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*This work was funded through an Innovation and Good Practice grant from The Housing Corporation, and Homelessness Housing & Support Directorate funds devolved through Birmingham City Council*
undertake extensive research in prisons and with numerous agencies and organisations involved in prisoner resettlement. Face-to-face interviews were undertaken with 30 prisoners, with a small number of ex-prisoners, with 20 offender management professionals and front-line staff, with 25 housing professionals and front-line staff, some of which are specialist housing providers, and with key senior stakeholders in the regional government office, prison service and probation service. Additionally, 20 telephone interviews were undertaken with respondents from offender management and housing. In total, approximately 100 people were interviewed. The full list of agencies and organisations involved in the research is included as Appendix 1 at the end of the guide.

What is the best way to use this guide?

After providing a map of the potential routes that a person might take through the criminal justice system, and noting the potential housing interventions that could be made at each stage, the guide is divided into good practice ideas on:

- Strategy, communication and partnership;
- Prison housing advice and support;
- Prisoner Resettlements projects;
- Other housing associations;
- Barriers to accessing appropriate accommodation;
- The private sector;
- Supporting People
- Needs of black and minority ethnic prisoners.

Within each of these sections, there are a number of real-life case studies drawn from our research in the West Midlands. You can ‘pick and choose’ from these case studies to suit your particular needs. A brief section on benefits, tenancies, deposits and homelessness follows this. The guide concludes by examining some potential future trends.

Introduction

Who is this guide for?

All voluntary, public, private organisations and agencies involved in working with ex-prisoners, but particularly those social landlords who are either providing (supported) social housing for ex-prisoners OR who are considering doing this.

Why is this subject important?

The Social Housing and Offender Management ‘worlds’ are agreed that one of (if not the) key aspects of effective resettlement is suitable housing. Many ex-prisoners need appropriate accommodation in order to be able to restart their lives effectively and with a view to avoiding situations and scenarios that might present them with potential re-offending opportunities. A substantial minority of ex-prisoners also need an element of support. This support includes avoiding drugs and alcohol misuse, mental health issues, budgeting and life-skills. Some ex-prisoners, a relatively small minority, need more in-depth and longer-term support.

All of the prisoners interviewed for this guide expressed this view: that suitable accommodation is their first priority.

It is also important to 'demythologize' the image of the prisoner and ex-prisoner. Prisoners are human beings with needs, hopes and desires like all of us.

How will the guide help with this?

This guide provides case studies of good practice in the housing and prisoner resettlement field. These range from very simple practical ideas through to ideas about strategy and communication. The research was undertaken in the Midlands, but all of these ideas are transferable to any other part of the country.

How was the guide produced?

Focus Futures in Birmingham were awarded an Innovation and Good Practice Grant from the Housing Corporation. They then employed the Centre for Social Justice of Coventry University to
Context and background

This guide is not suggesting that ex-prisoners' needs should be prioritized over other groups. In reality, ex-prisoners will include a large proportion of these other groups anyway. Instead, it is very simply suggesting that the needs of ex-prisoners should be treated in a fair and equitable way.

- Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners, Social Exclusion Unit, 2002

In June 2004, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) came into being. It brings together the prison and probation services in one organisation. See www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/output/page224.asp for more information on NOMS.

At the regional level, the West Midlands Prisoner Resettlement Strategy Framework was published in 2004.

The other substantial national context within which this guide is placed is the changes within the social housing sector in the last (approximately) 25 years, with local authority housing stocks being hugely reduced by the Right-to-Buy scheme and then with large stock transfers taking place. Housing Associations have consequently become 'big players' in the social housing market and face a number of competing demands for social housing. Also, the more recent changes with the introduction of Supporting People in April 2003 obviously affect the way that social housing providers operate.

So, it could well be that the production of this guide is very timely. It aims to bridge some gaps between offender management and housing (and other) professionals and do so in a way that is totally accessible to both. These bridges are very, very important. There is unanimous agreement that appropriate accommodation can play an extremely significant role in prisoner resettlement and prevention of re-offending. Whilst this is by no means automatic, good, effective provision of services can go a long way to meeting the prisoner 'half-way' in their efforts to change and stop offending.
Offender Management Map

This map follows the routes that could be taken by any person arrested for an offence. It details all of the possibilities that could occur and then, on the second page, matches this with potential housing implications and any pro-active, positive interventions that can be made.
Housing Interventions in the Criminal Justice Process

When a person is arrested for an offence, housing intervention may be beneficial at several junctures in the criminal justice process (see figure 1 above). The individual may not always be homeless, but may be residing in accommodation that it is deemed inappropriate for them to return to. Furthermore, the provision of supported accommodation may be more beneficial to an individual during this process than merely provision of an address.

- Following arrest, whilst the person is in police custody, housing support, of various kinds, may be beneficial in the same manner as other ‘arrest referral schemes’. Such things as homelessness, rent arrears and Housing Benefit issues should be addressed. If the individual is living in a hostel, the hostel should be informed. Satisfactory resolution of housing issues that may have contributed to offending may influence the nature of action taken against the individual, as well as reducing the likelihood of bail being refused by the police. If remanded into custody, Housing Benefit can be claimed for up to 52 weeks.

- Once an individual has been charged, access to housing support may still be required. Bail may be granted or revoked at any point prior to conviction and thus the provision of an appropriate address may still be relevant, particularly where the defendant has been remanded into custody.

- Should a defendant plead guilty or be found guilty of an offence, housing may also be a relevant issue during the preparation of pre-sentence reports and sentencing of the offender. Many alternatives to custody (including those introduced under the Criminal Justice Act 2003), which the court may consider for the offender, cannot be imposed without suitable accommodation provisions. Thus, without a suitable address an offender may be at increased risk of a custodial sentence.

- Should an offender receive a community sentence, there may still be a need for work with the offender, potentially in conjunction with the National Probation Service who supervise many community orders.

- Offenders receiving a custodial sentence may also experience a number of accommodation requirements. Prisoners may lose accommodation as a result of not maintaining rent or mortgage payments; access to temporary release or home visits will obviously be restricted without accommodation; and consideration of early release under Home Detention Curfew or parole may also be precluded without an address. Housing Benefit is a particular issue here. If the sentence is less than 13 weeks, there is no loss of Housing Benefit. However, many prisoners do not close down their tenancies if their sentence is longer than 13 weeks, so they can come out of prison with enormous rent arrears.

- Following release from custody, ex-prisoners often need support from housing providers. Those subject to mandatory post-release supervision by the National Probation Service, and even those pursuing voluntary aftercare, may still benefit from interventions that may reduce the likelihood of re-offending and assist their reintegration into the community.
**Strategy, communication and partnership**

This section contains ideas on good practice that are more general and ‘over-arching’ than subsequent sections. They are about strategy at the regional and local levels, good, effective communication at all levels, and positive ways of working in partnership.

**The HARP Protocol – A framework to reduce homelessness amongst people returning from custody**

For our purposes, the most important aspect of this protocol, produced by the Northumbria Probation Service, lays out an accommodation ‘pathway’ for effective resettlement of ex-prisoners. It states that housing needs should be taken into account at all of the stages of a prisoner’s experience:

```
Pre-custody ----- Reception/Induction - ---- During Custody ----- Pre-release - ----- Post-release
```

The term ‘Throughcare’ is used as a title for this process.

The overall purpose of the protocol is:

“To create a framework to help Local Authorities, the Prison and Probation Services and Voluntary Sector Housing Providers to prevent homelessness amongst people returning from custody.”

“The key to the effectiveness of the HARP protocol lies in clear communication, jointly understood risk assessment and trust between the agencies involved.”

The protocol provides a trajectory of prisoner experience and emphasizes the important interventions that can be (but are not always) made at each stage of this experience. It goes into great detail on each of these. For example, ‘On Reception in Prison’, it lists five tasks, the first of which is: ‘Prisoner’s housing status identified and actions to secure or terminate tenancy.’

It also emphasizes the importance of different agencies and organizations working together, effective communication and co-operation.


This aspect (the prisoner trajectory and appropriate housing interventions) of this protocol, produced by the Northumbria Probation Service, has provided a framework for the ideas on good practice presented here. It is though a somewhat idealized view of the process. In practice, there are very few housing interventions made at the pre-custody phase and some prisons are still not intervening to deal with housing issues at the reception/induction phase either.

It is important to emphasize that housing needs and issues need to be taken into account very early in a prisoner’s experience. One of the most common problems is tenancies not being closed down when a prisoner goes into prison, resulting in them accruing very large rent arrears. These arrears can become impossibly large and the ex-prisoner can lose the tenancy because they are unable to pay them.

Each of the English Government Office regions and Wales are developing structures which bring together senior representatives of key stakeholder organisations in prisoner resettlement in partnership.

**Regional Reducing Re-Offending Action Structure**

This is at an early stage of development with the relatively recent appointment of a Regional Offender Manager in the West Midlands. The Regional Offender Management Board will oversee the development of seven pathways including one on accommodation.

Its overall aim is to bring together a number of key agencies and organisations to co-ordinate a regional reducing re-offending strategy.

It will involve:

- The Regional Housing Board;
- The Housing Corporation;
- Supporting People;
- NOMS;
- The region’s local authorities.

While getting together such a wide range of agencies might present some strategic difficulties, it is absolutely essential if prisoner resettlement services are to be effectively delivered. A local example of such partnership working is shown on page 8, looking at Telford and Wrekin.

Contact: Government Office, West Midlands, Tel. 0121 352 5066.
Many, many people involved in prisoner resettlement believe that effective communication across different organisations and professional boundaries is one of the key aspects of service delivery. Effective communication is about the quality of communication. As one interviewee stated: “Often, it’s not what you say, it’s how you say it that’s important.” Another said: “The two groups need to be a little more humble and to try to understand each other’s problems and ways of working.”

The emphasis here is upon co-operative and collaborative relationships across agencies. One such example is:

**A Dedicated Tenant Support Service – Greater Manchester Probation Service**

Greater Manchester Probation Service have created a Tenancy Support Service. The basic ideas are that tenancy support workers will transcend professional and public service organisational boundaries (particularly between offender management and housing), they will be highly knowledgeable about the local housing scene and will spend much of their time networking. Its aims are:

- To ensure that ex-offenders are able to access mainstream housing
- To ensure support for them.

The article on this in the *Probation Journal* in 2002 draws attention to the quality of professional relationships in a section entitled: ‘It’s Not Who You Know, It’s How Well You Know Them’. This idea of the importance of high quality networking is echoed in other good practice ideas being presented here.

As regards effective partnership working, many people involved in prisoner resettlement believe that it is absolutely essential, particularly given all of the changes occurring, not least the creation of NOMS.
Another good example of partnership working of a very different kind is:

**Homeless Offenders Resettlement Unit (HORU)**

HORU is a National Probation Service office in Birmingham. Focus Futures is working in partnership with the probation service to offer an Accommodation Link Worker role at this office. The service is for ex-prisoners who are released from prison or from the courts who are ‘long-term homeless and rootless’ to HORU’s office in Birmingham. It is longer-term ex-prisoners (12 months or more sentence) who report to the office. Referrals to the Link Worker come only via Probation Officers based at the HORU office.

In addition to assisting people to access suitable accommodation, the role of HORU is to try to change people’s offending behaviour. Supported accommodation has a big role to play in this.

Some of the hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation that is available is not of a very high quality and in some of them there may be a high percentage of residents with drugs or alcohol issues. This can be problematic if an offender is trying to remain drug or alcohol free on release from prison.

HORU also gets involved in the longer-term picture of trying to get ex-prisoners settled into more permanent accommodation with social housing providers. There is currently a ‘bottleneck’ of ex-prisoners in temporary accommodation, because there is a lack of permanent accommodation available. One common problem is that their local authority tenancy wasn’t closed down when they went into prison and so they have very large arrears when they come out. Prisoners should be interviewed about their housing situation upon induction in all prisons.

Contact the Accommodation Link Worker, tel. 0121 248 6460 for further information.

Another good example of partnership working of a very different kind is:

**Telford and Wrekin Borough - Offender Resettlement Partnership**

Telford and Wrekin, in Shropshire, has an active offender resettlement partnership comprising of:

- Housing Needs team of the local authority
- Drug Action team
- West Mercia Probation Service
- Social Services Mental Impairment
- Connexions
- HMP Shrewsbury
- Revenues and Benefits of the local authority
- Wrekin Housing Trust
- Beth Johnson Housing Association
- Youth Offending Service
- Substance Misuse
- Telford and Wrekin PCT
- Telford and Wrekin Supporting People team
- YMCA (Wellington)
- STAY
- KIP

This is a very impressive array of partners.

**Its purpose is:**

- To try to prevent the loss of accommodation;
- The enabling of an equitable service to ensure the transition of offenders into appropriate accommodation;
- To consider the provision of supported housing and support needs made available within these areas.

**Its aims are:**

- To meet the corporate aims and objectives of the local authority through its partnership working
- To jointly and pro-actively work to reduce the risk of offending by the provision of appropriate housing and support;
- To establish mechanisms for the sharing of relevant information between the parties;
- To identify and manage risks to self, public and service providers.

This arrangement could be transferred to any local authority area. One of the advantages in Telford and Wrekin is that it is a relatively small geographical area.

Contact tel. no. 01952 202351.

In practice, this project is at a developmental stage. It was only recently established and so we do not yet have evidence of any positive outcomes.
Prison Housing Advice and Support

Within the West Midlands Prison Service Area, there are 12 prison establishments, including women’s prisons, open prisons, local prisons, Category B and Young Offenders Institutions. Research was conducted in six of the prisons. A number of examples of good housing advice and support services emerged. They are:

HMP & YOI, Drake Hall

Prisoners at Drake Hall provide housing advice and support to their peer group. The Housing Advice Co-ordinator is employed by NACRO and is supported by a full-time Housing Advice Worker and a part-time Housing Advice Worker, both of whom are prisoners. Drake Hall is a resettlement prison: prisoners go there for the last part of their sentence. This can be for a period of three week upwards to a number of years.

Prisoners are seen at Induction into the prison and are interviewed regarding their housing situation. If they ‘register’ with the housing advice centre as having a housing need, they can see any of the members of staff at any point up to their release.

Drake Hall believes that supported housing is crucial to try to get people back into the community and to reduce reoffending. However, there is a shortage of such accommodation and many prisoners are sent out into hostels, some of which are of dubious quality. Very few hostels cater for women. The team do not have the time and resources in order to be able to inspect hostels (or any of the accommodation that prisoners are being sent to). Supported accommodation projects provide about 50% of the housing for prisoners leaving Drake Hall. They find it very difficult (almost impossible!) to find accommodation with local authorities. They are members of the National Rent Deposit Forum.

The Job Centre, Alcoholics Anonymous, Phoenix (Drugs Rehab.), the Samaritans, NACRO and others come into the prison to give advice. The team also use a NACRO helpline which has a database of specific ex-offender projects.

The unit seems to be a very effective partnership between a full-time NACRO Co-ordinator and two prisoner advisers.

Contact the Housing Advice Co-ordinator, tel. 01785 774266.

The Housing Advice Co-ordinator emphasized the very hard, labour-intensive work involved in setting up and running such a project. It is helped by the fact that Drake Hall is a semi-open resettlement prison. It would be very difficult to establish such a service within a High Security prison. It is also difficult because of the specific conditions that exist within a prison. There is the issue of risk: how much information can a prisoner have access to and can they be trusted to have access to a phone, which they need to have to do the job effectively. One consequence of employing prisoners as housing advice workers is that they might be bullied by other prisoners to do ‘favours’ for them. Also, some staff within prisons do not believe that prisoners should be employed in such positions. All of these things compound to make it quite a difficult task to set up such a service.

HMP Hewell Grange

Hewell Grange is an open prison. This is good example of a prisoner-led housing advice service. It provides a very comprehensive service to the 170 prisoners in Hewell Grange.

The main aim is to prevent any prisoners leaving the prison without any accommodation. This is known as ‘No Fixed Abode’ (N.F.A.). Some of the prisoners completing their sentences are found accommodation in hotels, hostels and bed and breakfasts, as a ‘first step’. Some are found specialist housing association accommodation with Adullam, Focus, Stonham and Fry. They have not yet found a local authority tenancy for any ex-prisoner. Local authorities in that area all declare an ex-prisoner who is NFA ‘intentionally homeless’.

The prisoner advisers are paid the same amount as the prisoner orderlies in the prison. During the induction period for prisoners, the service attends and offers help and support on housing issues at that time. They introduce
The research also uncovered some relatively small examples of specific good practice. One such is:

## Brockhill Resettlement Unit

In Brockhill women’s prison in Worcestershire a (uniformed) prison officer told us about a scheme for retaining a short-term prisoner’s tenancy whilst in custody.

Many short-term prisoners lose their tenancies and so much effort is placed into trying to negotiate a retention. One idea for very short-term prisoners of up to about 3 weeks is that the prisoners will offer to pay a proportion of their wages towards their arrears whilst in prison.

The officer reported a reasonably high level of success with this. Some housing associations have accepted as little as 50p a week. As part of a weekly wage of £2.50 or £3.50, this is a high proportion and the associations sometimes recognize this and, in good faith, keep the tenancy open for the prisoner to return to upon release.

Even though this is a very small and perhaps limited initiative, this could make a huge difference to an individual prisoner. It can mean the difference between an individual having a home or not upon release.

HMP Blakenhurst

HMP Blakenhurst is a Local Category B Prison serving courts from the West Midlands and West Mercia.

In 2004 the prison established a Resettlement Zone in a designated area within the prison as a result of HM Prison Service Custody 2 Work funding. The Prison has a commitment to addressing the accommodation needs of offenders and funds 5 posts specifically related to addressing this issue. This work is undertaken by a team from NACRO who provide a service from reception through to release. The Team includes:

- A Resettlement Zone Manager with responsibility for the co-ordination of all areas of the work undertaken around the delivery of resettlement provision within the resettlement zone. This includes services delivered by full time Nacro staff and a variety of voluntary and community based organisations.
- A Nacro Induction Worker with a remit of addressing housing needs of offenders upon reception and during the induction programme.
- A General Resettlement Worker who is able to address various housing issues and provides general advice and a referral network to internal and external services.
- A Housing Advice Worker who is specifically employed to support prisoners who are of no fixed abode status and to look to establish links with housing providers.
- A Pre-Release Worker who delivers the prison’s pre-release course with an emphasis on housing advice.

A key part of the resettlement work involves working in partnership with a number of external organisations that have service level agreements with the prison such as:

- Housing providers within both the public and private sector
- Reed Learning
- Relate
- Citizen Advice Bureau
- Job Centre Plus and The Benefits Agency
- The Princes Trust
- Business in Prisons
- YMCA IAG Next Steps
- Warwickshire Bridge Builders

Contact: tel. 01527 400 797.
Many of the people who work on resettlement in prisons stated that it can be very difficult because the prisoners are often unavailable for housing or homelessness interviews etc. because of other prison commitments. They may have been transferred to another prison. It is also very difficult for a whole host of other reasons. (see the section on Barriers to accessing appropriate accommodation on page 20) Most prison regimes, at the moment, are simply not conducive to effective resettlement measures being taken while the prisoner is still serving their sentence.

These examples of good practice from West Midlands prisons represent only a small snapshot of what is probably out there. One of the key messages learnt from this part of the research is that prison housing advice and support services need to be very imaginative, creative and flexible. They also need to be able to ‘speak the language’ of and relate to prisoners. The examples of prisoner-led services appear to be particularly effective in this respect.
Resettlement Projects

The examples of resettlement projects featured here come from both the housing and offender resettlement ‘worlds’ and some span them. There is a relatively small number of housing associations that run projects on supported housing for ex-prisoners. In the West Midlands the main ones are Adullam, Focus, Fry and Stonham. Each of these have a number of projects running throughout the West Midlands region. All of the resettlement projects that were part of the research appear to be attempting to find new, innovative and more imaginative ways to engage ex-prisoners, prisoners and resettlement staff.

Stonham Housing Association has a commitment to reducing the impact of homelessness and social disadvantage through its provision of specialist housing with support to meet a wide range of needs.

In 2003, they established a new initiative in Coventry working with individuals who have an identifiable history of substance misuse. The key aim of the initiative is to provide a Halfway House that offers support and accommodation for single service users at risk of re-offending due to substance misuse, who have undergone detox and rehab treatment and are committed to living in a substance free environment. This is a new initiative funded by Coventry’s Supporting People that works in partnership with the Community Drugs Team, Probation, Alcohol services and other local support Agencies together with the service user. Service users are granted a License Agreement (reviewed after 4 weeks) and are expected to work with staff to address their individual substance misuse issue and to facilitate resettlement into the community. All service users are allocated a link worker; undertake a support plan and regular drug testing.

Contact: tel no. 024 76 256 338

Stonham is a national association that provides housing and support to men and women who have come into contact with the criminal justice system. It works closely with the Probation Service, the Youth Justice Board, the Prison Service and social services. This hostel is a drugs free environment (compulsory drug testing takes place) where there is intensive support for residents. They are also referred to external services. Residents can stay for up to two years. However, it is only a small-scale scheme with a maximum of six residents, it is men only and the operating costs are quite high due to the intensive nature of the support.

Fry is a Midlands-based housing association, founded in 1967, whose work is mainly with offenders and people who are at risk of offending. It provides shared housing. This is in hostels although they are attempting to challenge the stereotype of ‘hostel’. They have three projects in Birmingham similar to the Leamington Spa one and others in Coventry, Nuneaton, Bromsgrove, Hereford and Worcester.

Fry Housing Association – Resettlement Project, Leamington Spa

This project began in 2001. It is now supported by Supporting People and Fry have a service level agreement with the probation service. There are 27 bed spaces with 12 people receiving floating support. It is the only specialist ex-offender accommodation scheme in Warwickshire and has a manager and three project workers. As such it has a high rate of users to staff, 13 for each project worker.

Referrals are accepted mainly from Warwickshire Probation Service but also some from other areas. Warwickshire have a Central Accommodation scheme which has been in place for approximately 8 years. This arrangement appears to work very effectively. They will accept referrals up to 3 months before a prisoner is released.

Members of staff work with residents as their ‘keyworker’. Together they initially identify the support needs and then the keyworker helps them to acquire the skills to achieve their objectives as set out in the Support Plan which is reviewed monthly.

The scheme provides general support with such things as independent living skills, cooking, cleaning, looking after themselves, just being able to manage their own living environment and accessibility to local amenities like dentists, doctors, GPS’, opticians etc. Drugs and alcohol support are not available within the project but clients can be referred to external agencies such as the Community Drugs Team. As such, the scheme is classed as low to medium support. On average a person will stay with the project for about 18 months and is then, if successful, referred on to the local authority for re-housing.

The Leamington Spa project strongly values joint working with other agencies and with the service
users. It is through the latter relationship that they are able to identify their support needs, and through having a huge portfolio of agencies that they get to know about the project and what it does and vice versa. This contributes hugely to their effectiveness as a resettlement project.

Contact: tel. no. 01926 425445, e-mail leamington@fryha.org.uk

Adullam Housing Association

Adullam was founded in 1972 by Walter Moore in Birmingham. He started by purchasing a single house for ex-offenders who were homeless, that he had met on the streets. So, it began life as an organisation providing support to ex-prisoners. Subsequently, it has developed supported accommodation for other vulnerable groups. Following the 1974 Housing Act, Adullam became a registered Housing Association. Over the next thirteen years, three other independent organisations were developed, at Winsford, Liverpool and Stockport, providing a total of 100 bedspaces. In 1985, the four separate associations merged to form a national organisation. Since then, Adullam Homes has developed steadily, and now accommodates over 700 people in shared housing and single flats.

The Stage 1 project in Birmingham provides bed spaces for approximately 89 ex-prisoners, 50% shared and 50% single. The single accommodation is often used for ex-drug misusers. This is dispersed, street housing throughout Birmingham. The project employs a Manager, two Public Protection Officers, a Mental Health Worker, a Drugs Worker, four Project Workers and one Resettlement Worker. The Project Workers agree a support contract with each resident when they move in. The support is very intensive. The Probation or the Prison Service refers ex-prisoners. Every ex-prisoner is interviewed and usually accepted unless they are drug misusers or have attempted deception to obtain the accommodation.

If the support and accommodation is successful, after up to two years, residents will be offered permanent accommodation.

The project appears to be very successful with only a very small proportion of residents reoffending.

Research with Focus Futures also uncovered some examples of good practice. They are:

Focus Futures - Accommodation Link Worker with Walsall Probation

Funded by Supporting People in Walsall this scheme provides Probation Officers in Walsall with a dedicated Accommodation Link Worker. The Accommodation Link Worker operates alongside the Probation Officer in securing appropriate accommodation for people in housing need and on probation. This includes those currently in prison awaiting release, as well as those in the community requiring accommodation. The work of the Accommodation Link Worker is found to relieve probation staff of significant amounts of housing related work, enabling them to concentrate upon offender management.

Contact details: 07884116808
Organisational website www.primefocus.org.uk

Focus Futures Homeless Services Centre

In the Homeless Services Centre (HSC) Focus Futures brought together a range of their non-accommodation based services for people who are homeless, or in housing need. The framework of services enables engagement with people who may be vulnerable and chaotic, and provides a pathway encouraging stabilisation and progression. Street based outreach to rough sleepers, 36hrs a week of drop-in housing advice and surgeries in other projects, provide points of easy access to services. Dedicated drug treatment for rough sleepers and nomination agreements for emergency accommodation enable a proactive response to need. (A recent survey of those receiving this treatment showed that over 90% had a recent offending history). The HSC then provides tenancy support to ex-rough sleepers, those working with drug treatment providers, refugees, young people with multiple needs, and Focus Housing tenants. In addition the Birmingham Bond Scheme works with both families and single people to access the private rented sector in Birmingham.

Contact details: (0121) 233 6370
Organisational website www.primefocus.org.uk

See also the Focus Futures Multiple Needs Unit on page 17 of this guide.
The National Probation Service provides support, information and advice to prisoners and ex-prisoners (as well as providing some hostel-type accommodation – see page 16 on Braley House). One of its aims is ‘reducing re-offending’ and another one is ‘Rehabilitation of Offenders’. Their website can be accessed at: http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/output/Page1.asp

Two of the probation areas of the West Midlands region, Staffordshire and Warwickshire, are featured here as good practice examples:

**Staffordshire Probation – Accommodation Service**

Staffordshire Probation Area Accommodation Unit employs two full-time Accommodation Officers, covering the North and South of the county.

The service aims to help with the resettlement of offenders through the provision of housing advice and information, referral to hostels and supported housing providers, support with housing applications and referral to other agencies for help and support. Referrals are accepted from Offender Managers for offenders serving community sentences as well as those serving custodial sentences.

If a prisoner is referred to the Unit, the Accommodation Officer writes to them enclosing a questionnaire, a housing-needs assessment, for completion. The Accommodation Officer encourages the Offender Manager to contact the prisoner as soon as possible. If they are imprisoned within Staffordshire, the Accommodation Officer visits the prisoner to undertake a full housing needs assessment. Referrals are then made to individual accommodation providers based upon an assessment of housing need, attendant risk factors and public protection requirements. The Unit works particularly closely with the following providers of supported housing: Arch North Staffordshire; Potteries Housing Association; YMCA; Bethany Project; Focus Housing Association; Heantun Housing Association; Stonham Housing Association and NACRO. All of these resettlement projects are funded by Supporting People. The Unit also works with local housing authorities with whom they are developing joint working protocols.

The Accommodation Officers find it particularly difficult to secure move-on accommodation for ex-prisoners with large rent arrears which sometimes result from people not completing housing Benefit applications correctly. Prisoners with substance misuse problems are the most difficult to accommodate.

Contact: Partnerships Officer, Staffordshire Probation Area
Telephone: 01785 231733.

**Warwick Probation – the Central Accommodation Referral Service (CARS)**

This service employs a full-time officer whose role it is to: “...receive referrals of any offender or ex-offender who has supported accommodation needs (and it is currently being extended to general accommodation needs) and, after processing them, then forward them on to providers who may be appropriate for that person.”

The housing providers then assess the referral and the officer liaises with them on the suitability of the person, arranges interviews etc. The service also acts as a central contact point for any probation officer or referral officer requiring advice and information on housing and referrals. The service appears to be unique within probation services in England and Wales. It was created in 2002. Prior to that there was an accommodation officer, but the new service provides referrals to a much wider group of providers.

It has been difficult to establish the level of need in the area. One of the recent initiatives that the service has taken is to send an advice pack to all people going into prison from Warwickshire courts which includes information on sustaining or terminating tenancies.
It is perfectly possible to transfer this type of service to other probation areas. It provides an efficient method of dealing with complex and sometimes tricky issues. For example, the service has been able to provide information to Supporting People on such things as levels of need, numbers of referrals and their sources, additional needs such as mental health, drugs and alcohol. It has thereby been able to enhance the local Supporting People strategy, and included the needs of ex-prisoners in it.

Contact: Partnerships Manager, tel 01926 405817, Offender Accommodation Officer tel 01926 405816

Unfortunately, Connect doesn’t have a great deal of influence as regards appropriate accommodation. Also, 12 hours of mentoring is a very short amount of time to be able to be effective.

Project Chrysalis

Project Chrysalis is a joint agency service between the Probation, Police and Prison Services focusing on street crime, defined as:
- Robbery
- Snatch theft
- Car jacking
- Firearms offences

It works as follows:

Street Crime offender is identified and details recorded on a database.

Prisoner is tracked through the prison system and appropriate interventions identified.

Police and probation teams identified to manage the offender on release.

Police and probation teams notified three months prior to release of offending enabling pre-release action plan to be formulated.

Joint assessment and management of offender begins and continues throughout the licence.

This project is unique to the West Midlands. The three agencies are working in partnership to deliver the project. However, it could be replicated anywhere in the UK.

The project is mainly working with long-term offenders. Chrysalis and Birmingham City Council are working together to target street crime offenders across the West Midlands Prison Estate, specifically regarding their accommodation needs and issues. A Chrysalis evaluation report is...
One of the issues that emerged from the research is that the stereotype of a ‘hostel’ (poor quality accommodation where drink and drugs might be available) does not accurately represent the reality of much hostel-style provision. While this is often the case with stereotypes, many hostels do not provide accommodation that is conducive to prisoner resettlement and prevention of re-offending, particularly the so-called ‘Direct Access’ hostels. So, in order to challenge the stereotype, visits were made to a number of hostels that were recommended to the researchers as good quality provision. These are shown as case studies below.

Braley House, Worcester

This hostel is one of approximately 100 probation hostels in England and Wales referred to as Approved Premises.

The hostel is divided into seven self-catering flats that accommodate 18 medium to high-risk offenders with one flat specifically allocated for women. Male residents are not allowed into this flat. Residents are required to be on licence, bail or on a Community Order made by a court.

The hostel provides an environment that is similar to how people live outside ‘in the real world’. The hostel is almost unique as it is one of only 2 or 3 probation hostels in the country that accommodate ex-prisoners in an environment where:

- Residents are housed in flats;
- Their stay at the hostel is determined by their individual need;
- The hostel works in partnership with a variety of agencies such as the Community Drug Team, Turning Point, housing, employment and benefit agency;
- They have a direct nomination rights into local social housing and approximately 2/3 of residents get accommodation through this route each year.

Contact: tel. 01902 420 536

St George’s House, Wolverhampton

St George’s is a hostel owned and managed by Stonham Housing Association. It has 15 bedspaces for both ex-offenders and other homeless men. Staff usually undertake a prison visit to assess the suitability of a prisoner. It provides a very high level of flexible support tailored to meet individual need. It is a ‘dry-house’ and misuse of drugs is not allowed. There is a strict regime but one that also provides a high level of intensive support to individuals. The individual resident is expected to ‘take ownership’ of the support. Approximately 30% of the residents attend college and five residents have achieved completion of a Princes’ Trust Course, The Team Programme, in the last year.

Stonham, Wolverhampton branch also provides 22 move-on spaces comprising bed-sits, shared houses and single flats for semi-independent living. After that, Stonham will provide support and assistance to house residents permanently with local authorities and other housing associations.

Stonham took over the running of the hostel in 1989. It has a very high success rate with only a very small number of residents returning to crime (6% according to the hostel’s own monitoring form). They pride themselves on their pro-active interventionist approach to support.

Contact: Tel. 01902 420 536

At the end of March 2005 this project was incorporated into the Prolific and Persistent Offenders Strategy (PPO).
Focus Futures Multiple Needs Unit

At 90 Lancaster Street, in Birmingham, Focus Futures operates a Multiple Needs Unit (MNU). Established in 2001 the MNU accommodates and supports men aged 25-45, who have been serially excluded from direct access hostel accommodation in Birmingham because of multiple or complex needs. Residents will have already been excluded from other hostel provision in the city, and are generally homeless at point of entry; this will often be the last available option. Residents will have multiple needs including offending behaviour, mental ill health, substance misuse, personality disorder, learning disabilities, poor physical health, challenging behaviour, or other forms of vulnerability. Accommodation comprises 15 high-quality, self-contained studio flats, with additional communal kitchen, lounge and office facilities. Staffing is 24hr, assertive and responsive to needs and behaviours; behaviour that in other settings might lead to eviction is challenged and change is sought. Admittance, support planning and implementation are established in partnerships with agencies such as probation, community mental health teams and Homeless Services Centre.

Contact details: (0121) 359 2228
Organisational website www.primefocus.org.uk

Cyrenians’ pre-payment scheme

Coventry Cyrenians was established in 1973, as an initiative working with the single homeless. The Coventry service has expanded in recent years and currently provides a variety of support services targeted at different groups across the city. A part of the service includes working with ex-offenders, and Cyrenians accept referrals from both the prison and probation service.

For a number of years Cyrenians has had an ongoing arrangement with a number of direct access emergency providers in Coventry. Homeless people accessing Cyrenian's service can be paid into accommodation in the City for up to 5 nights in any 2 month period or 11 nights in any 6 month period. The Pre-Payment Scheme is funded from Coventry's Housing Benefit budget.
Housing Associations

There are a very large number of general needs housing associations in the UK. The research was able to engage with only a small number in the West Midlands. These are some of their stories:

'Sympathetic' housing associations

An example of a housing association (that wishes to remain anonymous) that doesn't undertake project work on prisoner resettlement but treats ex-prisoners in the same way as other applicants (the only proviso being that they carry out risk assessment on all ex-prisoners). They have thus gained a reputation as being an association that will provide accommodation for ex-prisoners: as a 'sympathetic' housing association.

They have some in-house client support, which is funded by Supporting People and is directly tenancy-related but which would pick up on other support needs as they arose. However, they have some concerns about the resourcing of direct specialist support for ex-prisoners. They are unable to do it themselves.

However, the main problem that has arisen is that because of their reputation, they are now receiving far more applications from prisoners and ex-prisoners than they can cope with. They are currently receiving 20 such applications per week and have a housing stock of single person accommodation of only 1,000 bed spaces. They are reporting getting applications from over 100 miles away from people with no local connection.

They are a general needs housing association that doesn't wish to become a specialist ex-offender association. So, the current situation presents them with something of a dilemma. While they wish to be fair and treat ex-prisoners in the same way as they treat all other applicants, they have now gained a reputation as a 'good' association in the prisoner resettlement world and are thus receiving many more applications from people than they can possibly accommodate.

Another general needs housing association in Birmingham recognizes that there is an ad hoc approach in the housing world to prisoner resettlement. It has developed informal links with HMP Birmingham but because there is no protocol or procedure for this, the key thing is to work quite closely with particular individuals. Because of the lack of a formal arrangement, these relationships can quite easily break down.

The association is trying to develop a system whereby housing officers interview prisoners before they are released but this is quite difficult to organize and is time-consuming. Two of the housing officers visited a local prison for a meeting, only to be told that the meeting had been cancelled.

The interviewee felt that there should be a system put in place to bring together housing providers and the prison service. All parties should have a responsibility to address prisoner resettlement.

The association currently runs a foyer that provides accommodation for young offenders.

Another small housing association does not have any specialist services for ex-offenders. It treats them as they do any other group trying to access accommodation. It has a vulnerable groups policy based upon homelessness legislation, which includes ex-prisoners.

This association would usually refer homeless ex-offenders on to the local authority because: "...they are the body who should be able to help this group."

Because it is such a small association, it is not considering specialising in supported accommodation for ex-prisoners. There are not any incentives that might get them to consider this.

Another large housing association with approximately 26,000 properties doesn't have specific projects to meet the needs of ex-offenders. However, the matter is currently under discussion within the association.

It only accepts applications from prisoners once they are released. Once it offers someone a tenancy, they are expected to move in as soon as possible.
Referrals are made from hostels and the association does house ex-offenders, but only if an additional need is identified, e.g. it may be a first tenancy or someone has experienced difficulties in maintaining a previous tenancy. In this situation a six months Assured Shorthold Tenancy is offered.

A Prospect Housing Tenancy Officer is employed who provides support on maintaining a tenancy, benefit applications, paying bills etc. Assured tenancies are renewed every six months.

The association will accept applications from individuals who have a small amount of rent arrears (around £100), but will not house individuals with large arrears until they are cleared.

The interviewee at the association stated that closer working relationships with the police, bail hostels and support services may encourage them to provide more support for ex-offenders.
Barriers to accessing appropriate accommodation

From the research undertaken, it is clear that there are a large number of barriers to prisoners in their efforts to obtain suitable accommodation. It is essential that they are successful in this if they are to avoid returning to offending. From the interviews with prisoners, it is absolutely clear that appropriate housing is the single, most important factor in preventing re-offending. However, an ex-prisoner aiming to take this route will find a number of potential obstacles in their path.

A shortage of suitable accommodation
There are very few hostels for women and for women with children. This can lead to family breakdown. There are very few hostels that will accept people on Home Detention Curfew (Tagged). There is also a lack of hostels that will accept violent offenders or arsonists (see below).

Overall, there is a shortage of both temporary and permanent accommodation for ex-prisoners. The latter is particularly the case in large cities such as Birmingham where many ex-prisoners are staying in temporary accommodation for very long periods of time.

Public Policy
Many local authorities have very long waiting lists for accommodation and most of them will not accept a prisoner on their lists until he or she has been released. A few local authorities will and, of course, this is beneficial to the prisoner as they are moving up the list while they are in prison.

Regulations which accompany the Homelessness Act 2002 extend priority need to homeless people who are vulnerable specifically as a result of spending time in prison or remanded in custody and creates a stronger duty to provide advice and assistance to those who are not in priority need. However, in practice, the research did not uncover a single ex-prisoner who had been housed by a local authority through the homelessness route!

Fire Setting & Arson
Accommodating anyone who has a history of fire setting or arson can prove very difficult. Not only will accommodation providers have the health and safety of residents and staff to consider, but there may also be specific restrictions imposed by insurers. One example of good practice around fire setting and arson is to have a specific risk assessment and management plan, undertaken when a general risk assessment highlights fire setting or arson as an issue. Once this is completed there needs to be a defined means by which insurers are approached and approval to accommodate sought. Focus Futures has such a process. This does not mean that all people with arson or fire setting are accommodated, but does mean that a blanket ban is not imposed.

Rent arrears
A very common problem for prisoners is that they do not close down their tenancies when going into prison. This often means that when they have served their sentence, they come out of prison with very large rent arrears. It is sometimes impossible for them to pay back such large amounts, so they can end up homeless.

It is imperative that services within prison establishments consult with prisoners at induction/reception as regards their housing situation. If tenancies need to be closed down (see advice on Housing Benefits in the Guide to benefits section), then prison services can write to the landlords informing them of this. This simple act can prevent prisoners coming out with huge rent arrears.

Demythologizing the prisoner

“So what are Housing Associations going to do when they (ex-prisoners) smash the house up, which they will?” Anonymous Prison Officer

This type of attitude, while rare amongst interviewees in the research, represents a viewpoint that is shared by many people. Ex-prisoners are often perceived of as unreliable, untrustworthy, deceitful, and unable to lead a ‘normal’ life. This stereotype can actually contribute towards the ‘revolving-door syndrome’ that some prisoners experience: if landlords, employers and others don’t trust ex-prisoners, they are often pushed towards reoffending.

In interviews with prisoners, they express similar feelings, aspirations, anxieties, vulnerabilities and thoughts as many non-prisoners. Here is a random selection of quotes from interviews with different prisoners:
There does not appear to be enough of a national emphasis on housing in comparison to education, training and employment;

Accommodation is essential. It would be helpful to have national and local partnerships with councils and Housing Benefit departments to provide consistency with contact points and networking events for staff and basic instructions/information sources for prisoners in an attempt to provide a seamless transition;

There needs to be a greater provision of housing from the private sector and safeguards to ensure rules are upheld.

The private sector

The private sector is underutilised as a provider of permanent and temporary accommodation. From the experience of the researchers in the West Midlands, there is potentially great danger in allowing an unregulated (as regards providing accommodation for ex-prisoners) private housing provider to provide accommodation for ex-prisoners. If the aim is ‘a roof over their heads’, then the unregulated private sector can be a last resort. However, a roof over their heads should never be the sole aim of resettlement.

If safeguards and regulatory monitoring is in place, there is no reason at all why the private sector cannot provide appropriate supported accommodation for ex-prisoners. However, in the absence of such safeguards, it is possible that privately provided accommodation can actually contribute to the ‘revolving door syndrome’ rather than challenge. Housing of a poor physical condition, where drink and drugs might be freely available and ex-prisoners are with other ex-prisoners regardless of the nature of their offending behaviour can cause severe problems.

Other barriers to ex-prisoners accessing appropriate accommodation, both temporary and permanent identified by one prison resettlement officer are:

- Housing Benefit regulations do not consider Home Detention Curfew as an earliest date of release, with regard to retention of tenancy under Housing Benefit rules;
- Housing providers often request risk assessments and these are difficult to complete as resettlement staff in prisons are not trained in risk and often resettlement staff do not know the prisoner well enough to make an assessment. It would be helpful to have more partnership working with risk assessors in probation or public protection officers or standardised staff training;
- There is an overall lack of accommodation in the community and particularly specialist provision for offenders and ex-offenders with types of behaviour or presenting issues;
What is Supporting People?

Launched in 2003, the Supporting People programme aims to support groups identified as ‘vulnerable’ to live more independently and maintain their tenancies. Hence it provides housing-related support to over 1.2 million vulnerable people. One of the many groups targeted by the Supporting People programme is ex-offenders and people at risk of offending. Much of the dedicated provision for ex-offenders has its housing support funded by Supporting People.

Why is there the need?
The Supporting People programme provides housing-related support to prevent problems that can lead to:

- Hospitalisation
- Institutional Care
- Homelessness.

It can provide a valuable transition for those leaving an institutionalised environment into independent living.

How is it delivered?
The programme is the remit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). It allocates Supporting People grants to 150 Administering Authorities. One of the key objectives of the programme is to develop effective working partnerships between:

- Local government
- Probation
- Health
- Voluntary sector organisations
- Housing associations
- Support agencies and
- Service users.

As such, the programme is delivered on a local level using a multi-agency approach with contracts established with service providers and partner organisations in order to develop Supporting People services.

What is housing-related support?
The main aim of housing related support is: “...to develop and sustain an individual's capacity to live independently in their accommodation.”

Some examples of this are:

- Enabling individuals to access their correct benefit entitlement
- Providing skills to enable individuals to maintain a tenancy
- Advising on home improvements
- Home visit services
- Providing on-site, full-time support workers.

There may well be good practice ideas to be found in examining how Supporting People teams assess the services and in looking at the partnerships between providers.

How can I find out more?
Help line number: 020 7944 2556
Web address: http://www.spkweb.org.uk/
The needs of black and minority ethnic ex-prisoners

The information in this part of the guide comes from research undertaken by Professor Douglas Sharp, Susie Atherton and Kate Williams at the University of Central England entitled EVERYONE'S BUSINESS: Investigating the Resettlement Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic Ex-Offenders in the West Midlands. Its aim was:

“To establish the resettlement needs of Black and Minority Ethnic ex-offenders and map available support.” Its key points are:

EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

- All BME groups, and both males and females, consider that the need for somewhere to live when released from prison is the most important resettlement requirement;
- 40% of ex-offenders are in unsuitable accommodation;
- High-risk offenders are particularly likely to be living in unsuitable accommodation;
- Black offenders are more likely to be living in temporary accommodation;
- Asians are usually in more permanent accommodation;
- There is very little available research on the effectiveness of current resettlement programmes in meeting the needs of the BME’s;
- Discrimination is often an additional barrier to BME ex-offenders accessing support;
- BME ex-offenders may also fail to get their needs identified by statutory and community service providers;
- Community-based organisations identified the needs of BME ex-offenders as developing from the different experiences that BME groups face in society, particularly young black men;
- Community organisations that could support BME ex-offenders are unable to do so because of funding issues and a lack of resources;
- Home Office statistics show that in February 2003 there were over 17,500 from minority ethnic groups in prison;
- Figures demonstrate an over-representation of BME groups in the prison population.

The researchers conclude that, for BME ex-
A very brief guide to benefits, tenancies, deposits and homelessness

The most important benefit for prisoners and ex-prisoners, in relation to accommodation, is obviously Housing Benefit. The rules are a little complicated. The Birmingham Community Safety Partnership guide for prisoners is an excellent resource on this and many other things. See page 7 on how to get hold of it.

Housing Benefit
If the individual is living in rented accommodation and is remanded in custody, he or she can receive Housing Benefit for up to 52 weeks as long as they intend to return to live in the property, the dwelling is not sub-let and the period of absence is unlikely to be more than 52 weeks or, in exceptional circumstances not substantially longer.

Depending upon the length of remand, or sentence, there are basically two options for the prisoner: to give up the tenancy and enquire, with local authorities and housing associations, if they will provide accommodation upon release; for him or her to get another person to live in the property, pay the rent and take over the Housing Benefit claim. This constitutes sub-letting and can be done only if the landlord is happy with this arrangement.

If the person is sentenced, Housing Benefit can be paid for up to 13 weeks. If the sentence is likely to be longer, then Housing Benefit will not be paid at all. If the sentence is for six months, then the prisoner is likely to be released within 13 weeks.

The landlord must be informed of any changes. Rent arrears are the single biggest housing problem that prisoners and ex-prisoners face. In some instances, a prisoner's possessions can be sold to pay the rent arrears.

Closing down tenancies
If it is decided that this is the best option for the prisoner, it must be done as soon as possible, to avoid accruing unnecessary rent arrears. The landlord needs to be informed.

Other benefits
If the sentenced prisoner has a mortgage, then the lender should be contacted as soon as possible to either: negotiate repayment terms if the prisoner can afford it; or suspend payments if it is a short sentence. If the prisoner is single and on remand and had been receiving mortgage interest payments in their income support, they can continue to receive this. This would not happen automatically. The prisoner would have to write to the Housing Costs section of their local Job Centre Plus. They would not be paid Income Support or JSA whilst they were on remand.

As regards Council Tax benefit, the local authority should be contacted as soon as possible. There may be grounds for the prisoner to continue claiming Council Tax benefit during their sentence.

Deposits
Help can be sought with paying a deposit for a new tenancy. The National Rent Deposit Forum is a national charity that supports rent deposit schemes and encourages new ones to develop. It is a membership organisation and can be found at: http://www.nrdf.org.uk/ Local authorities and other agencies may have local rent deposit schemes. See the website on this. The Community Safety Partnership guide has contact details for the Birmingham Bond Scheme. See page 7.

The prisoner may also be able to get a crisis loan to help pay rent in advance to a non-local authority landlord on the grounds that they are moving out of prison and a Community Care Grant is being paid to establish them in the community.

Homelessness
The homelessness legislation is notoriously complex. Homeless ex-prisoners are not automatically entitled to be re-housed. They will only qualify for accommodation if they are found to be vulnerable as a result of being in prison. They may also qualify if they meet other priority need tests, e.g. vulnerability due to a care background. Additionally, those found to be in priority need may also be found intentionally homeless, as a result of the crime that led to imprisonment and subsequent loss of their previous home.

The Code of Guidance states that 'residence in prison does not establish a local connection with the district'. Prisoners can often find it hard to establish 'local connection' on release from prisons which is required by local authorities when assessing homelessness applications. Information on this can be found at: http://england.shelter.org.uk/policy/policy-968.cfm
Future Trends

With so many changes occurring in the world of offender management at the time of writing, it is very difficult to predict the direction that prisoner resettlement will take in the near future. The founding of NOMS in July 2004 is obviously an event that will have great significance. At the time of carrying out the research fieldwork (August-December 2004) most interviewees could only speculate as to these effects.

There appears to be an enormous amount of goodwill in both the offender management and social housing worlds and a large number of initiatives bringing the two together in an effort to produce good and effective resettlement strategies.

The present time constitutes a period of great change and flux and while developments seem to be taking place which are moving things in the right direction, it is almost impossible to state with any degree of certainty what actual improvements will come about as a result of the current changes.

However, it is very clear that if prisoner resettlement is to be effective in preventing re-offending then a number of things must happen, as the absolute minimum. As a result of undertaking this research, the Centre for Social Justice suggests that these are:

- Effective housing advice and support teams to be an integral part of resettlement projects within all prisons;
- These teams (or in their absence, other people) must investigate prisoners’ housing situations upon reception/induction within prisons, and take appropriate action;
- Housing and offender management professionals must communicate with each other in ways that facilitate dialogue and co-operation. They must learn to ‘speak each other’s languages’;
- Prisoners must be treated as people with needs, hopes and desires. The mythology of ‘the prisoner’ needs to be challenged and overcome;
- Good quality, appropriate temporary and permanent accommodation needs to be made available and adequately funded if the ‘revolving door’ syndrome of many prisoners is to be halted;
- If private sector accommodation is to be used, it must be regulated and properly monitored.
Glossary of terminology

ARD – Actual Release Date, from prison.

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

CARATS – Counselling, Assessment, Referral Advice and Throughcare Service is a service for drug and alcohol misusers within prisons.

CDT – Community Drugs Team, for information and advice.

Connect – A resettlement project managed by West Mercia Probation and delivered throughout the West Midlands Area (see page 15).

DTO – Drug Treatment Order.

Establishment – a prison (this term is used within the prison service).


HDC – Home Detention Curfew (Tagging).

HMP – Her Majesty’s Prison.

The Housing Corporation - funds and regulates housing associations in England.

Licence - prisoners who serve a sentence of more than 12 months are released on licence with a requirement to comply with conditions and are under the supervision of the National Probation Service.

MAPPA – Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements.

MNU – Multiple Needs Unit

NACRO – (formerly known as National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders) an independent voluntary organisation now known as the Crime Reduction Charity.

NFA – no fixed abode, homeless. Prisons endeavour to avoid releasing prisoners NFA.

NOMS – the organisation that brings together the Prison Service and the Probation Service, formed in July 2004.

ODPM – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Offenders – the term is sometimes used interchangeably with ex-offenders, ex-prisoners (the term ex-prisoner is used in this guide).

POPS - Prolific and other Priority Offender Strategy.

PPO – Prolific and Persistent Offenders Strategy.

Probation – National Probation Service, formed in April 2001, NPS is responsible for the supervision of community sentences and licensees inter alia but also...

Probation - Does not really exist as an order anymore as a sentence: the Criminal Justice Act 2003 introduced ‘generic community sentences’.

Remand - when bail is refused by the courts, defendants are remanded into custody pending trial, for usually not more than 8 days at one time.

RSL – Registered Social Landlord, usually a housing association.

SEU – Social Exclusion Unit, set up in 1997 by the Prime Minister.

YOI – Young Offenders Institution.
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<td>West Midlands Regional Offender Management Board.</td>
<td>Regional Reducing Re-Offending Action Structure.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1 – List of agencies and organisations involved in the research

Adullam Housing Association
Aspects Housing
Beth Johnson Housing Association
Birmingham City Council Housing Needs Department
Bournville Village Trust
Connect project
De Paul Trust
Focus Futures
Fry Housing Association
Government Office West Midlands
Her Majesty's Prison Service, West Midlands Area Office
HMP Blakenhurst
HMP Brockhill
HMP & YOS Drake Hall
HMP Hewell Grange
HMYOI Brinsford
National Probation Service – Staffordshire Area
National Probation Service – Warwickshire
National Probation Service – West Mercia
National Probation Service – West Midlands
National Probation Service – Braley House
National Probation Service – Birmingham, Homeless
Offenders Resettlement Unit
NACRO, HMP Blakenhurst
NACRO, HMP Brockhill
NACRO, HMYOI Brinsford
NACRO, Prisons and Resettlement (Midlands)
Project Chrysalis
Stonham Housing Association
Supporting People, West Midlands
Supporting People, Birmingham
Supporting People, Telford and Wrekin
Telford and Wrekin Borough Council
The Housing Corporation
Trident Housing Association
West Mercia Housing Group

A number of personnel from many of these organisations and agencies were interviewed or consulted with. These were often in different parts of the West Midlands’ region.