



BETTER TOGETHER: PREVENTING REOFFENDING AND HOMELESSNESS

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KEY MESSAGES

“Probation was quite helpful generally, but I never got any help with my housing...I haven’t had any help moving on from the hostel I am in now either, and they never even mentioned the crime I used to do.” Client

This project examined how the criminal justice and homelessness sectors work together to prevent homelessness and re-offending.

Despite the attention given to partnership working over the years, it seems that we still don’t get it right. This research found that we still have some way to go to make sure effective cross sector working underpins our work to prevent reoffending and homelessness.

Partnerships provide better support and achieve better outcomes for the client. When we place the client firmly at the centre of our work, the barriers to cross sector relationships often diminish, and the drive to develop such processes is increased.

From the staff and clients we spoke to, it seems that homelessness services need more assistance, such as training, to be able to work with ‘offending’ as a support need in itself. Much of this could be provided by criminal justice agencies. Criminal justice agencies would benefit from a better understanding of the provision within the homelessness sector in order to provide more appropriate options for their clients. Both identified a need for a cultural shift in how mutual aims around housing and offending are perceived.

Throughout the research we saw much good practice in both sectors. Where we do get it right, it is often because of individuals who are committed to improving the lives of their clients through better cross sector links.

A change in how we perceive and value partnership working can be supported by embedding it at every level across both sectors. Prisons, police, probation and local authorities all have a role to play in ensuring this happens. As the voluntary sector we must also play our part, and ensure we are seen as a critical partner in the roll out of integrated offender management (IOM) in every local area.

However many of the changes needed to improve the joined-up support for clients are the ‘Trojan mice’ we often overlook – the small and simple changes that are easily assimilated and that reap considerable rewards. This can range from the local networks we build, the language we use, and the processes we use on a day to day basis.

Whilst partnership alone is not the answer, we cannot afford, particularly in the current challenging external climate, not to get this right. We are all facing wider challenges that will impact on clients and service provision, from welfare reform to localism. In this setting partnerships are a critical part of the puzzle. As new policy directions are set out for both the criminal justice and homelessness sectors, we must grasp the opportunity to improve the way we work together to support every individual who uses our services.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Homelessness and re-offending have a complex link where, for many individuals, each is both a cause and a result of the other. Among people who are homeless there is a vast over-representation of offending backgrounds. Over 75% homelessness services in England support clients who are prison leavers. One in five clients using homelessness services has links with the probation service.ⁱ

In turn, homelessness increases the chances of re-offending. Ex-prisoners who are homeless upon release are twice as likely to re-offend as those with stable accommodation.ⁱⁱ 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 have accommodation.ⁱⁱⁱ

This research project, the findings of which we present in this short report, was undertaken with these concerns in mind.

1.2 PROJECT AIMS

While the links between homelessness and offending have been well documented, less attention has been given to the role that the homelessness sector plays in preventing reoffending, or their working relationships with the criminal justice sector. Too often the homelessness sector has been viewed as synonymous only with 'housing' rather than for the wider role that it plays in addressing a whole range of other needs, including preventing re-offending.

Our aim was to explore these issues, along two key strands:

- 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.

The research project became even more pertinent with the publication of the Ministry of Justice's green paper 'Breaking the Cycle: effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders'^{iv} and the subsequent Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill, introduced to parliament in June 2011 which contains the required legislative provisions to implement the proposed reforms. Breaking the Cycle outlined a number of key changes which will impact on the way housing and criminal justice services work together in the future:

- The roll out of Integrated Offender Management (IOM) offers a framework which places partnership and cross sector working at its core, an approach which can re-imagine the role and responsibilities for all local partners at a local level, including housing
- Community based rehabilitation, including mental health and drug treatment for ex-offenders, will necessitate a greater role for community and voluntary sector providers. It will also potentially require a shift in how these services are delivered and linked in with other local requirements.

- Payment by results marks a radical shift in criminal justice policy and is set to underpin all work on reoffending in this country. This presents opportunities for the homelessness sector in designing and implementing such a system: however demonstrating impact and outcomes for services amid a system of potentially high financial risk will be a challenge for local agencies supporting these clients.

The views and experiences we share here also come against a context of increasing uncertainty and pressure as both sectors undergo significant changes. At the time of writing homelessness services are facing an average funding cut of 22%, reducing not only available bedspaces but wider support services which help vulnerable adults toward more settled and independent lives.^v Criminal Justice services face similar funding pressures. Alongside these cuts come the devolution of many decision making powers to a local level and some of the most radical reforms to the welfare system this country has ever seen.

All these interact with the existing challenges which agencies experience in meeting offenders' needs. As seen in this report, being able to respond to local need and the service environment is important. The challenge will be to ensure people will be able to access and receive the high quality support they need regardless of where they are connected to or to which prison they are sent.

With these changes as a backdrop, in this project we seek to highlight some of the different local approaches being taken across the sectors. We have touched on the challenges facing agencies seeking to improve these clients' housing and reoffending outcomes, and, drawing on the experience of the staff and clients we spoke to, share suggestions as to how approaches might be taken in the future.

This research project was made possible with the support of The Monument Trust, who shared our vision for understanding and improving the outcomes for people who have experienced homelessness and offending behaviours.

We also extend our thanks to members of our Steering Group for their insights and ideas, and all the staff and clients who shared their time and views with us.

FINDINGS

2. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

While this project sought to draw out the local approaches being taken to prevent homelessness and re-offending, it also spoke to frontline services, commissioners, and clients about the challenges to meeting these needs.

These challenges do not exist in a vacuum – they have great influence on a daily basis on the lives of individuals and affect their chances of success. At all stages in this project we have sought to understand what it's like for clients as they access and negotiate these services, often with little choice.

Over 400 individual staff members from across the sectors shared the barriers they encounter in their roles.^{vi} 76 clients spoke with us about what it's like to experience these services and the impact it has on them. These are some of the issues they shared.

2.2 CHALLENGES – THE AGENCY EXPERIENCE

EXTERNAL CHALLENGES: Many participants talked about problems rooted in external environment and systems which undermine the support they can offer to clients.

Exclusions

'Getting housing providers to give someone a chance and look beyond their offending history is a challenge that we face almost daily.' Survey respondent, criminal justice agency

Clients with offending histories continue to face exclusions to accommodation in many areas, including from housing associations, private landlords and supported accommodation providers. We were told about RSLs which continue to apply illegal blanket bans. For offences relating to arson, sex offences and certain other convictions, the options are even fewer. But restrictions also applied to anti-social behaviour and rent arrears, which many participants felt were excessive and counter-productive.

Lack of move-on options

'There is a feeling of helplessness over the lack of stock for this client group.' Service development manager, drug and alcohol service

Exclusions compound the lack of move-on many areas already face for their homeless client group. Many used the private rented sector (PRS), but reported challenges engaging with private landlords. This rang true particularly to agencies based in more rural areas, which, in addition, sometimes experienced inequity of access to county-wide schemes which left them with disproportionately fewer move-on choices.

‘There are so few options ...we basically have to send people away to find their own accommodation’. Community Safety Partnership

Services are already responding to the impact of changes to the Shared Accommodation Rate of Local Housing Allowance and as these are more widely felt these challenges are likely only to increase.

Access to external services

‘We feel frustrated – there is nowhere to direct them to. A lot of the external opportunities exclude clients because of their offending’. Manager, hostel

Clients with offending histories continue to face barriers when accessing external services. This was identified in relation to a range of services: employment, volunteering, finance and debt advice and mental health services. Staff and clients repeatedly told us how important these services are, yet ‘cherry picking’ by providers, lack of investment in this provision, and poor links even when services were in place, continue to prevent clients being able to access the support they need.

Poor local integration

‘There is a lack of leadership on joint working at commissioning level, a lack of incentives to joint work within existing resources, or the structure to support this.’
Service development manager, drug and alcohol service

Despite the development of more integrated offender management approaches, we heard about the need to improve joint working at a strategic level. There was a strong sense that despite a long standing agreement about the benefits of joint working, it is often down to the individual worker to bring services together. Many of the challenges in the day to day working was seen as a result of the lack of joined up commissioning or integration at a more senior strategic level.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES: Many of the day to day challenges lay in the internal systems and working practices used within agencies across both sectors.

Conflicting aims

‘With the criminal justice organisations it feels like we’re supporting and they’re enforcing, we have different remits even though offending is high on our agenda.’
Manager, hostel

Many perceived a sense of disjointedness between their organisations. In part this was attributable to a lack of knowledge about the roles and remits of each other’s services. Bound up in this were sometimes significant attitudinal differences which heightened the sense of isolation from each other’s work. Staff had strong perceptions about what they saw to be the other’s support ethos, goals and priorities which for some contradicted their aims. This was often rooted in the opposing models and assessments of risk which repeatedly arose as a major challenge.

Communication

'We sometimes feel like a bit of an outsider at the CSP [Community Safety Partnership] meetings ...they are so jargon heavy, it is like they use it wilfully as a barrier.' Manager, hostel

An array of challenges were linked to communication, often the result of poor or non-existent information sharing protocols. The alienating and excluding impact of sector specific 'jargon' was identified as a source of tension in communication.

Additional challenges arose around consistent disclosure and reporting of information relating to clients' support needs, changing behaviour patterns or levels of risk. This often led to services being unaware of critical changes- for example entering custody, prison release dates, or breaches - and unable to put more timely interventions in place.

Using data smartly

'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.' Service development manager, drug and alcohol service

Although the majority of services from both sectors collect data on housing and offending needs respectively, 60% of homelessness agencies don't report or share this data. Less than half of homelessness agencies monitor outcomes relating to offending. There was a strong sense that data, even when collected, was not always used to inform decisions, monitor quality or lead to service change.

2.3 CHALLENGES – THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Client participants shared their experiences of positive and negative support they had received in homelessness and criminal justice services. We have collated the main challenges faced by clients and present them here to show the impact and experience of these problems on the lives of individuals. Challenges are experienced very personally by clients, and where there is a lack of resources or a systemic failure clients feel personally let down.

All talk, no action

'They [housing advisers in prison] read the script, ticked boxes, and that's it. You're not allowed to bring it up again. Before you know it, you're released with nowhere to go' Client

Clients described many instances of being released from prison to sleep rough. They told us that they had spoken to a support worker in prison about their housing need, especially in the first few days of their sentence, but nothing was ready for when they came out. Several clients described being told to present at the local authority and of being released on a Friday without accommodation and only a discharge grant in their pocket (£37 - £46 depending on age).

Clients expressed anger and sadness about this situation. It had a negative impact on their trust of the services such as resettlement teams in prison. Clients also described the anxiety and fear they

experienced having nowhere to go and feeling that in order to have somewhere to sleep and social contact they would return to areas and friends where relapsing into offending and drug use was inevitable. Clients felt that they must be worthless if they were not important enough to get somewhere to sleep.

Blinkered view

'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'. Client

Clients said it was noticeable when staff were too focussed on a very narrow support area. On the criminal justice side clients described offender managers who were only interested in talking to the client about their licence and if they had breached their terms or not and did not want to discuss other support needs.

In supported housing environments clients reported that they were asked about offending when they were booked into a service, but often not asked about it again. The impact of this was that clients understood the service was only interested in their offending if it was going to be a problem for the service and not in relation to the client needing help. The result of these actions, from both sectors, was to reinforce negative self-image. As long as staff got to tick the boxes they needed, what was happening for the client didn't mean anything.

Pillar to post

'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.' Client

In the course of the research clients reported that they felt they were being "handed over" or "dumped" from the criminal justice agencies to the housing services. For some people this was experienced as a passive silence, and for others it was an active conflict between the services that caused a great deal of stress and was indeed the very opposite of a supportive environment.

Conflicting support ethos

'It's not about support at all. [My probation worker] just talks about breaches. Not about what you want to do.' Client

Criminal justice services and homelessness services often have very different philosophies on how to work with clients. In focus groups clients talked about being 'pulled in different directions' by services because the objectives are not coordinated. Clients were left feeling angry and insignificant when support plans were devised without their input, where plans from different agencies duplicated actions or had very different expectations of them. Some clients also felt they had to 'keep the support workers happy' in order to stay out of jail or keep their housing, which implies the relationships are experienced as authoritative rather than supportive.

3. EFFECTIVE SUPPORT – WHAT WORKS?

Every individual has their own set of aspirations and needs, and every area a different local landscape within which it must seek solutions.

Participants in our research shared many different examples of what had worked for them. The challenges outlined in the previous section provide a backdrop for the work being delivered in both sectors. Despite the variation in the approaches which were shared, several cross cutting themes emerged about what contributes to supporting a client with an offending history. This section shares these perspectives.

3.1 EFFECTIVE SUPPORT: THE CLIENT PERSPECTIVE

Our findings here are based on the views and comments shared by the 76 clients who took part in interviews and focus groups over the 12 months of research. All these individuals had current or recent experience of criminal justice agencies and were receiving support from a homelessness sector provider. Almost half were currently in contact with probation services, almost three quarters had been in prison previously and four out of five were currently and/or previously in contact with probation. We talked with clients about their triggers to offending, experiences of support services, cross sector support, and what made a real difference for them personally. Clients underlined the individual nature of the journey and that support has to meet the particular needs of a person. Thus whilst the principles below were common across the clients contributing to this project, individuals placed varying levels of importance on them depending on their experience.

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE SUPPORT: CLIENT PERSPECTIVE

1. **A roof of one's own:** accommodation
2. **Not a number:** supportive staff and an individualised approach
3. **Better in myself:** self-esteem building
4. **At the intersection:** cross sector support
5. **Work works:** employment
6. **Clear headed:** addressing drugs and alcohol
7. **Keeping busy:** structure in daily life
8. **All about me:** personal responsibility

1. A ROOF OF ONE'S OWN: ACCOMMODATION

'Need, that's my biggest trigger. Homelessness is a need so you have to offend. Then when you put the addiction on top of that, there's no option.' Client

Time and again in the client focus groups participants emphasised that homelessness in itself had a major impact on their likelihood to offend. This could be in the form of petty 'survival theft' such as stealing food; stealing alcohol to self-medicate the distress of sleeping rough; through to more serious offences, often linked to low self-esteem or specifically to get locked up to get off the streets.

It is not surprising that many clients said having safe accommodation was a crucial part of breaking offending patterns. Knowing exactly where they would be living in advance of leaving prison was important. Having accommodation 'helps level your life out', providing space to address other needs, and importantly gives motivation to succeed. Housing need must be identified and tackled early on.

However, many clients we spoke to were equally keen to point out that a tenancy alone is not necessarily the answer. Many talked about the stress and pressure associated with the practical skills needed to take on and maintain a tenancy, and that this can be overlooked by services. For some people this meant needing a more supported environment for a period before moving into a tenancy of their own, or financial and practical assistance to buy furniture and arrange their new tenancy. Clients also underlined the importance of continued support after resettlement.

In the focus groups clients shared experiences of being well supported, where a supported housing service had visited them in prison and talked with them about what to expect. Another example was where a housing provider managed the prison's resettlement service – clients saw that they were able to suggest more options for them in the community.

'Now I've got something I don't want to lose. In jail or be homeless, the less of two evils. Having a flat that's fitted out, that's a lot to lose.' Client

2. NOT A NUMBER: SUPPORTIVE STAFF WHO PROVIDE AN INDIVIDUALISED APPROACH

'Finding someone I can trust, then I open up a bit more. Once you can trust someone with everything, life gets a bit better.' Client

Clients were unanimous in their belief that a good support worker makes a real difference to their progress. There was no prejudice about what service the worker was based in, be it probation or a hostel or a substance use service, the quality of the support was the issue. When asked about what helped, every group noted that a "good worker" made a difference. Each group was then asked to describe what makes a support worker "good" – common attributes were identified as someone who listened, someone who had "been there" or "knows where you're coming from" and who "had the power to change things" such as securing a drug rehabilitation placement, housing or work and training opportunities.

Consistent and continuous support was identified as very important, especially where the client did temporarily relapse to old behaviours. The knowledge that they were supported "no matter what" was hugely positive. It is worth noting that for many clients who have led chaotic lives the continuity of support, in both the individual worker and the support model, may have been a rare experience.

Throughout both the first and second phases of research clients reported that committed and persistent individual staff had had significant impact on them. In such instances the attitude and motivation of the worker appeared to be the factor that resulted in the client feeling positively supported, regardless of whether a specific goal was achieved.

3. BETTER IN MYSELF: SELF-ESTEEM BUILDING

'Some workers [at probation] say hello, that they're proud of us. It's nice to hear you're doing alright, you're doing well.' Client

Many participants described their offending as occurring when they felt a complete absence of care about themselves, their lives or the consequences of actions; in this context offending and subsequent imprisonment was effectively seen as self-harm. Offending is often a clear communication of how a person feels about themselves and their expectations and aspirations in life.

Participants identified self-esteem as a part of all other needs and could not say if one came before the other. The majority of participants were clear that the journey to improved self-esteem was highly individual. There were aspects that were based on personal action, and others based on the way they were treated by those around them. Clients reported that positive reinforcement, both directly as verbal feedback and indirectly through consistent support, had a big impact. In one focus group the participants were keen to point out the trust and faith placed in them by staff was invaluable – that the support staff believed they could run an errand, take a voluntary post, go on a training course, get a job, or maintain their tenancy became something they could believe was possible for themselves.

Women were not as well represented in the client focus groups, but some of the contributions made by women did show a different experience of self-esteem and offending. In particular, one client volunteered that she had at various times returned to sex working despite not needing to maintain a drug habit. She felt a great deal of pressure to provide material items for her child, especially around Christmas and birthdays. Her comment was that she knew she was breaking the law and thus risking the consequences of that, but she stated "I'm the only one that it's hurting" and saw that as acceptable.

Self-esteem was described by clients as both a motivating force for action, and the result of action. In the context of support work with clients, greater emphasis may be needed on the element of self-esteem development that is intrinsic to other support needs, particularly in preventing offending.

4. CROSS SECTOR SUPPORT

'I meet every few weeks with probation, my drugs worker and my keyworker at the hostel. Everyone knows what's planned and what the other one is doing'. Client

Clients reported very mixed experiences of cross sector support between agencies they were engaged with. Overall there was a sense that probation and housing staff did not always link up as well as they could. At the same time, clients shared many examples of individual staff who did work across the sectors to support clients. One client reported that his probation officer and drug and alcohol worker got together once a week. He found this useful because 'they both want me to do well.'

Clients felt that cross sector working could be very positive. We were told about good joined up working across the support network where clients had multiple needs. One participant said that he had encountered joint working in his hostel, where his community drug and psychological support worker, Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) worker and keyworker were joined up around his support, so that each worker was able to do their bit better and he knew where he stood with each.

This experience highlights why joined up working is necessary: where it doesn't work the impact is frustration, lowered self-esteem, conflict and ineffective support; where it does work there is a positive sense of being valued and moving forward. If the client is firmly at the centre of the support model then there should be no insurmountable barriers to joint working.

5. WORK WORKS: EMPLOYMENT

'Being able to have a job makes a big difference. You sort your benefits, get a home, then get a job and that's when you're totally sorted.' Client

Employment has often been linked to reducing re-offending and many clients identified the importance of this. Focus group participants were enthusiastic that working made a big difference in their lives and that it provided them with a lot in return: confidence, 'a reason to get up', self-respect, purpose and something 'to keep your mind active'.

But, as many clients pointed out, the gap between them and employment can be huge, not only related to skills, but also self-belief and attitudes of employers.

'Sometimes it doesn't matter whether you can or can't get a job, it's the thinking you can't that's the problem. The stigma of having a record can make you give up before you start.' Client

In one housing project, many were encouraged to volunteer with the service or were assisted to find a voluntary placement locally. This first step sent a strong message to clients that they were capable and trustworthy and began what was for many a journey into paid employment.

Several clients told us about schemes which had offered supportive routes back to employment, often provided by their accommodation project or brokered by their housing worker via external agencies. Where they worked, clients felt it was because it had responded to their individual work goals realistically, and helped them to achieve them.

6. CLEAR HEADED: DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

'This place has an allotment programme, I'm a landscaper and this programme has really helped to keep me occupied. It gets me out of my head and stops me thinking about drugs all the time.' Client

A large proportion of the clients who took part in the research saw a strong link between their offending and substance use. When clients were ready and able to address their substance use issues they reported:

- reduced offending as a result of not needing to get money for drugs or alcohol (or stealing alcohol);
- being able to think better when not gripped by addiction and the obsession it engenders, including improvements in decision making ability and contemplation about their life.

The type of service or intervention that assists in addressing substance use issues is very personal, for some it was residential rehabilitation, day programmes were ideal in some instances, and for others scripting on methadone gave immediate relief from the behaviours associated with their substance use, such as offending and inability to sustain any kind of accommodation.

7. KEEPING BUSY: STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITY IN DAILY LIFE

'[you need] some structure when you're released, somewhere to get away and start a new life. Can't do it on your own, you need help and a normal routine – paying bills, your TV licence, going to the job centre, sticking to appointments- you need all that.' Client

Boredom was identified as highly destructive, often acting as a trigger to offending and to the drug or alcohol use which is often interlinked to this.

Many clients we spoke to talked about the importance of structure in daily life. It came in many forms, from work, client groups, volunteering, education and training, to meaningful activity like gardening. Clients shared how structure and regular activity contribute to confidence and self-esteem, helped provide distance away from previous associates and places which can trigger old behaviours.

The benefits of meaningful activity were reflected by comments about work placements which some individuals were completing as part of their community order. However this experience was very mixed: it was felt some activities had 'no point' to them. 'You need to see that you're doing something to help someone else.'

Positive activities had a really clear impact: however many services felt accessing and funding this type of provision was increasingly difficult. A manager of a project for single homeless people stated: 'Funding meaningful activity is a nightmare. We basically have to be really creative and find things that don't cost.' [Supported housing provider]

8. IT'S ALL ABOUT ME: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

'When I was in prison they put me through the victim awareness course, I was really gutted seeing what they had gone through.' Client

Participants highlighted that no external support worked until they personally were ready to change. At the same time, a supportive environment could contribute to an individual reaching this personal point of change readiness. Further to this, participants noted that services play a crucial role in providing the help needed when the decision has been made.

'It took me fifteen years to get to the stage to want to change.' Client

The adoption of person centred support models in the majority of supported housing services is linked to the idea of personal responsibility. In such a support model it is acknowledged that only the individual can change themselves, but the provision of the best possible environment for personal change and assistance with a wide variety of needs can make a positive contribution.

Clients also said specially tailored programmes for offenders made a difference. However our survey found this is provided only in about a fifth of homelessness agencies. One participant had attended a 'personal triggers to offending' course which he said had been very useful; another described taking part in a victim awareness programme and the impact this had had on his thinking and behaviour. Homelessness services would be an ideal environment to host or deliver such programmes with their clients, especially those with offending histories who are not under statutory supervision.

3.2 EFFECTIVE SUPPORT: THE AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

In researching what criminal justice agencies and homelessness services knew to be effective practice and what they wanted to improve, it became clear that there was much overlap between the sectors. In this section we have brought together the responses from both sectors under one heading as they shared far more than they disagreed on.

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE SUPPORT: AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

1. **Get in:** referrals and assessment
2. **Upfront:** addressing offending head-on
3. **Share the Load:** joint commissioning and investment
4. **How it all works:** building life skills
5. **Multi-tasking:** don't compartmentalise support needs

1. GET IN: REFERRALS AND ASSESSMENT

'A clearer understanding of the problems, issues and risks that offenders face is much needed. A clear, flexible assessment process coupled with a better multi-agency comprehensive assessment tool is what will make sure that people are not just housed in what's available.' Support worker, Drug and Alcohol Assessment Team

Both sectors perceived a disconnect between the risk assessment of clients in criminal justice agencies and homelessness services. Staff were aware that the definition and response to 'risk' differed in each sector and this was most apparent in the referral process for clients from criminal justice agencies to homelessness services.

Criminal justice services reported that the referrals for their clients to supported housing schemes were frequently declined on the basis that the client's support needs were deemed "too high". Homelessness services stated that in referrals from criminal justice services there was often a lot of information on offending needs but little on other areas where the client may need support.

Services in both sectors, particularly frontline workers, had a number of suggestions on how to overcome this issue, including:

- Greater consideration of the client's engagement level, or distance travelled, alongside offending history or risk level.
- A common multi-agency assessment tool for risk and support needs to improve referral processes.

A previous conviction for arson is a common reason for declining a referral into supported accommodation. Several of the homelessness services we met with said they had reviewed their policy on arson convictions and now requested more detail if arson came up in a referral, including

discussing the issue directly with the client. On many occasions the conviction was found to be a one-off act of vandalism committed when the client was young.

Some criminal justice staff had a poor opinion of some hostel accommodation and their suitability for their clients. Over the last decade the Places of Change Programme (now the Homelessness Change Programme) funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government has transformed the support models and physical environments of many hostels to create positive spaces with motivated and trained staff. Perceptions and reputations of specific hostels may be out of date, as well as knowledge about what provision is available locally. Visiting and meeting staff and clients in local supported housing projects would help improve awareness of support on offer and referral options.

2. UPFRONT: ADDRESSING OFFENDING HEAD ON

‘Offending behaviour and the likelihood of being court and sentencing being implemented will detrimentally affect any support plan that can be assembled. Therefore you cannot ignore the offending behaviour...it must be taken into account in all plans put together.’ Housing provider

Offending is a support need in its own right. In our survey, the majority of services did not have a direct programme of support for this need, but defined it in relation to a clients’ overall needs, especially substance misuse.

Some client participants felt that homelessness services lacked expertise in understanding offending patterns. One client noted the difference between living in a bail hostel, when he was asked about his offending behaviour every week, while other hostels did not specifically address offending or ask him directly about these issues. Another client said his hostel keyworker didn’t notice that he was behaving in ways that would lead back to offending, but his probation officer had responded immediately.

Even with offending being clearly delineated in support tools such as the Outcome Star^{vii} it was often not perceived as an issue for keyworkers in supported housing. It was not commonly incorporated into staff training or support sessions.

However the majority of services take steps to address offending, often within broader support tools and policies. Homelessness respondents cited many different policies and procedures which contribute to an overall response to offending. Answers ranged from risk assessments to exclusion policies and guidance on when to report offences to police. Some of the more common policies listed were safeguarding and substance misuse policies.

Other services more explicitly incorporated offending into support planning and training for staff. This boosted their confidence and ability to ask the right – and often challenging - questions and offer the right response when clients disclosed information about their offending. See the case studies on our [website](#) to read more.

3. SHARE THE LOAD: JOINT COMMISSIONING AND INVESTMENT

'Our team is made up of police, probation, resettlement workers and local authority workers. This partnership approach is working extremely well... once our clients understand the purpose of our work they begin to put their trust in the police to assist them with homelessness and in turn reduce or prevent reoffending'. Diamond team

Joint commissioning and investment was reported as one of the key ways to overcome a commissioning system which continues to be perceived by many as 'siloed' according to support needs (for example, into mental health, substance use, homelessness, offending), rather than holistically.

Integrated Offender Management (IOM)^{viii} and Community Safety Partnerships were reported as being particularly good starting points for linking up services and creating new opportunities for joint investment and partnerships. Joint investment or commissioning can be very small or large scale, encompass two or a multitude of organisations and be adapted to respond to specific local needs.

In current partnerships and jointly funded projects the statutory agencies were often the lead, and third sector services were invited to join after the development of the project, meaning the emphasis continued to be on the criminal justice agency's terms and support model. Practice could be more holistic if all appropriate agencies were seen as a partner from the outset.

Where our research did encounter programmes and schemes of this nature several challenges were identified. Many talked about the short term nature of funding which made achieving and demonstrating sustained outcomes with clients very difficult.

4. HOW IT ALL WORKS: BUILDING LIFE SKILLS

'Every day there are things that we don't know how to do, not knowing where to start. Without [my housing worker] I would have sacked it off by now.' Client

A lack of life skills contributes to both homelessness and reoffending, through the breakdown of tenancies, loss of benefits, poverty and frustration.

Prison can be an infantilising experience^{ix} in which individuals lose life and work skills they had previously developed. One interviewee reported that many younger offenders (18 – 25 years) she worked with had been in care and had missed out on a significant amount of life skills development. Similar effects are seen in people who have experienced homelessness, where skills are eroded and confidence, self-esteem and social ties are destroyed.^x Staff felt it is therefore important to include life skills in the support mix and not take for granted that such skills are easy or already in place. Recognising the signs of life skills that need development is important – for example, missed appointments, rent arrears or benefit problems may be communicating a support need in life skills.

'It is our service's job to build up a sense of independence in clients, so that they have confidence and awareness about the practical things needed to move on'. Regional Homelessness Service Manager

5. MULTI-TASKING: DON'T COMPARTMENTALISE SUPPORT NEEDS

'It's all about people's expectation. If clients think they will carry on using, they will do that. We look at goals and how to get there.' Manager, housing provider

Staff stressed how important it is to support ex-offenders' other goals, such as employment- rather than assuming other often more acute needs, particularly relating to substance misuse and mental health, must be stabilised first. For many the engagement in employment or meaningful activity can create calm in chaos and improve outcomes around other support needs, including self-esteem, reduced offending, and maintaining accommodation.

The manager of the Community Safety Partnership in Preston advocated engaging clients in employment schemes as soon as possible. The manager stated that work provides 'immediate status and rewards', relieves boredom and takes individuals away from old environs and associates that may impede their progress.

Multi-tasking in Preston

The Community Safety Partnership and Methodist Action jointly created an employment scheme for clients that was piloted earlier in 2011. Even clients in the very early stages of rebuilding their lives took part, including those on high doses of methadone and/or recently rough sleeping. Work placements were negotiated by a manager who was funded by the CSP but based with Methodist Action. The manager provided mentoring support to clients throughout the programme. The particular placements were negotiated with the specific needs of the client in mind, such as allowing for other appointments. The CSP and Methodist Action were careful in developing the project to ensure that the level of responsibility in placements was not so high that it created high stress levels in participants.

During the pilot none of the participants offended against their employers, and only one offended at all (the opportunistic theft of workwear to use at his placement).

Staff felt they can afford to be less cautious and restrictive in their support of clients. There is a need to raise the expectations and aspirations some staff have for clients and challenge clients to see this too.

4. PRINCIPLES FOR CROSS SECTOR WORKING

Throughout our research, participants shared many examples of working relationships between the sectors, yet many still felt that better cross sector working would secure better outcomes for their clients. We wanted to explore this further to see what really drives and maintains effective cross sector working, and identify what can be improved.

There were many different experiences about how effective cross sector working had come about and how staff used these connections: often it was down to individuals, with nearly all participants giving examples of passionate workers who had been the catalyst for stronger cross sector working in their local area. However, despite the differences, a number of principles emerged which were seen to underpin joint working and contribute to more positive outcomes for clients.

These principles are also derived from the issues commonly identified as needed to improve cross-sector exchange. None of these principles can create strong cross-sector relationships in isolation: rather, they offer a guide to approaching joint working which can be taken in combination and applied to the particular needs of clients, organisations, and local mix of services.

PRINCIPLES FOR CROSS SECTOR WORKING

1. **Help from on high:** the strategic vehicle
2. **Overcome the culture clash:** mutual support ethos and goals
3. **Colocation, colocation, colocation**
4. **See eye to eye:** benefits of face to face contact and networks
5. **All at the table:** multi-agency panels and support
6. **Common knowledge:** cross-sector learning
7. **Pass it on:** share information wisely

1. HELP FROM ON HIGH: THE STRATEGIC VEHICLE

‘To improve partnerships we need joint commissioning and cross sector structures to support joint working and sharing of information.’ Criminal justice survey respondent

Effective cross-sector working needs a strategic vehicle to provide the impetus and continued support for staff at all levels, so that it doesn't fall down to the individual worker.

Whilst a number of policies and agreements already exist on working with other agencies, there was general consensus that these documents alone do not drive the connection between sectors. Staff we spoke to felt there has to be a strategic requirement that ensures that cross-sector working is a responsibility spanning across and within all local agencies.

For some, the strategic 'vehicle' came from joint reoffending plans which were locally owned between statutory and volunteer sector providers. For others it was supported by dedicated 'partnership' or specialist posts within probation or housing teams. Some homelessness agencies reported that a

strong organisational framework, in which offending is identified as core focus of their work, ensured closer integration with the criminal justice agencies was part of everyday practice. Some agencies said having partnership working as a monitoring requirement ensured everybody took responsibility for it. Having this recognition at a more strategic level was seen as necessary to embed a value on joint working which everybody – not just the passionate individual- signed up to.

Strategic vehicle: Kirklees

In Kirklees, many participants talked about a strong tradition of joint working between the local authority, probation service, and homelessness providers. There were many reasons cited for this: strong individual relationships which over time have developed into more formal links; local networks which have led to more open communication; and the development of several joint protocols and initiatives which strengthen daily practice.

Several staff we spoke to felt that the Joint Reducing Reoffending Plan for Kirklees had been critical in providing a strategic vehicle for these things to develop. Most recently, staff from across the sectors have come together to look at the local 'Offender Journey' and ensure each stakeholder's involvement is mapped and understood, and improvements can be jointly identified and targeted.

A successful multi agency bid has also been secured to develop a bond scheme for offenders, which one member of staff said 'would not have happened' had it not been for the partnerships already developed through these mechanisms. As a participant told us, embedding partnership at a strategic level helps ensure everybody gets around the table. 'It's given us a voice. Everyone gets to see the wider agenda'.

2. OVERCOME THE CULTURE CLASH: MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF ETHOS AND GOALS

'What's helped has been taking time to understand the cultures, learn how each other work, and what pressures we each work under.' Survey respondent, criminal justice agency

The different priorities and cultures of the sectors were often identified as a source of conflict. Many acknowledged such perceptions are not helpful and prevent partnerships being developed. A shared understanding of mutual goals was seen by many as an essential foundation for more productive working relationships.

One way to overcome the cultural differences was using a common language, avoiding the jargon and terminology that can alienate.

Respondents also felt that to prevent cultural barriers they need to be clearer about their own services and processes. The survey we undertook revealed varied levels of understanding between sectors about their roles, remits and objectives. Many acknowledged more can be done to overcome cultural differences simply by sharing and articulating what they do in a clearer and transparent way, and sharing the systems and processes they use so that these don't become a source of misunderstanding.

Use of police jargon and misconceptions of remits and roles was found to be an issue for many homelessness agencies. However, there were a number of initiatives that the police were taking to break down some of these barriers and encourage knowledge exchange, such as bringing together multi-agency working groups, and arranging training for voluntary agencies to engage with and learn from all sectors of the community.

3. COLOCATION, COLOCATION, COLOCATION

‘Having a dedicated member of staff from the main housing options team based in the Probation hubs has been very effective’. Probation staff

Some of the most positive reports of cross sector working we received during the qualitative research phase were in relation to staff who were colocated in other agencies. For example, in Preston Lancashire, the Community Safety Managers, who are Preston City Council employees, are based in the Preston Police Operations Centre, and a Housing Support Worker for Foundation ‘hot-desks’ in the Preston Probation Service offices.

The main colocation examples we encountered during the research involved staff going into criminal justice environments, often from a role that was already focussed on offenders. It was clear that the sector sees and derives real value from these types of partnerships. The staff with experience of colocation talked about the ease with which they were able to understand different agency cultures, share information, and improve overall joint working.

Colocation did not solve all issues and the availability of resources, especially preferred housing types, remained a difficulty. Even where colocation worked well issues did arise around last minute referrals to the colocated service. In rural areas the use of colocation may be a greater challenge, where there are bigger geographical areas to cover and fewer resources as determined by population size. In some areas where colocation was not possible, the use of regular cross-sector “surgeries” – where another service visits for a few hours or a whole day- helped staff to develop relationships and build knowledge.

4. SEE EYE TO EYE: BENEFITS OF FACE TO FACE CONTACT AND NETWORKS

‘We have a good relationship with the PCSOs. It’s a two way relationship and they come in here regularly. It’s good because we can phone them to find out if there is anything we really need to know.’ Survey respondent, homelessness sector

The importance of having named contacts and personal, and often informal links, was repeatedly stressed during our research. Staff who could personally identify the correct person to contact for a query or referral were more likely to develop good cross sector working. This was often done by making it regular practice to invite workers to team meetings; attend sector forums and networks and drop into other services where clients are based.

Many managers made a strong case for taking time out to ‘network’ with cross sector colleagues amid other pressures. Despite the time it requires, dedicating time to this paid off through the improved links they helped to create. As one manager told us, at the start staff saw it as a ‘bit of a jolly...but we have sent a very strong message that this is an important part of a support worker’s job and that it’s worth it for the relationships it develops’.

Whilst this seems straightforward, staff stressed that more time and energy is needed to invest in these links. Many felt they should do more to raise their profile and make themselves known to other agencies, as a way to foster face to face contact.

‘It’s hard to find time for the ‘nice bits’ of building relationships. I’d like more links with probation, not just around individual cases but so we can bounce ideas off each other too. We should push for this to happen more.’ Deputy Manager, supported housing service

Seeing Eye to Eye in Preston

The Homeless Forum in Preston, Lancashire, is long-standing and very well attended by a wide cross section of services in the area, across the voluntary and statutory providers. The Forum regularly includes homelessness services (both accommodation based and day centres), outreach services, substance use services, mental health services, local councillors, police, probation and community stakeholders. The Homeless Forum has proved to be very good for networking and a lot of “how to work with each other” is negotiated in this setting, especially for those working in frontline and operational roles.

5. ALL AT THE TABLE: MULTI-AGENCY PANELS AND SUPPORT MEETINGS

‘We have three way meetings, though it doesn’t happen as much as it should. It’s important though for the clients to see that we, as agencies, talk to each other, that we all have their interests at heart.’ Manager, hostel

Multi agency panels are common across many criminal justice services. Our respondents spoke of the value of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) meetings, of complex needs panels, and of ‘Task and Targeting’ (T & T) panels which involve a broad range of local agencies to plan a joined response to vulnerable people (such as entrenched rough sleepers), and individuals involved in serious anti-social or criminal behaviour that is affecting the local community.

Joint case conferences in Bedfordshire

In Bedfordshire a joint support system has been created by using joint case conferences between probation or the IOM floating support worker, and some of the local supported housing project. This has not only aided cross-sector partnership working but has also led to information such as OASys scores being shared effectively. Most importantly, such joint working arrangements ensure that the support and sentence plans for clients do not conflict, and focuses on the clients’ needs as an holistic concept, rather than disjointed, target driven support.

The online survey found that there is a significant relationship between the quality of the cross sector relationship and the level of engagement of criminal justice staff with clients.^{xi} This is reflected by many examples we came across of routine joint support-planning sessions between an individual client and the different support workers they were linked into. The clients we spoke to had a consistently positive experience of joint sessions and the difference this made to the support they received. Staff acknowledged these could take more resources to set up and co-ordinate, and expressed a wish to making this the norm.

A significant recent development is the rolling out of IOM. As a framework for bringing together local agencies to prioritise interventions with offenders, particularly offenders identified as Prolific and other Priority Offenders (PPOs),^{xii} the 'IOM approach' offers a model for joint working which can be developed specific to local need. The project highlighted a varied awareness of, and involvement in, IOM among homelessness organisations. Some reported the positive shift IOM had brought to local working relationships, particularly with the police. As the IOM approach is extended, there are further opportunities to ensure all local partners are included in this model.

'Improving partnerships means developing IOM further, to integrate services and pool resources.' Crime Reduction lead, Local Authority

6. COMMON KNOWLEDGE: CROSS SECTOR TRAINING

'More work still needs to be done training police, probation & housing association staff regarding issues around the complexity surrounding our type of clients given their criminality and substance misuse issues.' Survey respondent, criminal justice agency

Nearly half of respondents from the criminal justice sector said they would benefit from training around housing need; few had ever had any. Over a third of homelessness providers wanted training to help them understand and address offending and how the criminal justice system works.

There is a strong case for widening access to training - whether this is informal or more structured. Homelessness sector staff who had had formal training reported the highest confidence in supporting clients with needs around offending behaviour. For criminal justice staff, those that had received some informal training, such as a shadowing scheme, reported the highest confidence. For many people we spoke to, knowledge of other sectors was gained through more 'on the job' methods: "through my colleagues", and "self-taught through lots of reading on my own time" were typical comments. However given the strong correlation between access to training and on the job confidence, there is a case to broaden opportunities for staff in both sectors to suitable training. As agencies face increased financial pressures, forming partnerships with local agencies to facilitate informal learning opportunities, such as exchanges and work shadowing, offers one way to do this without additional strain on resources.

Approaches to cross sector learning

- In Luton, all new police cadets complete a work placement within a homelessness support setting
- Staff at the Gosport-based team of the YOU Trust have time for regular training and knowledge sharing as part of their workplan. This can involve independent research, visits, or shadowing to help build up skills and expertise.
- Attending the local Probation Service's team meetings was seen as a very effective way by many hostels of learning about their work and addressing mutual challenges.
- Holding 'open house' sessions in accommodation or day centre services can provide informal training, showcase services and improve the links that both staff and clients have with local services.
- Many IOM areas provide training for the agencies involved in the approach, and run additional workshops for the voluntary and community sector to ensure this is linked with other existing provision.

7. PASS IT ON: SHARE INFORMATION WISELY

'Consistent information sharing...managing expectations. High level working arrangements and protocols don't always translate in to operational practice on the ground.' Housing provider

The timely and appropriate sharing of information between agencies and services can make the difference in preventing somebody's homelessness or reoffending. In our study, we heard many accounts of clients reoffending or losing their accommodation because it was not clear who needed to take the initiative to pro-actively share information.

Identifying and acting on the opportunities needed to share information about clients' changing needs was seen as one of the most important aspects of getting information sharing right as it can have a critical impact on the possible interventions an agency can make. Our research found that many agencies had signed up to information sharing policies and protocols which clarified expectations about which data can be shared; how client consent should be managed; and detailed the processes for sharing information. However staff, in both sectors, tended to be cautious even where they existed. The documents themselves do not solve the problem, but regular engagement and reviews of how they are meeting agencies' needs can help identify some of the challenges.

Read more about effective practice in our Information Sharing Spotlight.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As new policy directions are set out for both the criminal justice and homelessness sectors, we must grasp the opportunity to improve the way we work together to support every individual who uses our services.

Breaking the Cycle recognises that settled housing is ‘critical’ to stabilising the lives of offenders and it is encouraging that the DCLG has already made new investment to improve access into PRS accommodation for homeless people, in a scheme led by Crisis.

Further attention to accommodation for offenders was given in the new vision document from the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness^{xiii}. Alongside recognition of the need to improve joined up work under the IOM model, the report also commits to publish more comprehensive expectations for prison and probation on how to assist offenders to access stable housing. It will additionally highlight the learning from this research and we look forward to working with the Group on how this can best be taken forwards.

At a time of significant financial challenge however, when we have already started to see disproportionate cuts to the services which support ex-offenders and the impact of changes to the welfare system, we must ensure further steps are taken to improve the way we work better together. Our research has shown that there is significant will and energy to address some of the long standing challenges which currently create breakdowns in these partnerships. As we shift to a more localised response, joint approaches will prove ever more crucial in meeting our shared aims of reducing reoffending and homelessness. Here we outline some steps to support this goal.

AT A LOCAL LEVEL

Agencies must look beyond organisational boundaries and take a fresh look at who their local partners are in meeting the needs of every individual: agencies are still working within policies and priorities which can be at odds.

- Agencies must place the individual at the heart of identifying who our partners are and what interventions are needed. We must ask their ideas about how we can work better together to help them achieve change.
- Criminal Justice and homelessness agencies should have a shared understanding of the map of local provision and how they fit into the ‘offender journey’: Joint forums and working groups are a good place to facilitate this process.

Partnership isn’t optional, it must be a responsibility at every level: there needs to be a responsibility for joint working at a strategic or commissioning level so it doesn’t just fall down to the individual worker.

- Service Level Agreements and joint working protocols can help create partnerships, but they must be jointly developed and owned at every level within local statutory and voluntary agencies working with offenders.

- Clear expectations and arrangements for partnership working need to be embedded in every local structure: probation trusts, police, Community Safety Partnerships, commissioners and local authority housing departments should review how partnerships can be better facilitated through local structures such as prevention panels, and reducing reoffending boards.

Organisations must ensure staff have the right knowledge to address housing and offending needs: working with complex individuals requires a special set of skills. Yet training on working with offenders is not routinely available for homelessness staff, and those in the criminal justice sector reported gaps in housing knowledge. We don't need to become experts in each other's field, but we do need the right knowledge to better understand each other and how to support clients effectively:

- Cross sector training, shadowing, inductions and informal knowledge sharing does not have to cost a lot and should be the priority of every team working with this client group.
- Homelessness sector organisations must ensure their staff can confidently address offending behaviour as a support need and understand how to work with criminal justice agencies
- Criminal Justice organisations must ensure their staff understand housing need and how to link into full range of available options for their clients.

Every IOM should involve the homelessness sector as a key partner in its approach: each IOM will respond to its own local landscape: however offender management requires accommodation solutions and housing should be represented in every IOM structure.

- As the IOM approach is rolled out, IOM leads must identify and engage with local providers of housing, including the community and voluntary sector, as well as local authority housing leads or Housing Options.
- The homelessness sector must be proactive in finding out about their local IOM and how they can engage with it.
- IOM leads should re-think the full range of stakeholders involved in offender management and take steps to include them in the local approach: including private landlords, Job Centre Plus, and health services. Without involving all partners we cannot offer coherent package of support which addresses all an individual's needs.

All agencies should make better use of data: some services do not collect or monitor data on offenders' housing need or offending behaviour. Few share it consistently with other agencies. As we enter a Payments By Results system, all agencies can take steps to be smarter about the data they use:

- Every agency which works together should have an Information Sharing protocol which is understood at all staff levels and by clients.
- Criminal justice and homelessness agencies should look together at how common outcomes frameworks, assessments, locally shared indicators, can be used, particularly within a PBR framework.
- Commissioners should look at the monitoring systems they use to see how these can better track outcomes on offending and housing, and support agencies to monitor the work they do.
- Police and Probation services should examine how and when housing need is recorded and shared with homelessness agencies.

Local authorities must protect longer term funding for homelessness services

The contribution homelessness services make to reducing reoffending and wider outcomes can only continue if local areas continue to invest in these services. Local Authorities must consider the wider economic and strategic case for maintaining these services and take steps to protect funding amid wider cuts.

AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

The Ministry of Justice should send a clear message to every probation trust about the need for closer partnership working with homelessness organisations

The Ministry of Justice has shown a strong commitment to ending homelessness through its role in the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness. It is important that the need to work together is underlined by a better understanding among prisons and probation about the role played by the homelessness sector in reducing reoffending. There should be a clearer expectation that they must invest in multi-agency approaches with the sector so that partnerships becomes the norm and not the exception.

Clearer expectations need to be set for prisons so that housing and support is available for every person leaving prison

Despite excellent results from some resettlement teams, in-reach housing advice and services, prisoners are still released with nowhere to go. Prisons should develop a clearer set of guidelines for release date arrangements which outline how other support services are engaged in this process.

- Guidelines need to include processes for identifying and holding a supported housing bedspace.
- Specific timing of release is an important factor. Release arrangements need to ensure that if a prisoner is released without accommodation they are released at a time when they can access services in the community.
- Housing and support must be available to every person leaving prison, including those serving short sentences.
- Individuals who are unemployed upon release need to have benefits in place to start as soon as they leave prison.

The Home Office should promote the importance of integrating homelessness providers throughout the rollout of the IOM programme

Housing and voluntary sector organisations which support homeless people should be seen as equal partners in IOM. The Home Office should promote this message in future guidance and toolkits and share learning from the programme about IOM's role in promoting more integrated solutions for offenders.

The government must take steps to minimise the impact of welfare reforms and ensure this does not increase housing need among this client group

The extension of the shared accommodation rate restriction to all under-35 year olds will have particularly detrimental impact on vulnerable people with a history of homelessness, and those leaving prison. The recent announcement that those moving on from hostels and ex-offenders subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) will be exempt from the SAR age extension is welcomed. However, the age extension is likely impact to on accommodation options for

a number of clients amid wider changes to welfare reform. The needs of ex-offenders must be considered within these.

The Department for Work and Pensions must recognise ex-offenders as a potentially vulnerable group

Ex-offenders face multiple barriers to the labour market. As such, ex-offenders require greater support in their journey to employment and this needs to be reflected in the requirements and conditions imposed on them, currently in the jobseeker's agreement and in the soon to be implemented claimant commitment.

More action is needed to challenge the restrictions on accommodation options faced by ex-offenders

- The Homes and Communities Agency should explore how the risk register and regulatory framework for housing associations may be excluding clients with offending histories and possible steps to address this.
- Local authorities must work with private landlords to negotiate and develop options, such as rent guarantee or bond schemes, for ex-offenders.
- Homeless Link to work with supported accommodation and related services review policies that exclude certain people based on their offending history.

Homeless Link will work with both sectors to take forward the learning from this project and ensure multi agency working remains a focus in future policy and practice

- We will produce tools and resources for frontline staff, drawing on the practice and experience shared throughout this project
- We will explore options to develop and fund training for staff across both sectors
- We will offer support to criminal justice organisations to understand homelessness and the work of the sector, and work with local areas to explore opportunities for multi-agency working
- We will promote the ethos of the Homelessness Change Programme and share learning across both sectors about how holistic and personalised services can transform the lives of homeless people with offending backgrounds.

APPENDIX

PROJECT DESIGN

The research was divided into two phases. In Phase One of the project we sought a broad understanding of the issues for clients and staff, and guidance to inform our qualitative phase of research. We did this through:

- A literature review
- Client focus groups (4 sessions, 21 participants in total)
- Two online surveys – one for homelessness and one for criminal justice services' staff (389 responses to the surveys, with 163 respondents from homelessness services and 226 respondents from criminal justice services)

The client focus groups were conducted to ensure the homelessness and criminal justice staff surveys asked appropriate questions and explored areas of concern raised by clients. The literature review and the client focus groups informed both the development of the surveys and the in-depth qualitative stage of research – Phase Two.

Two online surveys were designed to explore the themes identified by the literature review, client focus groups and our original queries about how ex-offenders experiencing homelessness are supported. The 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.

Through the online survey we identified five areas across England to look at in more detail. These areas were:

- Bedfordshire
- Hampshire
- Kirklees
- Lambeth
- Lancashire

In Phase Two we conducted semi-structured interviews with a wide range of staff from criminal justice and homelessness agencies in these five areas, following up on findings from the surveys and identifying challenges and good practice in more detail. Interviews or focus groups were also held with clients in each of the areas. In total, we held interviews and/or focus groups with 36 staff and 55

clients, as well as attending several meetings, such as a Homeless Forum, a Rough Sleeping Pathway and a Diamond Team.

The project was also guided throughout by a steering group made up of representatives from a range of frontline statutory and non-statutory services across criminal justice and homelessness, as well as policy makers and advisors. Members of the steering group brought both local and national perspectives to the project.

This report brings together our findings and focuses on extrapolating principles for 'what works' based on the research and highlights case studies of interesting practice from the areas where we conducted the qualitative research. The report is organised into two main themes: cross sector working and effective support. The full literature review, client focus group reports, and interim report (including the survey methodology and key findings) are available on our website www.homeless.org.uk/criminal-justice-project

ⁱ Homeless Link, SNAP 2011 available at www.homeless.org.uk/snap-2011; as compared to 1 in 250 have links with probation in the general population, based on UK population of 61.8 million and 241 500 people under probation supervision (Source: Office of National Statistics www.statistics.gov.uk and Ministry of Justice 'Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin July to September 2010', England and Wales, 27 January 2011 p.7)

ⁱⁱ Home Office and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 'Guide to Housing and Housing Support Options for Offenders and People at Risk of Offending' London, 2005

ⁱⁱⁱ Ministry of Justice 'Compendium of re-offending statistics and analysis' November 2010 p. 130

^{iv} Ministry of Justice 'Breaking the Cycle: effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders' December 2010

^v For more information on our research into impact of funding changes on homelessness services please see www.homeless.org.uk/cuts-monitoring

^{vi} Over 400 staff shared their experience with the project, either in our online survey, in a focus group, or an individual interview between October 2010 and May 2011.

^{vii} Originally developed by Triangle Consulting for St Mungo's, the Outcomes Star has been subsequently widely tested and revised for the London Housing Foundation. See also www.homeless.org.uk/outcomes-star

^{viii} The Home Office developed the Integrated Offender Management as a framework to encourage a multi-agency approach to working with offenders in the community and reducing reoffending. The IOM approach encourages working across the criminal justice agencies and partnerships with non-criminal justice organisations. The core client group are people whose crimes cause the most harm at a local level. See www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/reducing-reoffending/iom/

^{ix} Trebilcock, Dr J 'No Winners The reality of short term prison sentences (summary)' The Howard League for Penal Reform, London, 2011

^x See <http://crisis.org.uk/pages/causes-consequences.html> Retrieved 4 October 2010

^{xi} Using Pearson correlation (two tailed) the Engagement of criminal justice staff with clients and quality of cross sector relationship had a significant link (.634)

^{xii} Prolific and other Priority Offender (PPO) is a term used to describe both individuals identified as offending in this way and the approach to reducing their reoffending. See www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/reducing-reoffending/ppo/

^{xiii} Vision to End Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide, July 2011, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/visionendroughsleeping>