policies but thought they were needed
- 5% thought they did have policies on this but were not aware of the details and 6% were unsure

When asked to describe their policies and procedures to address any offending by clients using their services respondents indicated that many different policies and procedures contributed to an overall picture of responding to offending. Answers ranged from risk assessments to exclusion policies and guidance on when to report which offences to police. Some of the more common policies listed were safeguarding policies and substance misuse policies. Some described discussing behaviours with the client before taking action, whilst others said they report any offending behaviour directly to the police.

In terms of effectiveness respondents, rated the policies to be an average of 3.89 (on a scale of 1 to 5).

Respondents indicated that they would benefit from a range of support options to improve policies and procedures:

**Graph 9 – Support options to develop or improve policies and procedures**



**B. RESPONSES TO OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR**

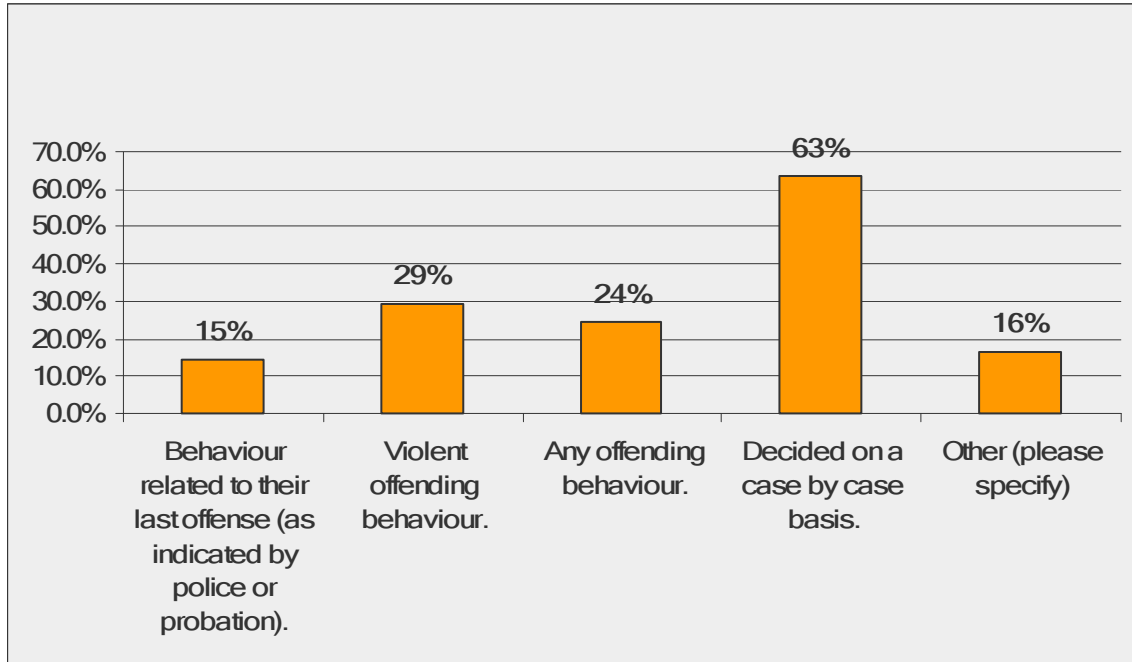
Respondents were asked about when they would report offending by their clients to the police.

**Table 2 – Reporting offending behaviour to the police**

Does your project report offending behaviour to the police?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, always.	15.6%	20
Yes, if deemed to put others or themselves at risk.	57.0%	73
Yes, if related to their sentencing plan or support plan.	7.8%	10
No.	4.7%	6
Other (please specify):	14.8%	19
<b>answered question</b>		<b>128</b>

- 16% of projects always report offending behaviour to police, whilst 57% only do so if it is deemed to put themselves or others at risk. Other answers indicated a mostly 'case by case' based process:
- For clients with an offending history, projects indicated a number of offences that would be reported, but the majority of projects decide on this on a case by case basis:

**Graph 10 – Types of behaviour reported to police or probation**



Whilst homelessness services estimate that 44% of their clients have reoffended in the previous year (see Graph 1), 39% did not have a policy for responding to a client going into custody.

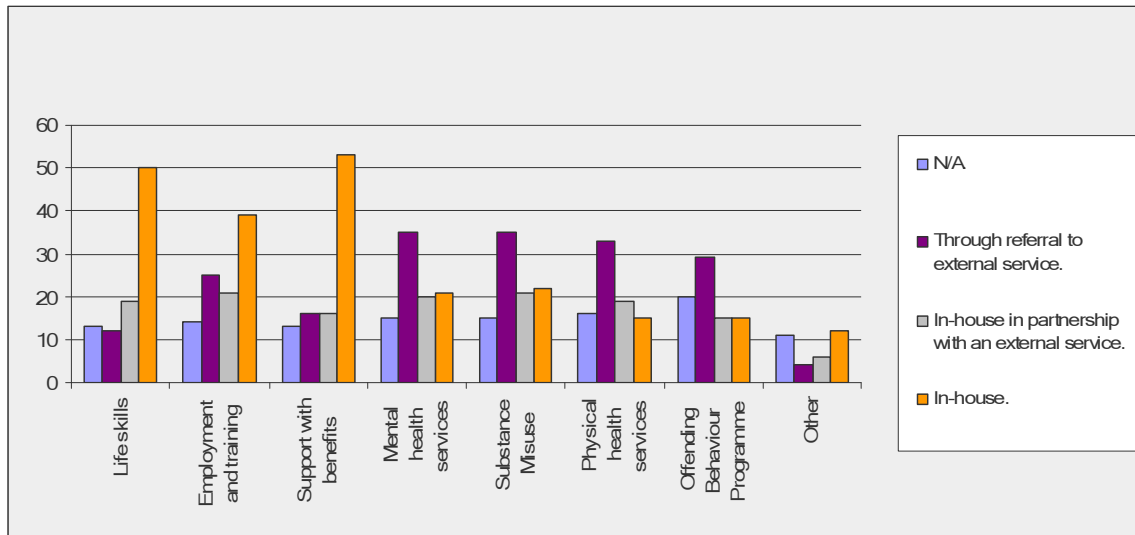
**Table 3 – Policies for clients who go into custody**

Do you have any policies in place for clients who go into custody?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No.	39.2%	49
Yes, keep bed for a certain number of nights.	36.8%	46
Yes, engage with client prior to release.	34.4%	43
Yes, client is barred.	1.6%	2
Yes, other (Please specify):	20.8%	26
<b>answered question</b>		<b>125</b>

- 39% of projects do not have any policies in place for clients who go into custody
- Other answers indicated that a range of responses can be triggered by someone going into custody, including holding a bed space for a week, holding a bed space whilst client on remand, case manager stays in touch to organise post-release accommodation, liaise with client and housing benefit to ensure benefit remains in place if eligible in order to have housing upon release.

We asked homelessness services about support offered to their clients. Respondents indicated that a number of support services are available, some of which are specifically targeted at offenders. Services for mental health and substance misuse are more commonly offered through referral to an external service and services such as life skills and benefit support are more commonly offered in-house:

**Graph 11 – Service provision routes for ex-offenders**



- 88% of respondents consider addressing offending behaviour to be part of a client’s support plan. In terms of how this is addressed by projects, a number of strategies and approaches are described by respondents, most commonly:
  - Some not explicitly, but as part of wider support
  - through external links
  - through ETE and other activity
  - indirectly via substance misuse and mental health services
  - working with trigger points
  - behaviour contracts
  - CBT and other specialist interventions
  - Multi agency meetings

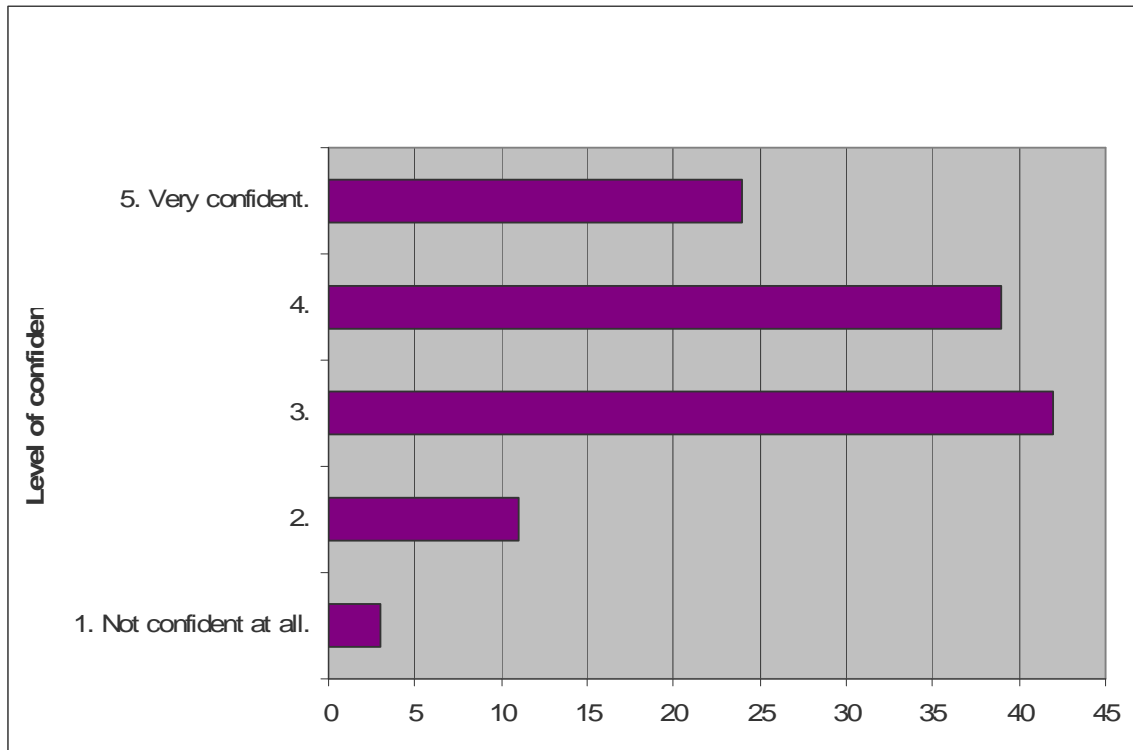
### C. SERVICE FOCUS, CONFIDENCE AND TRAINING

We asked respondents about the degree of focus their project puts on addressing

offending needs, their self rated confidence in dealing with offending behaviour, and what training they had received in order to do this.

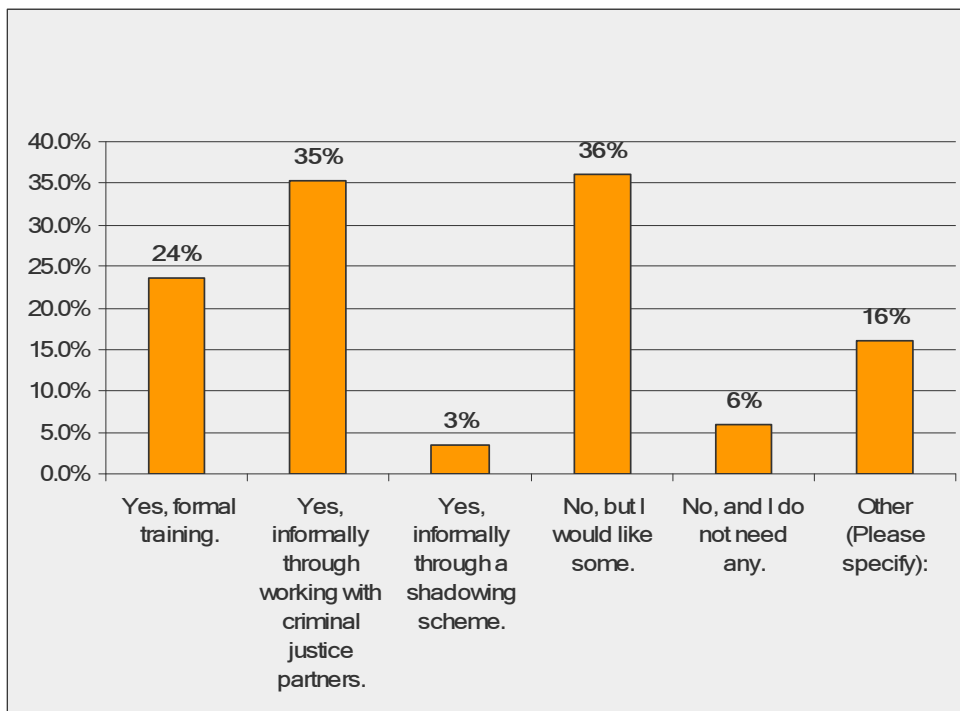
On a scale of 1 to 5, respondents rated how focused their projects are in addressing clients' offending behaviour, with 30% indicating a 5, and the average being 3.88. In terms of confidence, respondents rated their confidence at an average of 3.58 (on a scale of 1 to 5), and 35% of respondents indicated a 3.

**Graph 12 – Confidence in supporting offending behaviour needs**



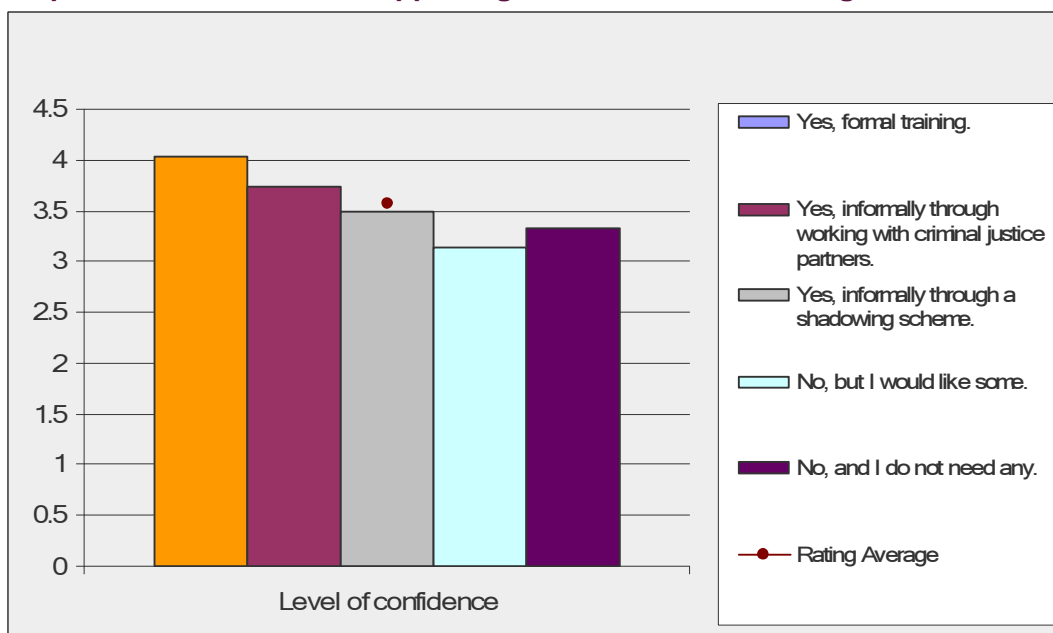
36% of respondents have not had any training in supporting clients with needs around offending behaviour, but indicated that they would like some. Very few had been on a shadowing scheme, but 35% have had informal training through working with criminal justice partners.

**Graph 13 – Training to support clients with offending behaviours**



Interestingly, when looking at the relationship between training and confidence, those homelessness sector staff who had had formal training reported the highest confidence in supporting clients with needs around offending behaviour:

**Graph 14 – Confidence in supporting needs around offending behaviour**



### 3.3.2 CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

#### A. IMPORTANCE OF HOUSING FOR EX-OFFENDERS

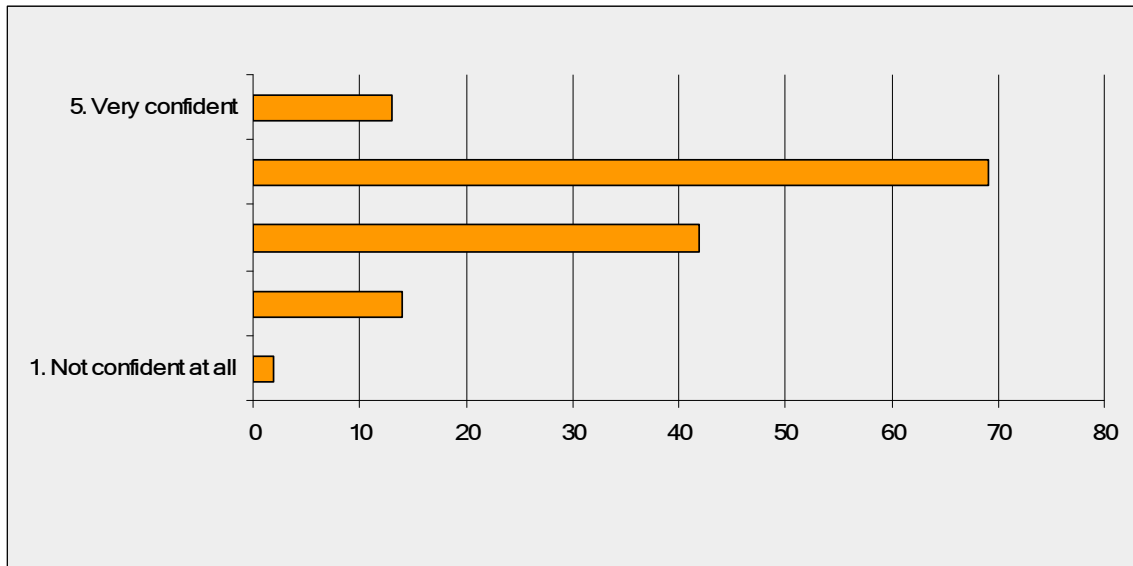
We asked criminal justice services if housing was a part of the support required for an ex-offender to prevent reoffending. Almost all considered suitable and sustainable accommodation as part of an offender's needs in this context, with 70% indicating this to be correct in all cases, 29% in some cases and only 1% stating it was not required.

We asked criminal justice services staff how they address the housing needs of the offenders they work with. Further analysis is needed, however answers for this ranged from signposting to actively seeking accommodation that is suitable for clients and monitoring this need. Some provide very practical help in terms of support with furniture/decorating the accommodation, and others try to enable offenders as much as possible to manage their accommodation independently.

#### B. SERVICE FOCUS, CONFIDENCE AND TRAINING

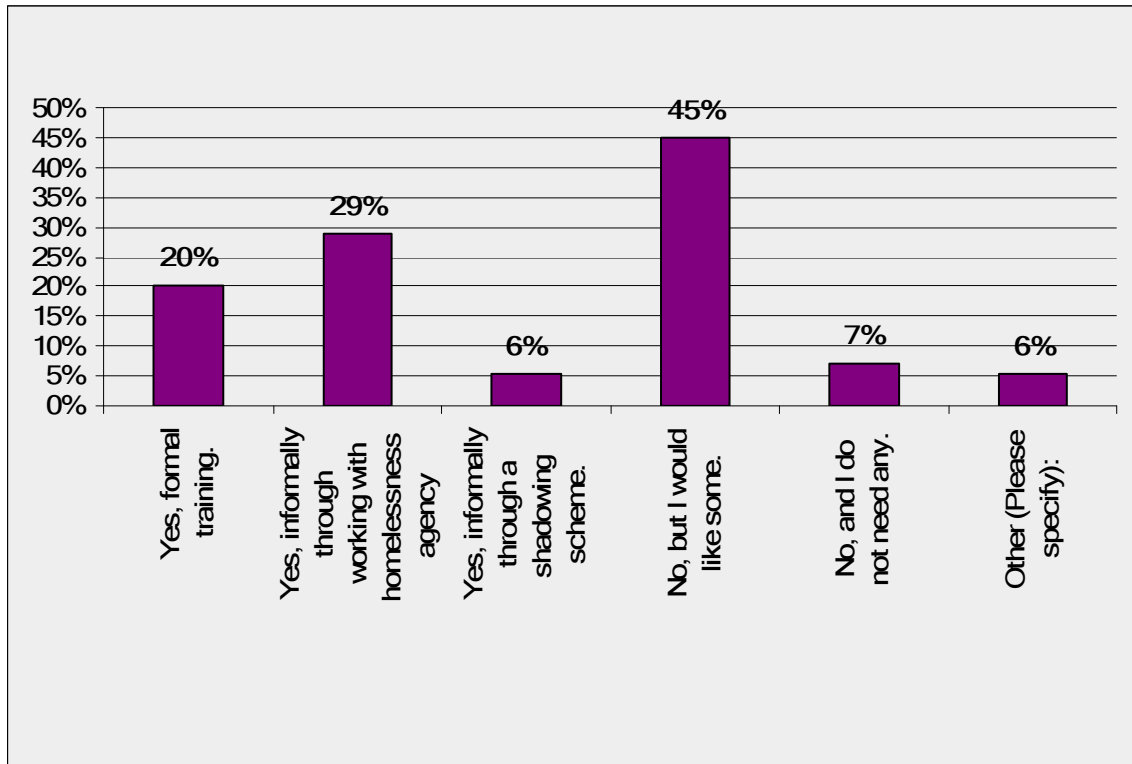
As with homelessness sector staff, we asked criminal justice staff about their self-rated confidence in dealing with housing needs, and what training they had received in this area. On a scale of 1 to 5, respondents reported an average of 3.55 when asked how confident they felt in addressing housing need:

**Graph 15 – Confidence in supporting needs around housing**



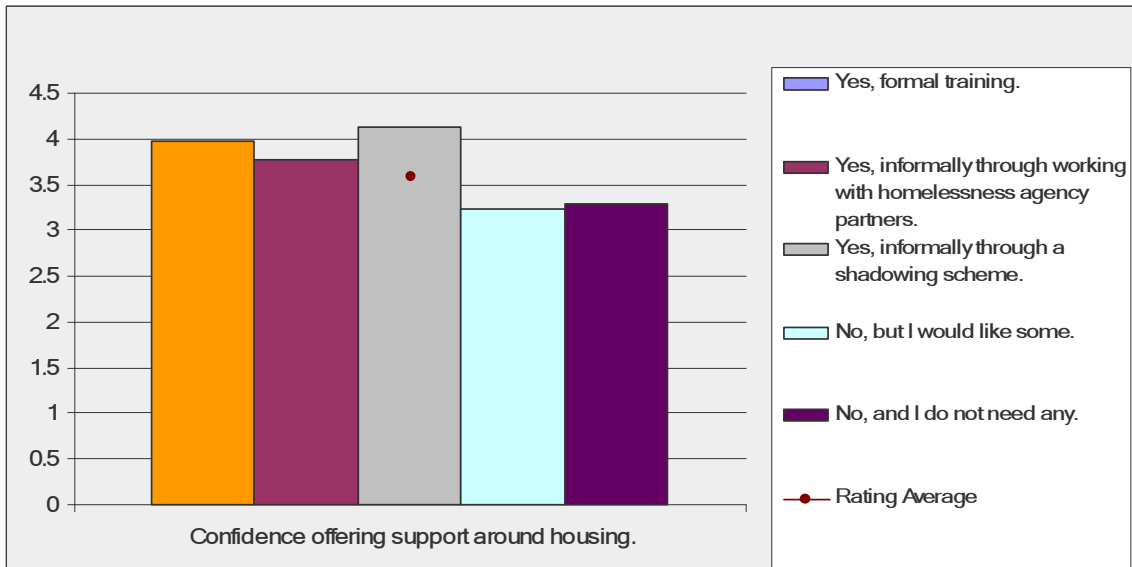
Interestingly, 52% of respondents have not had any training in addressing housing needs/concern, but most of those indicated that they would benefit from some:

**Graph 16 – Training in support for housing needs**



Looking at the relationship between confidence in addressing needs and type of training (if any) received, those that had attended some informal training, such as a shadowing scheme, reported the highest confidence:

**Graph 17 – Confidence in supporting housing needs**



In comparing the two sectors, homelessness services staff who had received formal training reported higher confidence than their colleagues in dealing with offending support needs, whereas criminal justice staff who had participated in informal training, such as a shadowing scheme, reported higher levels of confidence than their colleagues in supporting housing needs.

### 3.4 CROSS SECTOR WORKING

We asked about cross-sector working in terms of relationships, self-assessment of role and remit, and links with services in other sectors. Respondents left many extended comments in this section, reflecting both the challenges and successes they have had in cross-sector working.

“Maintaining the trust of our clients. We have to be very transparent with our clients from the outset about what kinds of information we are required to share ... Our primary responsibility is towards our client with some responsibility to the wider community etc in terms of safety. The Criminal Justice sector has a primary responsibility to the law and the wider community and some responsibility to the client - so the main focus of our work is different.”

#### 3.4.1 CROSS SECTOR WORKING: HOMELESSNESS SERVICES' PERSPECTIVES

Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 – 5, their working relationship with criminal justice staff, how engaged criminal justice staff are with their clients and the ease of sharing information between sectors.

**Table 4 – Rating the cross sector relationship**

Variable	Mean rating (range of 1 to 5)
Rate the working relationship with criminal justice staff	3.22
Engagement of CJ staff with your clients	3.37
Ease of sharing client information	3.03

Based on the mean rating, homelessness services staff generally described the cross sector relationship as a “Good relationship but some areas could be improved”. In terms of the engagement of criminal justice staff with their clients, the general sense was of “some engagement” and in ease of sharing information homelessness staff reported the experience to be “neither easy nor difficult”.

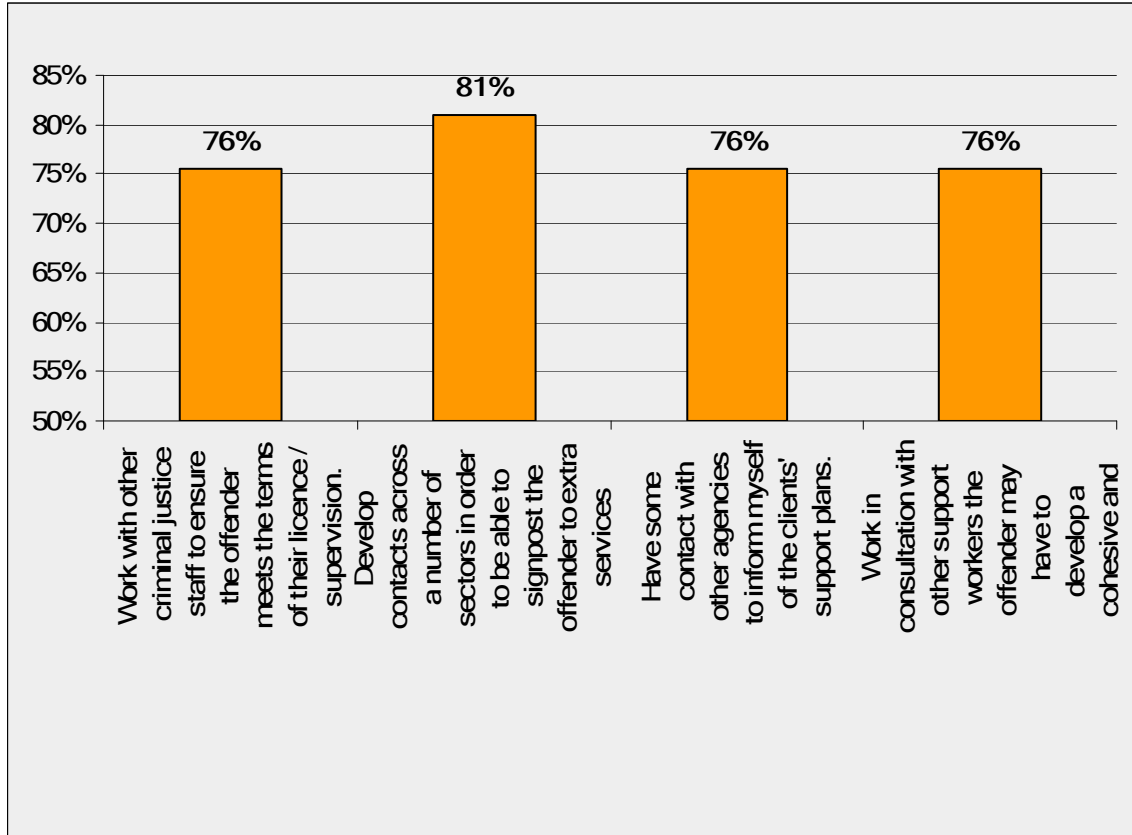
More detailed free-text responses revealed some of the specific challenges and successes for homelessness services in cross sector working:

Homelessness services reported that the main challenges they experienced in cross sector working, organised into themes, were: inconsistencies, individual attitudes,

resources, lack of understanding of roles, conflicting objectives/priorities, lack of trust, and issues with information sharing.

We asked homelessness services staff what they saw as their individual remit in terms of working with other support staff and agencies:

**Graph 18 – Self assessment of role in terms of cross-sector working**



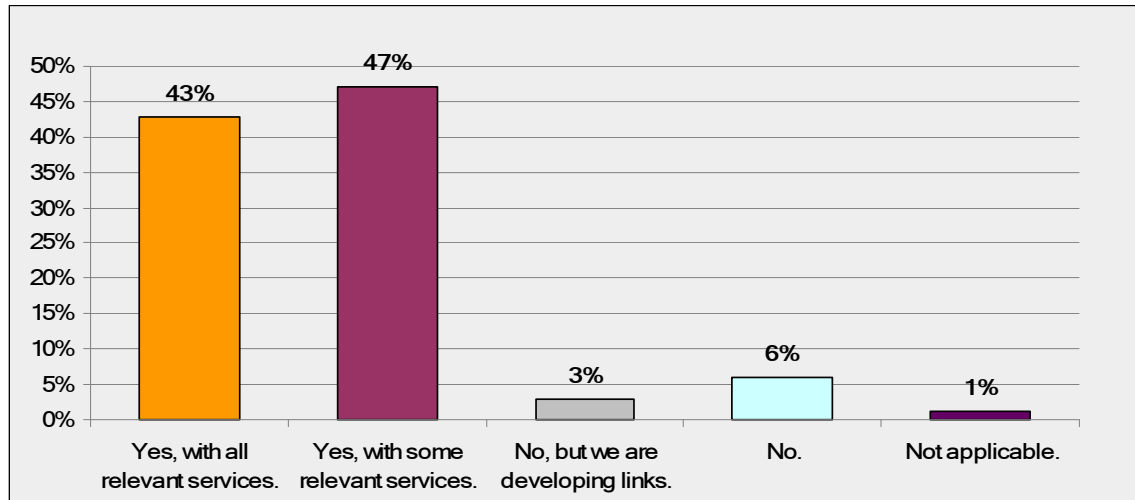
Encouragingly, the majority of respondents saw their own role in the context of their links with other services and a need to work both within the sector and other agencies in order to support their clients.

“We are represented on the steering group for the local Dedicated Drugs Court - this has allowed us to forge relationships with Magistrates to better their understanding of the needs of our client group. Also, the MOJ funded project, Women Outside Walls (WOW), have specialist criminal justice knowledge, and this has made effective communication easier.”

### 3.4.2 CROSS SECTOR WORKING: CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES' PERSPECTIVES

Most of the criminal justice services respondents self reported links with either all or some relevant homelessness services. This finding should be treated with some caution, as the definition of “all relevant services” may be different depending on the perspective of the assessor. Less than 10% of respondents said they did not have any links, and of these approximately 3% were developing links.

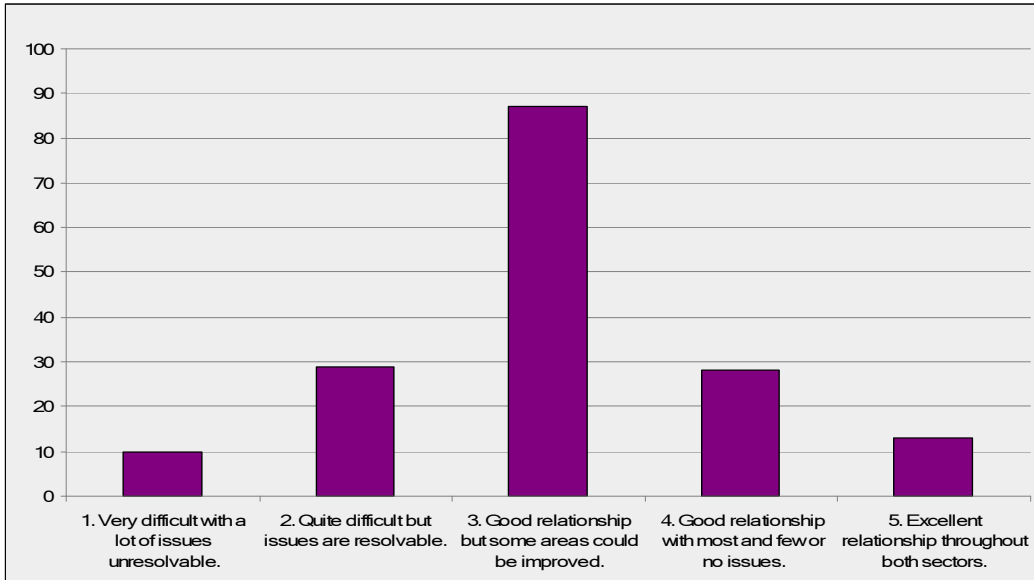
**Graph 19 – Self assessment of cross-sector links**



On a scale of 1 to 5, respondents rated the cross sector working relationship at an average of 3.03, defined as a “good relationship but some areas could be improved”.

“I find that attending the local homeless network, which is attended by statutory and non-statutory representatives, provides a source of information, resources and a place where I can pass on general information and concerns that I have.”

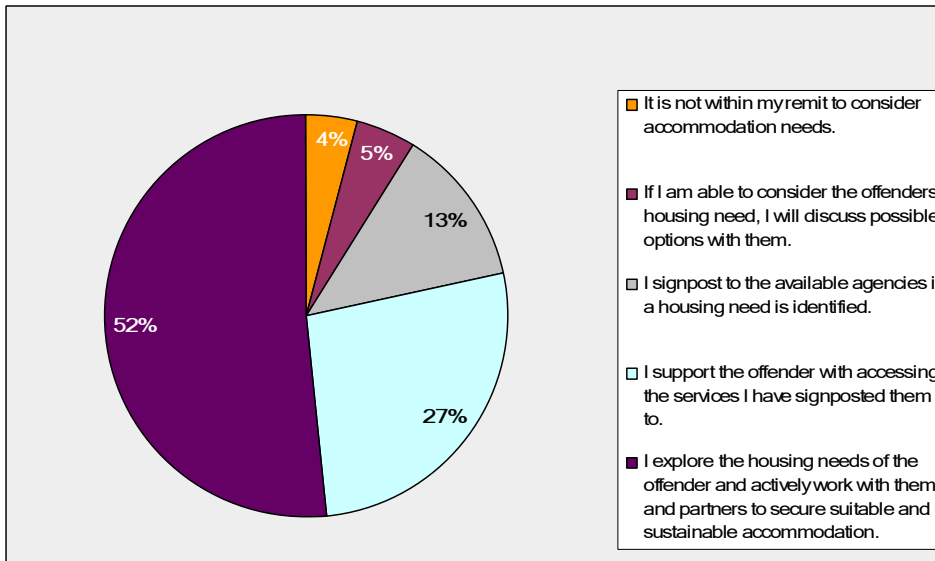
**Graph 20 – Rating the cross sector relationship**



Again, in free text responses we received detailed and forthright descriptions of the experience of cross sector working:

We asked criminal justice services staff about their individual remit with regard to how other agencies or services are included in their support of offenders, which ranged from no remit to considering housing needs, through to the majority (52%) responding that they actively work with the offender and partners to resolve housing issues. This response has overlaps with the section on Addressing Housing and Offending Needs (3.3.2)

**Graph 21 – Approaches to addressing accommodation needs**



To gain a better understanding of the make up of the criminal justice agencies that responded to the survey, we also asked in this section whether the agency has a strategic housing lead or not. 49% of respondents reported having a strategic housing lead, and compared to those agencies without a strategic housing lead, these agencies are:

- More likely to monitor housing needs on a regular basis, as opposed to as and when necessary
- More likely to share those needs with other agencies
- More likely to have links with all relevant homelessness services, as opposed to having links with only some agencies
- Much more likely to see their remit as 'exploring the housing needs of the offender and actively working with them and partners to secure suitable and sustainable accommodation, and
- Slightly more confident in supporting offenders with housing needs.

This suggests that having a strategic housing lead has a positive effect not only on the cross sector relationships, but crucially, appears to increase the focus and frequency of an offender's housing needs being addressed. Whether this has an impact on the outcomes for individuals either in terms of housing need or offending behaviour cannot be answered with this data, but is something that will be interesting to address in the next stages of the research.

The free text responses from both sectors indicated highly similar concerns and positive experiences. Both sectors were aware of a different working and client support culture and both sectors indicated that in many instances where a good cross sector working relationship existed it was due to the efforts of particular individuals who made the relationship work. This was echoed in the experiences of services users in our focus groups, who identified that the different support approaches of the two sectors were not complementary and that it was often the efforts of individual staff that had made a real difference in their lives.

## 4 SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

There was a great deal of similarity between the responses of the homelessness and criminal justice services staff in terms of what emphasis is placed on particular support needs and in the successes and challenges of cross-sector working.

Homelessness services consider offending behaviour to be a high priority support need, but the survey responses show that data collection and monitoring is inconsistent. Whilst in excess of 90% of services collect data, 60% do not report on this information internally or externally. Criminal Justice services report high levels of data collection around housing need, but there were strong expressions of caution that the collection of information did not translate into improved outcomes and concerns that there was not sufficient monitoring of the data.

The issues around data collection may be the reason why we were unable to identify longitudinal data on outcomes for ex-offenders who had been engaged with homelessness services.

In both criminal justice and homelessness services training has a positive impact on the level of confidence of staff in addressing either housing or offending support needs. The sectors differed in what type of training had the greatest impact – for criminal justice staff informal training had the greatest impact and for homelessness services it was formal training

Many of the challenges and successes of cross sector working were experienced similarly by criminal justice and homelessness sector staff. Both sectors generally rated cross sector working as “Good but could be improved”. The themes of inconsistencies, individual attitudes, resources, lack of understanding of roles, conflicting objectives/priorities, lack of trust, and issues with information sharing were raised across both sectors. Both sectors noted in free text responses that committed individuals were often the key reason for cross sector working being successful, but understood that this was not an ideal way to build sustainable working relationships as the absence of the individual in question could lead to breakdowns in these links.

We have undertaken some further analysis of the data and looked at correlations between certain responses to see if there are any significant relationships. The table below shows correlations where a large or medium effect was found.

**Table 5 – Significant correlations**

<b>Homelessness Respondents N=163 Significant positive relationships between:</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation (two-tailed)</b>
Focus of addressing needs and level of confidence in supporting clients	.650 (large effect)
Engagement of CJ staff with clients and quality of cross sector relationship	.634 (large effect)
Focus of addressing needs and quality of cross sector relationship	.351 (medium effect)
Level of confidence in supporting clients and quality of cross sector relationship	.307 (medium effect)
<b>Criminal Justice Respondents N=226 Significant positive relationships between:</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation (two-tailed)</b>
Perceived importance of accommodation and frequency of housing concern discussion	.432 (medium to large effect)
Confidence in supporting offenders with their housing needs and frequency of housing concern discussion	.424 (medium to large effect)
Perceived importance of accommodation and confidence in supporting offenders with their housing needs	.216 (small to medium effect)

Homelessness sector staff who worked in a project where there was a high focus on addressing clients' offending behaviour had greater confidence in being able to support

this need. In terms of the experience of cross sector working, homelessness staff who reported higher levels of engagement of criminal justice staff also reported a higher quality cross sector working relationship.

For criminal justice staff there was a medium to large positive effect seen in the relationship between the perceived importance of accommodation and how frequently the matter was raised with service users. Similarly, a positive effect was seen in the relationship between the confidence of staff in addressing accommodation support needs and frequency of housing concern discussions.

Following from this report the next stage of the research project is in-depth qualitative research across five areas to explore the issues raised in phase one in more detail. The areas will be chosen based on responses to the survey, guidance from the Steering Group and their geographical spread. The qualitative research will help us to develop a good understanding of the overall and local experiences of staff and service users in order to highlight good practice and identify recommendations for how homelessness services can better support clients to reduce re-offending and improve cross sector working.

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<sup>1</sup> Homeless Link, SNAP 2010 Table 29 – Client Issues p.45

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Justice 'Compendium of re-offending statistics and analysis' November 2010 p. 130

<sup>3</sup> Homeless Link, SNAP 2010 Criminal Justice Findings

<sup>4</sup> Communities and Local Government 'PSA 16 (Socially Excluded Adults) qualitative research on settled accommodation' March 2010 p. 18

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice 'Compendium of re-offending statistics and analysis' November 2010 p. 130

<sup>6</sup> Homeless Link, SNAP 2010 Criminal Justice Findings

<sup>7</sup> The consultation can be found at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/breaking-cycle-071210.htm>  
Retrieved 10 January 2010

<sup>8</sup> Homeless Link 'Preventing Re-Offending And Homelessness Together Research Project Client Focus Group Findings' October 2010 (unpublished). This document is available upon request from Homeless Link

<sup>9</sup> <http://homeless.org.uk/criminal-justice-project>

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Justice 'Compendium of re-offending statistics and analysis' November 2010 p. 130

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