



SNAP 2010

CRIMINAL JUSTICE FINDINGS

SURVEY OF NEEDS AND PROVISION 2010

Each year Homeless Link carries out a survey looking at the needs of single homeless people and the service provision they receive. It's in its third year and to collect the data, 500 projects were surveyed including day centres, direct access hostels and 2nd stage accommodation projects. This briefing summarises the criminal justice findings of SNAP 2010.

- **Prior to being imprisoned:** a third of prisoners are not living in permanent accommodation.
- **While they are in prison:** a third of prisoners lose their homes.
- **About to leave prison:** a third of prisoners said that they have nowhere to stay. (Crisis¹)

Criminal Justice and Homelessness

Several studies have shown a strong link between crime, imprisonment, and homelessness. A publication by the Social Exclusion Unit² suggested several key factors which can have a huge impact on the likelihood of prisoners re-offending, one of which is housing. Evidence shows that having stable accommodation reduces the risk in re-offending by 20%.

There is no denying the considerable challenges in breaking the cycle of crime, imprisonment, and homelessness. The SEU article also highlights the alarming fact that prison sentences can often be counter-productive in reducing crime, as a prison sentence often aggravates the factors associated with re-offending. A period of incarceration is likely to increase the risk of homelessness amongst prisoners for a number of reasons including the loss of local authority tenancies and private rental agreements as well as a breakdown in familial and other relationships. For example, around a third of prisoners lose their house, two thirds lose their jobs and over a fifth face increased financial problems. In addition, there are also real dangers of mental and physical health deteriorating further, of life and thinking skills being eroded, and of prisoners being introduced to drugs.

Prevalence of Prison Leavers in 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. Survey respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of clients who were prison leavers that their projects have seen. It should be noted that the figures are based on the estimates given by the projects interviewed and as such, are not exact figures.

- **Nearly three quarters of projects** have reported seeing prison leavers in their service.
- **50 projects** out of the 500 interviewed (10%) reported that more than half of their clients are prison leavers.

Out of the three different services looked at in SNAP 2010, the data from day centres would give a good indication of prison leaver clients across different regions. Day centres tend to be the 'first port of call' as they offer practical services to clients including laundry, showers, and mailing address. As such, these services would see the biggest number and range of clients. The table below indicates the number of day centres who reported that more than half of their clients are prison leavers broken down into the nine regions.

	Prison Leavers N (% day centre in region)
EAST ENGLAND	3 (60%)
EAST MIDLANDS	1 (14%)
LONDON	2 (15%)
NORTH ENGLAND	0
NORTH WEST ENGLAND	5 (83%)
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND	3 (23%)
SOUTH WEST ENGLAND	1 (14%)
WEST MIDLANDS	1 (50%)
YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE	1 (33%)

Respondents from the 364 projects who had some clients that were prison leavers were also asked how many of these clients had links to probation. 53% of these projects reported that a large majority of the clients had links with probation. This is an increase of 10% from last year's 43%.

Client issues as an indication

Survey respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of clients with certain types of issues. A large majority (88%) said that they have some clients with offending behaviour issues, with nearly a third of the projects estimating that more than half of their clients are affected by this problem. In comparison with SNAP 2008, the findings have remained stable in the number of projects seeing clients who are affected by offending behaviour issues.

Clients moving-on to prison

- **Over 60% of projects** have reported seeing some clients going into prison after leaving their service.
- **11 projects** out of the 500 interviewed (2%) reported that **more than a quarter** of their clients moving into prison.
- **2009 vs 2010:** There has been an overall increase in the number of projects seeing clients going into prison.

Criminal Justice as a funding source

In 2009 only **2 % of projects** cited criminal justice as a source of funding and **3% in 2010** despite the big proportion of prison leavers and clients with offending issues being seen by various projects.

There is growing evidence to show the close link between homelessness, crime, and imprisonment, and the significant challenges in breaking the cycle. It is apparent that there is a need for a co-ordinated multi-agency effort in tackling the problem, ensuring the availability of support during custody and sustaining this after release. Such attempts by the criminal justice agencies must be supported through partnership with a wide range of other agencies.

As Mairéad Seymour³ summarised in her article on the subject;

“Unless the challenge of reintegrating homeless prisoners into mainstream society is addressed the most predictable outcome is that homeless prisoners will continue to move between the street and the prison cell returning repeatedly to a costly system of imprisonment ...”

References:

1. Crisis, (n.d.). *About Homelessness: Causes & Consequences*. Retrieved 30 June 2010 from <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/causes-consequences.html>
2. Social Exclusion Unit. (2002). *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*. Retrieved 30 June 2010 from http://www.gos.gov.uk/497296/docs/219643/431872/468960/SEU_Report.pdf
3. Seymour, M. (2006). “The Recurring Cycle: Pathways of Homelessness, Crime and Imprisonment.”, *Prison Service Journal* **166** (July).