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Evaluation of homelessness services to adults in the secure estate: Main findings report

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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Evaluation of homelessness services to adults in the secure estate:
Main findings report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Abbreviations and Glossary

- **Annex 8.** The housing referral/application form completed on prison leavers and intended to be sent to providers of probation services and then housing departments 66 days before a prison leaver is released from custody.
- **Annex 9.** The housing risk assessment which should be completed by providers of probation services and then sent, along with the annex 8, to Local authority housing departments.
- **AP (Approved Premises).** Hostels managed by the NPS and which primarily accommodate High Risk offenders who have been released from custody.
- **BASS (Bail Accommodation and Support Service).** The BASS commenced in June 2007 to provide a source of accommodation and/or support for those who would otherwise be held in prison. The service is specifically for defendants who can be bailed and offenders who can be released on HDC or who are subject to an intensive community order with a Residence Requirement (sex offenders and high risk offenders are currently excluded).
- **BCS1 (Basic Custody Screening 1).** An Assessment completed by Prison Service Staff on all prisoners within 3 days of reception into prison.
- **BCS2 (Basic Custody Screening 2).** A Resettlement Plan which details activities to be undertaken to promote rehabilitation and resettlement after a custodial sentence is passed. This is completed within 5 working days of the BCS1 by TTT staff.
- **CRCs (Community Rehabilitation Companies).** Providers of Probation Services to offenders assessed as being of medium and low risk of serious harm to others.
- **Intentionality.** Term used where housing support is restricted due to a local authority decision that an individual deliberately did something, or failed to do something, which resulted in the loss of their accommodation (s77 Housing (Wales) Act 2014).
- **IOM (Integrated Offender Management).** IOM brings a cross-agency response to the crime and reoffending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working together.
- **In-Touch hubs.** These Hubs are part of the Wales CRC operating model. They are intended to remove routine case administration roles from frontline staff and prioritise offender-facing time for case managers. Those rated as low risk of harm are managed by the hub through telephone contact.
- **Local Connection:** A person may have a local connection with the area of a local housing authority if the person is living or has lived there, is working in the area, because of family reasons or because of special circumstances.

- **MAPPA nominal (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement: nominal).** A MAPPA nominal refers to three categories offenders who are eligible to be managed at either Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. The three categories are: Category 1: Sex Offenders; Category 2: violent offenders and other sex offenders sentenced to 12 months or more in custody. Category 3: Others.
- **MAPPP (Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel).** This term refers to those offenders managed at level 2 and level 3 under MAPPA and therefore subject to discussion and management at regular multi-agency panel meetings.
- **NPS (National Probation Service).** Since 2015 the NPS is responsible for producing all court reports and supervising offenders assessed as being a high risk of serious harm to others all sex offenders and MAPPA eligible offenders.
- **OAsys (Offender Assessment System).** The assessment instrument used to assess and plan for meeting the needs of offenders under supervision. An OAsys explores 13 areas of need: Current Offence, Past Offending, Accommodation, Education and Training, Finances, Family and Personal relationships, Health, Emotional and Mental health, Lifestyle and Associates, Substance Use, Thinking and Behaviour, Attitudes and Risk.
- **OM (Offender Manager).** OM is a term still in common usage to describe a prisoner's Responsible Officer
- **OMU (Offender Management Unit).** The OMU is a team within a prison comprising uniformed prison staff, CRC and NPS staff. They engage in sentence planning with prisoners and promote engagement with purposeful activity and rehabilitation whilst the person is in custody.
- **OS (Offender Supervisors).** Offender Supervisors are uniformed prison staff responsible for case management activities (e.g. OAsys completion and sentence planning) for medium and low risk offenders serving sentences of over 12 months in custody. They are also a liaison point for Responsible Officers in the NPS managing High Risk cases
- **ORA (Offender Rehabilitation Act).** An Act which extended supervision arrangements to include all prison leavers and paved the way for probation services to be divided between NPS and CRCs.
- **PARWG (Prisoner Accommodation Resettlement Working Group).** PARWG was set up to explore the possibilities of developing processes to ensure prison leavers' needs were addressed.

- **PHP (Personal Housing Plans).** PHPs are usually developed between Local authority housing options staff and the service user. Such plans outline the 'reasonable steps' each party might undertake to prevent homelessness or help to secure accommodation.
- **Priority Need:** Section 70 of the Housing (Wales) Act identifies those persons/ households who should be considered in priority need (NB: there is discretion to exclude).
- **Prison Resettlement Officer.** A member of local authority homelessness team who focuses on supporting those due to leave custody.
- **PLC (Prison Link Cymru).** This is a service funded by Welsh Government to address accommodation needs of prisoners on reception into custody.
- **RO (Responsible Officers).** This is the generic name for the professional responsible for an offender's supervision. The Responsible Officer may be from the NPS or CRC.
- **RSO (Registered Sex Offender).** A RSO is a person convicted for a sexual offence and required to sign the Sex Offender Register.
- **Risk:** Considerable confusion is associated with the word 'risk' primarily because it affords a number of interpretations. An offender may be deemed high risk of reoffending, high risk of harm to self, high risk of absconding on bail etc. In the criminal justice system the term is normally reserved to describe offenders assessed as being "High Risk of Serious Harm to others".
- **SEU: (Social Exclusion Unit)** A Government department.
- **SPOC (Single Point of Contact).** This refers to arrangements whereby (usually) a single named individual is a point of contact in relation to an issue or type of service user.
- **SP (Supporting People).** The 'Supporting People' programme was introduced in 2003 and funds services to a diverse range of socially excluded groups including people with learning difficulties and people with mental health difficulties. The programme is the primary funding source for the majority of accommodation based services for homeless people with additional support needs. From April 2011 onwards, in England, the Supporting People allocation was subsumed into the Formula Grant paid to Local Authorities, so the allocation was no longer separately identified. It remains, however, a separately identified funding stream in Wales.
- **TTG (Through the Gate).** The generic name for services aimed at helping prison leavers resettle in the community. CRCs are responsible for providing 'Through the Gate' Services but for the most part have sub contracted that element of the work.

- **Vulnerability:** The Court of Appeal, in *Pereira v Camden Council*, held that a homeless person is vulnerable if their circumstances are such that they would suffer more when homeless than ‘the ordinary homeless person’.
- **WG (Welsh Government).** Housing is devolved to Wales and the Welsh Government is responsible for legislation associated with the supply and choice of housing, improving the quality of housing and the provision of social housing and accommodation for the homeless. The operation of the criminal justice system is not devolved to Wales and remains the responsibility of the UK Government (largely through the Home Office and Ministry of Justice). There are, however, significant overlaps with areas of Welsh Government responsibility including health, education, housing and social care support.
- **Working Links:** The CRC for Wales.

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Introduction

This evaluation aimed to assess how changes to legislative duties towards those leaving custody since 2015 had been implemented by local authorities, prisons and probation providers; what impact the changes had on housing prison leavers; and to identify areas of good practice in meeting the housing needs of prison leavers.

Chapter 1 provide some understanding the policy context for the development and implementation of the National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Adults in the Secure Estate. Chapter 2 briefly covers the existing delivery arrangements for the pathway. A background paper accompanies this report and provides more in depth exploration of both these issues. Chapter 3 describes the methodology adopted to undertake the evaluation. In turn thereafter, chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively present the findings in relation to the operation of the National Pathway at the reception, pre-release and community stages of a prisoner's journey into and out of custody. In Chapter 7, better practices in relation to implementing the National Pathway are discussed. Finally in chapter 8 the evaluation findings are summarised and recommendations for improving practices are identified.

1. Homelessness and Crime

1.1 Homelessness

Homelessness has been defined by the United Nations (2004) as the absence of permanent shelter which requires individuals to carry their possessions with them and take shelter where they are able. However, elsewhere it has been argued that there is a continuum of homelessness, with rough sleeping at one extreme and being in possession of temporary, insecure or inadequate housing conditions on the other (Watson and Austerberry 1986; Mackie 2015).

The precise relationship between homelessness and crime is complex because homelessness may occur with a number of factors. Much of the research on the link has explored the relationship between homelessness and imprisonment. This takes the form of studies which explore the number of people in prison classed as homeless, or alternatively the number of people who are classed as homeless who have been to prison.

The Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction study (SPCR) found that 15% of a sample of 1435 prisoners sentenced in 2005/2006 were homeless before custody (Ministry of Justice 2012). Conversely, around 40% of rough sleepers are recent prison leavers (Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), 2002). Data from 2014/2015 suggests that 32% of rough sleepers in London had been to prison at some point (Clinks, 2017).

Addressing homelessness amongst prison leavers promotes rehabilitation. In 2002 the SEU suggested housing prisoners could reduce reoffending by 20%. In the SPCR study of 2012, more than three-quarters of prisoners (79%) who reported being homeless before custody were reconvicted in the first year after release, compared with about half (47%) of those who did not report being homeless before custody (Ministry of Justice, 2012)

1.2 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014

From 2009 onwards the Welsh Government began reviewing its approach to supporting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Wales (Welsh Government, 2009). A series of reports explored international policy in the area and Stakeholder views were sought about the adequacy of the existing

legislative framework (Mackie and Hoffman, 2011; Fitzpatrick et al., 2012, Mackie et al., 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

Subsequent engagement and consultation with a range of stakeholders identified broad support for an increased focus on preventative activities. Such a focus was enshrined in Homes for Wales: A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities published in 2012 and thereafter, from April 2015 onwards, The Housing (Wales) Act introduced major changes to the way homelessness would be tackled in Wales.

Changes to the homelessness legislation in Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act sought to focus services around preventing homelessness and providing assistance to all eligible applicants:

- Section 62 of the Act placed a duty on Local Authorities to carry out an assessment in all new cases where an eligible person/household has applied to them for accommodation or help in obtaining accommodation and where that person/household is homeless or threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days.
- Section 66 introduced the duty to 'help to prevent' such an eligible person/household from becoming homeless.
- Where such an eligible person/household is homeless and might be in a 'priority need' category Section 68 placed an 'interim duty' on Local Authorities to place such a person/household in temporary accommodation whilst further enquiries are made.
- Section 73 placed a duty on Local Authorities to provide 'help to secure' accommodation where a person/household is eligible for help and homeless. The duty to help to secure accommodation runs for 56 days but can end earlier in a number of specified circumstances.
- Section 75 of the Act imposed a Final duty on Local Authorities to secure accommodation for persons/households in priority need who have a local connection. The previous requirement to screen for 'intentional homelessness' was changed from a duty to a power

- The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 empowered Local Authorities to discharge their duties through the private rented sector.
- Section 70 of the Housing (Wales) Act identified those persons / households who should be considered in priority need (NB: there is discretion to exclude):
 - Pregnant women.
 - Persons/Households with dependent children.
 - Persons/Households who are vulnerable for special reasons.
 - Persons/Households experiencing an emergency arising from fire or flood
 - Persons/Households experiencing domestic abuse.
 - Single persons aged 16-17.
 - 18-21 year olds at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation
 - 18-21 year olds who have previously been 'Looked after Children'.
 - Individuals homeless on discharge from the regular armed services.
 - A person who is vulnerable as a result of custody.

The Act sought to support practices that empowered people to design solutions to their housing problems which might be through jointly developed 'Personal Housing Plans' (PHP) which would address not only immediate housing problems but, where relevant, issues causing homelessness. To this end the Act emphasised joint working between health, criminal justice and social care agencies to better meet housing related needs. Thus, as Shelter point out the Act sought to embed a new philosophy into practice:

The philosophy of this new approach is based on partnership working with other agencies and with people facing homelessness. The aim is to involve people in designing their own solutions, looking not just at immediate housing problems but also at any underlying issues, intervening early wherever possible to prevent people's situations escalating out of hand (Shelter 2015).

As a result of the new focus on prevention activity it was anticipated that more people would become eligible for assistance than had previously been the case. In addition, it was expected Local Authorities would seek to discharge more of their homelessness duties by making an offer of accommodation in the private sector.

The Housing (Wales) Act removed the automatic priority need status previously conferred on all prison leavers in Wales. Priority need status, however, was still conferred upon those prison leavers deemed to be “vulnerable as a result of their time in custody” or those who met any of the other criteria for being in priority need. It was anticipated that approximately 70% of those prisoners who had previously been entitled to a housing duty would no longer be eligible for those duties (Welsh Local Government Association, 2014).

As a result of concerns about the potential effects of this change, the then Minister for Housing and Regeneration established the Prisoner Accommodation Resettlement Working Group (PARWG) to explore processes to ensure prison leavers' needs would still be adequately addressed.

PARWG developed ‘the National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate’. The National Pathway seeks to consolidate existing processes for providing services to prisoners with housing related needs and describes the systems for managing communication and relations between the agencies providing relevant services. Development and implementation of the National Pathway in relation to adults was led by Welsh Government but with significant engagement from the National Offender Management Service in Wales (now renamed HPPS Wales); the Welsh Local Government Association and ‘Working Links’- the Wales Community Rehabilitation Company.

The National Pathway¹ went live in December 2015 but operated in a shadow form from May 2015 onwards.

Key aspects of the National Pathway include designated tasks allocated to particular agencies at key points in a prisoner's journey through custody and back into the community. These are presented on pages 16-17 of the National Pathway.

Welsh Government made funding available to support prison leavers during a 12 month transitional phase and whilst the National Pathway was being implemented (transitional funding is currently extended to 2018). This funding was intended to cover emergency support, including the cost of short term accommodation, for some prison leavers.

A more detailed account of the relationship between homelessness and crime; how Housing Policy in Wales has developed; and the context in which the National Pathway has been implemented is available as a separate background paper accompanying this publication.

¹ See <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/services-and-support/homelessness/national-pathway/?lang=en>

2. National Pathway: Delivery Arrangements

- 2.1 The National Pathway for Adults in the Secure Estate (Wales) has relevance and applies to practice with prisoners at nine prisons that routinely accommodate prisoners from Wales. Whilst many establishments may accommodate individuals intending to resettle to Wales, for the most part male reception functions are undertaken in HMP Altcourse for north and mid Wales, and HMP Cardiff or Swansea for south Wales. In the case of females such functions are discharged by HMP Styal for north Wales and HMP Eastwood Park for south Wales.
- 2.2 General practice in relation to addressing homelessness is discussed and developed in Wales under the auspices of separate quarterly 'Homelessness Network' and 'Supporting People Network' meetings. The former, the Homelessness Network, is attended by housing options staff from the 22 Welsh Local Authorities. The latter, the Supporting People Network, is attended by lead officers from each local authority that administer and commission Supporting People funded projects and services.
- 2.3 Practice in relation to the Pathway is developed and facilitated under the auspices of three Regional Prisoner Resettlement Meetings (one in the north, one in the South East, one in the South West).
- 2.4 The Prison Link Cymru (PLC) service is funded by Welsh Government through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. The service meets housing related needs at the point of reception into prison but, as a result of falling outside of the Wales CRC area of responsibility, this had been renegotiated at HMP Altcourse so that PLC staff undertake the resettlement work and the CRC staff undertake reception related work.
- 2.5 Most of the 22 local authorities receive housing referrals directly, but variations apply. In north Wales, four of the local authorities have used transitional funding to employ a 'Regional Prison Liaison officer' who receives all housing (Annex 8 and 9) referrals, makes assessments of which duty is owed, and completes a basic PHP and then passes the information to the relevant authority.
- 2.6 Most of the 22 local authority areas operate gateway services for Supporting People funded interventions.

- 2.7 The Prisoner Release Empowerment Project (PREP) operates across Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Bridgend and Newport. PREP provides support to homeless prisoners assessed as not being in a priority need category. The project works with prison leavers to find and maintain housing, and supports them to ensure a successful and positive transition into the community from prison.
- 2.8 The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) operate a mentoring services across Wales. This service is presently more developed in parts of south Wales. The Pact service provides a pick-up and drop off service for those being released from custody and a longer term (three contacts) mentoring service. A PACT single point of contact (SPOC) is employed at HMP Cardiff and there is a worker in situ at HMP Eastwood Park. There are plans to develop the service at HMP Swansea and HMP Berwyn. The PACT service is provided to offenders under supervision to the CRC, but may be bought in by NPS at a fixed fee.
- 2.9 Justice Cymru is a Wales wide initiative which embeds housing workers within CRC teams. The Justice Cymru worker engages with offenders in the community and, where necessary, in custody to motivate and support them to engage with services. Justice Cymru staff may have their own links and contacts to providers of housing services. 'Justice Cymru' services are delivered by a consortium of providers and is contracted by the Wales CRC; Working Links. The service may be accessed by NPS staff through payment of a fixed fee.
- 2.10 A Women's Pathfinder project operates in Cardiff providing housing related advice and assistance to female prisoners as part of a multi-agency approach.

3. Methodology of the Evaluation

3.1 Aims and Objectives

3.1.1 The research aim was to engage in a post-implementation process and impact evaluation of the homelessness services available to adults leaving the secure estate in Wales. The research objectives were:

- To assess how the changes to legislative duties towards those leaving custody have been implemented by Local Authorities, prisons and probation providers both in prison and in the community.
- To undertake an initial assessment of the impact of these changes on ex-offenders.
- Identify areas good practice and areas for improvement.

3.1.2 In discussion with funders a methodology comprising parallel mixed methods research with five groups was identified as appropriate. The five study groups were:

- Local authority stakeholders
- Prison based stakeholders
- Community based stakeholders
- Prison leaver respondents.
- Responsible officers

3.2 Local authority stakeholders

3.2.1 During June 2017 a representative from each of the 22 local authority areas housing options team (homelessness leads) was identified by contract managers for the Welsh Government to be engaged in an online survey. The short questionnaire (using the online survey software Qualtrics) was agreed with contract managers and contained a combination of closed and open-ended questions, thereby generating both quantitative and qualitative data. Links to the survey were sent by email to nominated staff and, pursuant to follow up activity, a response was obtained from each of the 22 local authority areas in Wales.

3.2.2 Each of the 22 respondents was subsequently contacted and invited to identify an additional staff member to contribute to the research by engaging in a qualitative interview. Subsequent to this, and during July 2017, 21 stakeholders (representing 19 of the 22 local authority areas) from Housing Options or Supporting People teams were engaged in a telephone (n=19) or face to face interview (n=2). These individuals were contacted by email and provided with information sheets and consent forms. Thereafter a convenient time to undertake an interview was agreed. Semi-structured interview schedules, which focussed on accommodation practices with prisoners at the reception, pre-release and community stages of their journey into and out of custody, were agreed in advance with contract managers for Welsh Government. All interviews were recorded and subjected to verbatim transcription for the purposes of subsequent data analysis.

3.3 Prison based stakeholders

3.3.1 Drawing on existing knowledge within the evaluation team of how adult prisons are structured, bed spaces are commissioned and offender management is pursued in Wales, a list of individuals with responsibilities for the operation and delivery of the National Pathway within custodial establishments was agreed with contract managers. These individuals (n=27) were subsequently contacted by email and invited to contribute to the evaluation. Invitations to contribute were taken up by Prison Resettlement leads; TTG resettlement staff in prison; CRC staff (strategic); NPS and CRC staff (strategic); Prison Link Cymru staff; HMI Probation/HMI Prison representatives; IOM Cymru staff; NOMS/HMPPS: Contract managers. Accordingly 19 individuals were engaged in a telephone (12) or face to face interview (7) during June and July 2017. As before, semi-structured interview schedules, which focussed on accommodation practices with prisoners at the reception, pre-release and community stages of their journey into and out of custody, were agreed in advance with contract managers for Welsh Government. All interviews were recorded and subjected to verbatim transcription for the purposes of subsequent data analysis.

3.3.2 These respondents are subsequently identified and grouped together in this report as 'prison based stakeholders'. This is because their contribution could primarily be in relation to how the National Pathway operated at the reception and pre-release stages of a prisoner's journey into and out of custody.

3.4 Community Based Stakeholders

3.4.1 Drawing on their existing knowledge and contacts, contract managers for the Welsh Government identified organisations and service providers across Wales providing services to prison leavers and those facing homelessness. These organisations (n=35) were subsequently contacted by email and invited to contribute to the evaluation. Initiations to contribute were taken up by: Nacro; Rough Sleepers Cymru; St Giles' Trust; Housing Association Representatives; Police; Hostel managers; Justice Cymru; PREP Staff; Pobl. Accordingly 18 individuals were engaged in a telephone (14) or face to face interview (4) during June and July 2017. Here too semi-structured interview schedules, which focussed on accommodation practices with prisoners at the reception, pre-release and community stages of their journey into and out of custody, were used and agreed in advance with contract managers for Welsh Government. All interviews were recorded and subjected to verbatim transcription for the purposes of subsequent data analysis

3.4.2 These respondents are subsequently identified and grouped together in this report as 'community based stakeholders' This is because their contribution could primarily be in relation to how the National Pathway impacted on a prison leaver's experiences in the community on release from custody.

3.5 Prison leaver respondents

3.5.1 The strategy for engaging with prison leavers focussed on five prisons: HMP and YOI Cardiff; HMP and YOI Parc; HMP and YOI Eastwood Park; HMP Altcourse; HMP Styal. This was to ensure the research engaged with the experiences of a range of prison leavers including those serving under 12 months in custody, over 12 months in custody, male and female prisoners, BME prisoners, repeat offenders and those from a range of Local Authorities.

- 3.5.2 The selected prison establishments were asked to recruit prisoners who were due to be released into a resettlement study. The intention was to interview these prison leavers 4-6 weeks before they were released (wave 1 interviews) and 2-3 months after they were released (wave 2).
- 3.5.3 The selected prisons were also asked to recruit prisoners who had recently been received into custody and had received a housing intervention into a reception study. However only one prison was able to do this. Prison leavers due to be released, however, could also talk about the way the National Pathway applied at the point of reception. This was because almost all were serving prison sentences that post-dated implementation of the National Pathway.
- 3.5.4 Wave 1 Interviews took place in July 2017 and in total 75 prisoners were interviewed. 59 of the prisoners identified themselves as male, 16 as female. The mean age for respondents was 36. The youngest respondent was 21, the eldest was 56.
- 3.5.5 67 of the prison leaver respondents provided researchers with details of their legal status:
- 8 were on remand (interviewed as Reception Cases).
 - 2 were indeterminate sentenced prisoners (life) nearing release.
 - 23 were coming to the end of sentences of 12 months or more.
 - 34 were coming to the end of sentences of under 12 months (28 of whom were serving sentences of 6 months or under).
 - 15 of the 59 sentenced prisoners were back in custody having been recalled².
- 3.5.6 Three of the Prison Leaver Respondents identified themselves as being from a BME group and three said they were from a travelling community.
- 3.5.7 Most of the interviews were conducted one to one between a researcher and the prisoner. In one prison, however, it was assessed as being operationally appropriate for TTG staff to sit in with the researcher for some interviews.

² Sentence details reference index offences/ sentence length not recall

- 3.5.8 Excluding the eight prisoners engaged as part of the reception study, 67 prison leaver respondents were eligible to be followed up and they were dispersed across 14 local authority areas.
- 3.5.9 Wave 2 follow up interviews study were brokered through each prison leaver respondent's Responsible Officer (n=56). There were fewer Responsible Officers because some supervised more than one potential wave 2 respondent.
- 3.5.10 Attempts to re-engage with prison leaver respondents between October and December 2017 led to 22 wave 2 interviews taking place. Three of these interviews were conducted by phone and the remainder were conducted face to face.
- 3.5.11 All prisoner interviews (wave 1 and 2) were completed using semi-structured interview schedules which focussed on their experiences of accommodation support up to the point they were being interviewed. Where appropriate respondents were asked to comment on their experiences before and after May 2015. With institutional permissions obtained, all interviews were recorded and subjected to verbatim transcription for the purposes of subsequent data analysis

3.6 Responsible Officers

- 3.6.1 Attempts were made to identify and interview each of the 56 Responsible Officers, supervising the 67 prison leaver respondents involved in the study, eligible and willing to engage in wave 2 interviews. These individuals were contacted by email and 34 Responsible Officers from the Wales CRC and NPS were subsequently interviewed either on the phone (9) or face to face (25). Face to face interviews normally coincided with visits to field offices to undertake scheduled wave 2 interviews with prison leavers (October-December 2017). To address concerns about staff extraction, interviews were designed in consultation with the research contract managers to be brief. They were semi-structured and focussed on respondents' experiences of the operation of the National Pathway. They were also subjected to verbatim transcription for the purposes of subsequent data analysis.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

- 3.7.1 Prison leaver respondents were only interviewed if they were judged as having the capacity to consent and agreed to take part in the study. This was assessed at each stage of the recruitment process (pre-engagement by gatekeepers and pre-interview by researchers). Some limits were intended to apply in relation to confidentiality and anonymity. These were identified in the information sheets given to potential respondents and on consent forms.
- 3.7.2 Researchers made clear that all respondents were free to decide what information they wish to share with the researcher and that they should feel under no pressure or obligation to discuss matters that they do not wish to. When interviewing, researchers followed a Managing Distress and Managing Disclosures Policy.
- 3.7.3 This research was commissioned by Welsh Government and approved through the National Research Council process, by the National Probation Service (Wales), Working Links (CRC in Wales); Purple Futures (CRC in North West), Wrexham Glyndŵr University's Research Ethics Committee and the Governors of the prison establishments involved in the research study.

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

- 3.8.1 The approach to data analysis involved members of the research team coding interviews and engaging with the principal researcher following each round of data collection to identify the key themes that arose in relation to the three key milestones in the National Pathway: the reception, resettlement and post-release stages of a prisoner's journey in and out of prison.
- 3.8.2 As the data was analysed staff sought to keep in mind that the criminal justice system is adversarial and one purpose served by interview accounts is to convey narrators' preferred self-images (Blaxter, 1997). Accordingly in presenting the data, the focus is on the broad picture and findings which capture consistencies both within and between respondent accounts. References are made to discrete comments when they seem to have explanatory value. For the most part, however, the view is taken that in qualitative research a counter or alternative perspective can almost always

be identified. However, giving equal weighting to all of them could misrepresent the overall perspective and cloud the bigger picture.

- 3.8.3 In presenting the findings respondents are identified in terms of whether they are local authority, community based or prison based stakeholders; whether they are Responsible Officers or prison leaver respondents. The latter term is used to avoid confusion when the intention is to refer to prison leavers in general as opposed to the prison leaver respondents who contributed to this research – i.e. the findings in this study relate specifically to the prison leavers who took part in this study, and should not be generalised to all prison leavers. Occasional references are made to professional stakeholders when the finding is relevant across the stakeholder groups and Responsible Officers. Finally, where information has to be omitted to protect anonymity, xxxx is used to represent the redaction.

3.9 Limitations to the Research

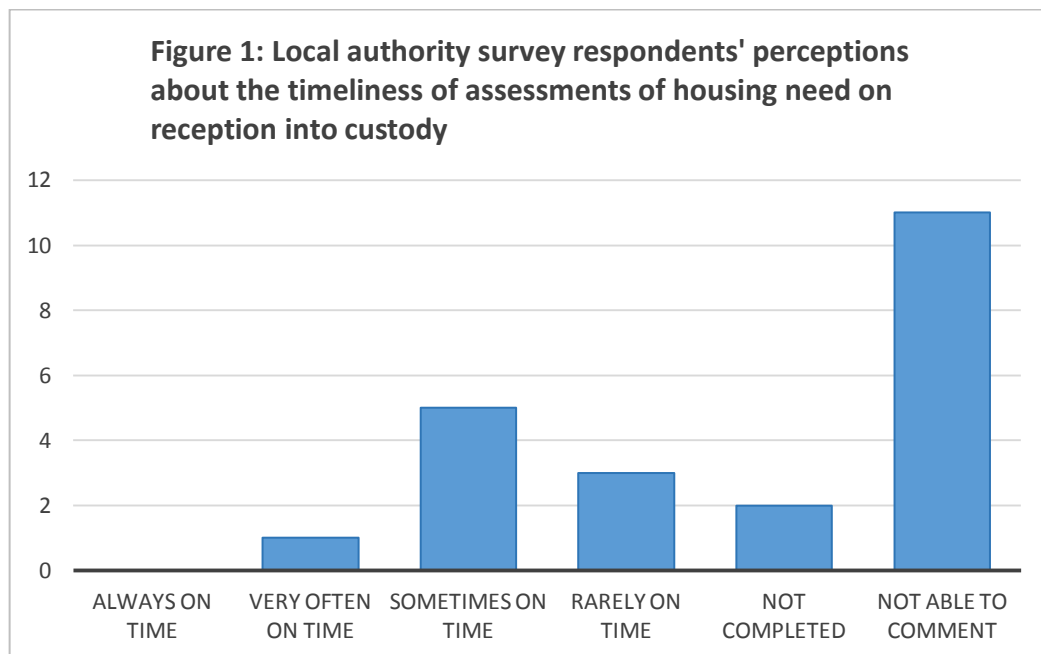
- 3.9.1 This study is limited by its reliance on perceptions, memories and any self-serving biases. It follows from the study design that the prison leaver respondents who were interviewed at wave 2 might have the most positive experiences of service provided to adults leaving the secure estate.
- 3.9.2 In relation to data presentation, caution is exercised in terms of drawing specific conclusions about which agency provided which forms of assistance to prison leaver respondents. This is because prison leaver respondents frequently did not identify which agency helped them, referring instead, usually by first name, to a specific worker whose affiliations were unknown to them.
- 3.9.3 Despite these limitations, the study involved a large number of respondents (N=189) and interviews (n=211). There were consistencies within and between accounts provided by service user and provider respondents, and the policy and practice recommendations made in this report are based on a considered assessment of the evidence. Accordingly the study meets the aims of providing an early assessment of the implementation and impact of the homelessness services available to adults leaving the secure estate.

4. Findings: Reception Stage

- 4.1 Across the respondent groups, helping prisoners maintain accommodation on reception into prison was assessed as being important and associated with positive outcomes for prison leavers on release:

If you can help someone keep their accommodation, or close one down so when they are released they haven't got arrears, that is obviously going to be a good thing for when they come out (Prison Based Stakeholder).

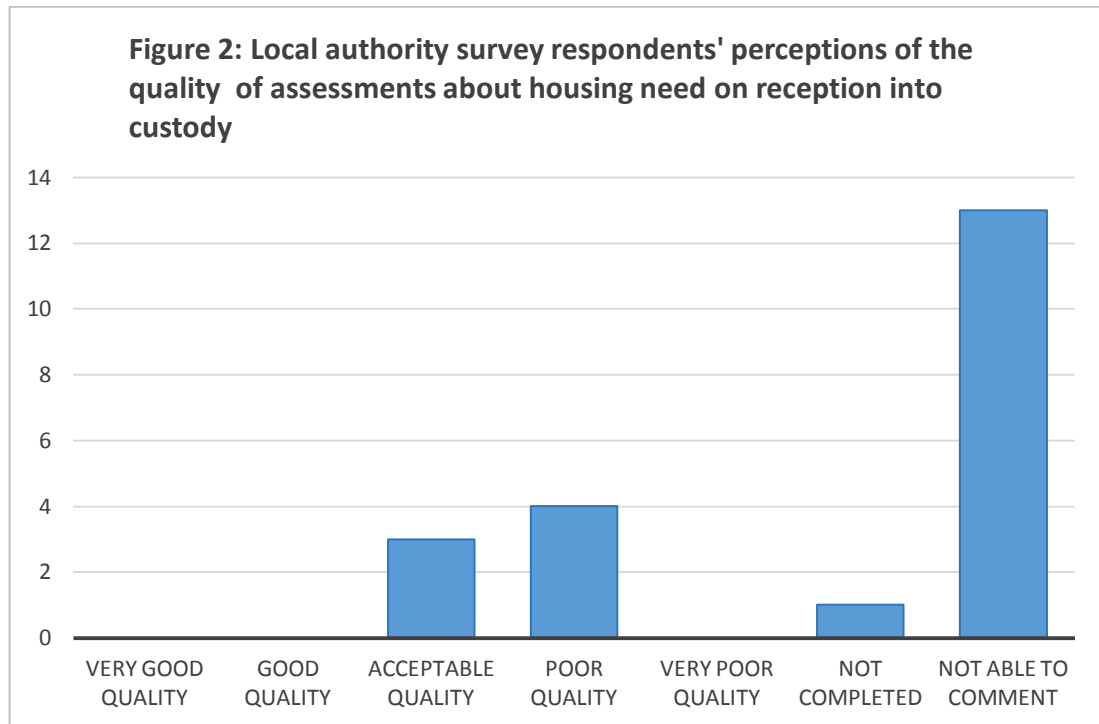
- 4.2 Local authority stakeholders, however, were frequently unable to assess and evaluate the range and quality of work that went on to prevent homelessness when people were sentenced to custody. Those that could, tended to be sceptical as to whether the necessary activities were taking place. For example, in the survey, local authority respondents were asked about the timeliness of housing assessments (i.e. completion of the BCS1) on reception. They provided the following responses:



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=21 answered this question)

- 4.3 As illustrated, half of local authority survey respondents considered they were not in a position to comment on the timeliness of housing assessments on reception (n=11). Of those that were, only one respondent considered that they were 'very often' completed on time.

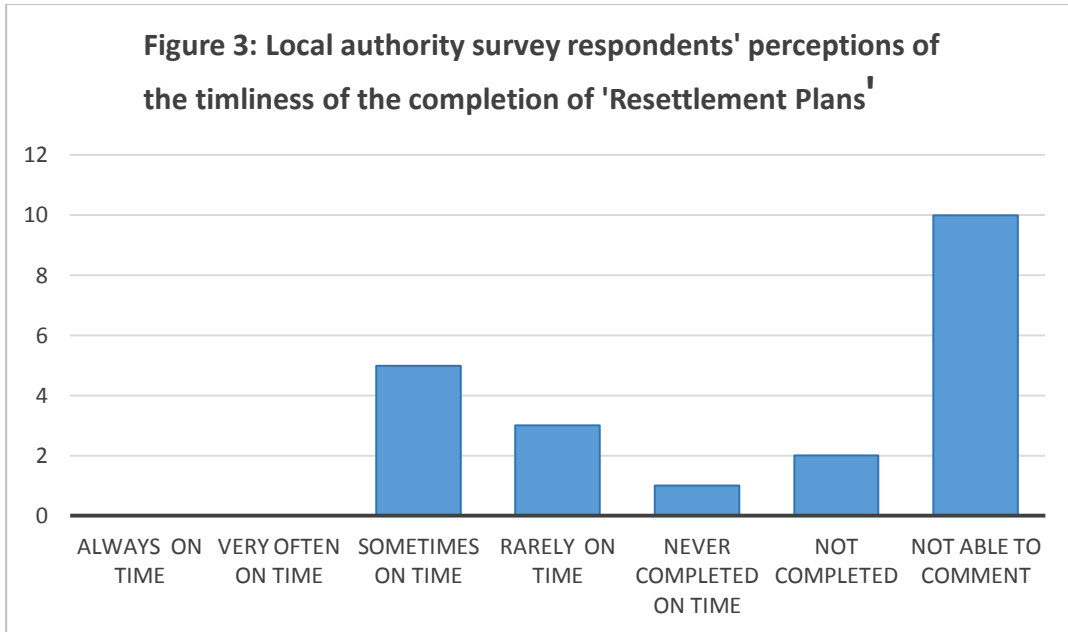
4.4 The same respondents were asked to rate the quality of the assessments that were completed on the housing needs of prisoners on reception into custody:



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=21 answered this question)

4.5 Most local authority survey respondents also indicated they were unable to comment on the quality of assessments that were completed on the housing needs of prisoners on reception into custody (n=13). Of those that did comment, there was a fairly even split between those rating the quality of assessments as poor (n=4) and those rating the quality of assessments as acceptable (n=3).

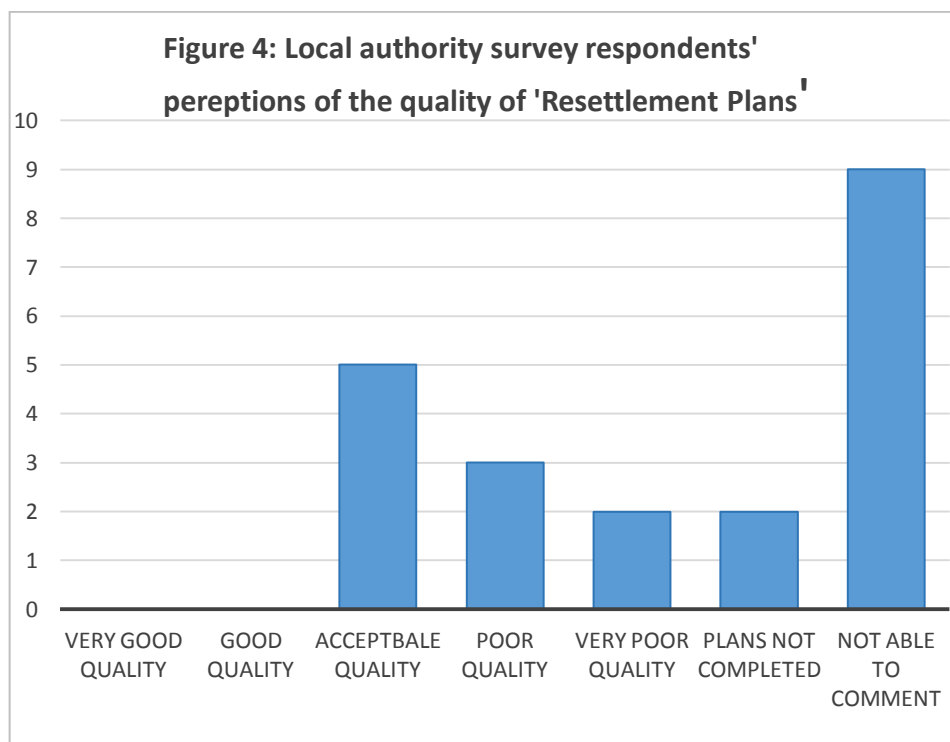
4.6 Local authority survey respondents were also asked to comment on the timeliness of the completion of BSC 2 'Resettlement Plan':



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=21 answered this question)

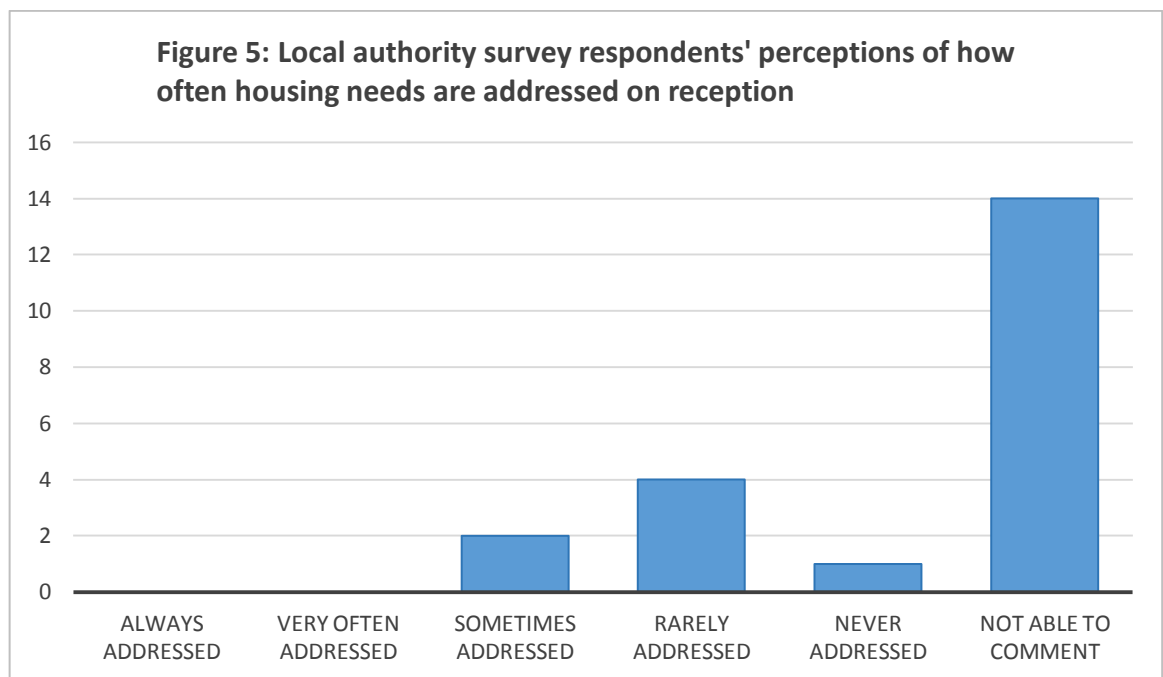
4.7 As these responses indicate, almost half of respondents to the survey were also unable to comment on this aspect of practice (n=10). Of those that did comment on the timeliness of BCS2 Resettlement Plans, five considered Resettlement Plans were 'sometimes' completed on time and six suggested they were 'rarely' or 'never' completed on time or 'not done'.

4.8 Respondents were asked to evaluate the quality of the plans they did see:



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=21 answered this question)

- 4.9 Here, again many local authority survey respondents were unable to comment on the quality of plans (n=9), but of those that did five considered the quality to be 'acceptable' and seven considered the quality to be 'poor', 'very poor' or indicated that plans were 'not completed'.
- 4.10 Irrespective of how timely and sufficient assessment and planning may be, the required activity around addressing housing needs at reception might still be undertaken. Thus local authority survey respondents were asked about their experiences of how housing needs are addressed on reception



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=21 answered this question)

- 4.11 Most respondents considered they were not in a position to comment on how housing needs were addressed on reception into custody (n=14). Others considered needs were 'sometimes' addressed (n=2) or 'rarely'/'never' addressed (n=5).
- 4.12 Asked as part of the survey to expand on their answers, respondents commented they simply did not know what happened during reception processes in custody. For example one respondent told us:

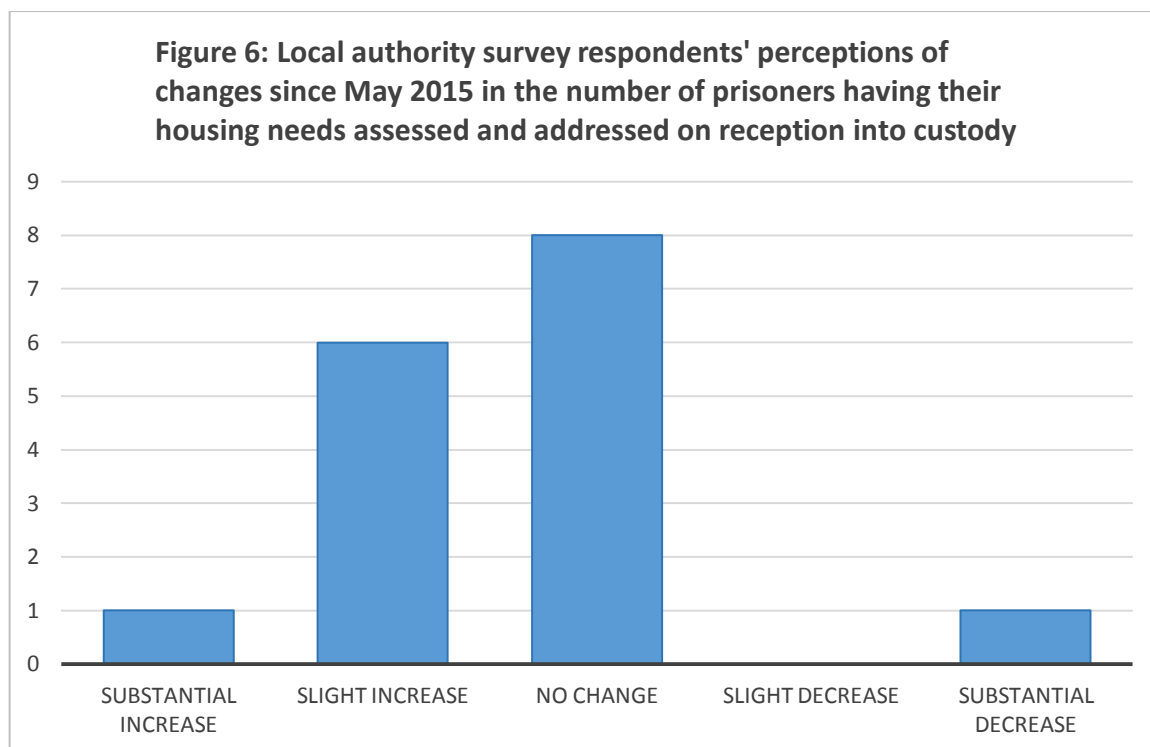
It is very rare that any housing plans are shared with this Authority, so the only conclusion I can reach is that either plans are not being made following reception or that they are made, but not referred/reported (Local authority stakeholder)

4.13 It is clearly problematic that local authorities are unsighted on how well, if at all, BCS1, BCS2 and prevention related activities are undertaken in prisons. Welsh Government and individual local authorities are not in a position to quality assure and develop practices with prisoners who may face or experience homelessness without access to data on the extent, range and outcome of activities undertaken with them.

4.14 As a result of being infrequently invited to help prevent homelessness, however, local authority stakeholders who were interviewed doubted that appropriate activity to protect tenancies was taking place when prisoners were received into custody:

It could be that they are doing something that were not aware of but then when we are not aware of it, it might look like nothing is being done from our perspective, because no one is feeding back and going “this month this amount of people came into prison and this number of tenancies were saved as a result” and “they didn’t come to you because they were dealt with by us” (Local authority stakeholder).

4.15 Local authority survey respondents were asked their views on whether there had been any changes in the numbers or prisoners having their housing needs assessed and addressed on reception since the National Pathway was introduced. Responses to the survey question on this issue were as follows:



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=16 answered this question)

4.16 As may be noted, of the survey respondents who answered this question only one was of the view that since May 2015 fewer prisoners were having their housing needs assessed and addressed immediately following sentence. The others considered that there had been 'no change' in this regard (n=9) or there had been a 'slight' (n=6) or 'substantial' increase (n=1).

4.17 Some prison based stakeholders and Responsible Officers suggested not everyone who needed a housing intervention on reception would receive such a service. One reason for this was that BCS1 assessments were not being completed to a high standard. Thus referrals to the staff responsible for addressing housing related needs on reception into prison might not take place. In this regard a prison based stakeholder commented:

The basic custody screenings...are frankly a complete waste of everyone's time and money, they are opened and signed just to say they were done and to claim the money and with no attempt made to kind of corroborate what a prisoner says (Prison based stakeholder).

- 4.18 Responsible Officers were critical of the BCS1 process and unconvinced that the information gathered was of significant use:

They don't have any information, they don't have anything of value, and they're hardly ever done anyway, or hardly ever completed. If they are, there's hardly any information in them, might as well not do them (Responsible Officer).

- 4.19 Some prison based stakeholders suggested processes for assessing housing need at reception were flawed because the BCS 1 and then BCS2 had to be completed within 72 hours and 5 working days, respectively, of a prisoner's reception into custody. Initial reception into custody was often on remand, however, which was reviewed every fortnight. Thus, it was often the case that prisoners were asked about their accommodation status at a time when they might be unclear about their future and probably harbouring hopes of being granted bail. As an example of this, one prison leaver respondent commented:

I think shelter came to see me a couple of days after I got here but obviously I didn't know what I was going to be sentenced then... so I said "I don't really know my circumstances or what was going to happen" and nothing since then (Prison leaver respondent)

- 4.20 Prison based stakeholders reported that the BCS2 Resettlement Plan was not automatically re-done after each remand hearing or following sentence. Moreover that once completed, the BCS2 could not be updated even if a change of circumstances arose.

- 4.21 Some prison based stakeholders doubted that those new to prisons were in a position to communicate effectively about their circumstances. It was suggested that the shock of imprisonment could mean some prisoners were not able to act in their own best accommodation interests at an early point in their custodial experience:

4.22 Another reason preventative services might not be available to prisoners on reception was staff sickness within the PLC provision; challenges associated with managing the ‘churn’ of people in and out of the larger reception/resettlement prisons; and the time available for staff to see everyone:

They are always really busy and have lots of people to see ... We see busy staff, we see them going on the wings and they always have waiting lists for people to see (Prison based stakeholder).

There is a staffing issue with prison link..., they have had a lot of sickness and other leave so we have never had full staff for prison link (Prison based stakeholder).

4.23 Some PLC staff did not have access to prison keys and this made arranging to see relevant prisoners difficult. This small practical barrier to engaging prisoners caused considerable difficulties in meeting demand.

4.24 In total 75 prisoners were interviewed at wave 1 of this study. Not all were clear about their housing circumstances on reception. The 66 who could be engaged on this topic reported the following profiles:



Base: Self reports by 66 of the 75 prisoners interviewed at wave 1

4.25 In the above figure the NFA category (n=32) includes those who described unsettled patterns of living at the point of reception, either with friends/'sofa surfing', making use of night shelters, or street homeless.

4.26 Prison leaver respondents struggled to recall what issues had been discussed with them and by whom on reception into prison. Most, however, suggested they had been asked about their accommodation. They recalled the focus of such discussions being on eligibility for Housing Benefit and for some this had helped:

She contacted the council, I enquired first when I came in, one of the officers from Shelter [PLC] came over to see me ..., and I asked to sort my rent out and ...and she sorted it out for me, and they said if I was serving anything over 13 weeks I wouldn't get the rent paid, and I serve 13 weeks to the day. Spot on (Prison leaver respondent).

4.27 Prison based stakeholders reported that activity to prevent homelessness usually took the form of helping new prisoners apply for housing benefit or close down tenancies if they were going to be in custody for longer than the benefit could be paid:

We're trying to maintain tenancies whilst they are in here so that involves county court action, making sure housing benefit claims are in place and liaising with landlords trying to sort out when some tenancies, unfortunately, have to be closed down (Prison based stakeholder)

4.28 There were very few references to prison based staff engaging in more varied preventative practices such as mediation with local authorities, families, private landlords or hostel staff about maintaining tenancies or accessing discretionary payments where a housing benefit shortfall might occur.

4.29 Four prison leaver respondents nearing release reported housing difficulties that seemed related to matters which, dealt with at reception, might have improved their accommodation prospects. In two of these cases housing was lost because the prisoner served longer than 13 weeks in custody. However, both of these cases involved an over-stay in prison of only 2-3

weeks. A third prison leaver respondent referred to difficulties paying rent which, in the absence of any other offer of help, they had to involve family to resolve. A fourth respondent referred to his own imprisonment (and loss of earnings) having made it difficult for his partner to pay the 'additional top up element' of their monthly rent. None of these respondents could recall whether the possibility of discretionary housing payments being made had been discussed or explored with them.

- 4.30 Accounts of how housing needs were assessed on reception into custody suggested the focus was on the questions 'do you need to apply for housing benefit?' and/or 'do you have an address to go on his release?' Assessments of housing needs at the reception stage therefore could be superficial:

They just said 'have you got an address on the outside' and I just said 'I was renting a place', they said 'are you likely to go back there?' I said 'perhaps but I am not too sure on the circumstances' and I never heard anything back on that (Prison leaver respondent).

- 4.31 Two prison leaver respondents talked about giving up tenancies on going into prison. Accounts of this were tinged with a sense of grievance that this had not lead to them enjoying any advance standing for accommodation when released:

The last 2 years, I had a flat in xxxx, I come to prison and give it up voluntarily and got told that I would be re-accommodated when I got out but it never happened, I went to the council and they said they have no care for me or whatever (Prison leaver respondent).

5. Findings: Resettlement

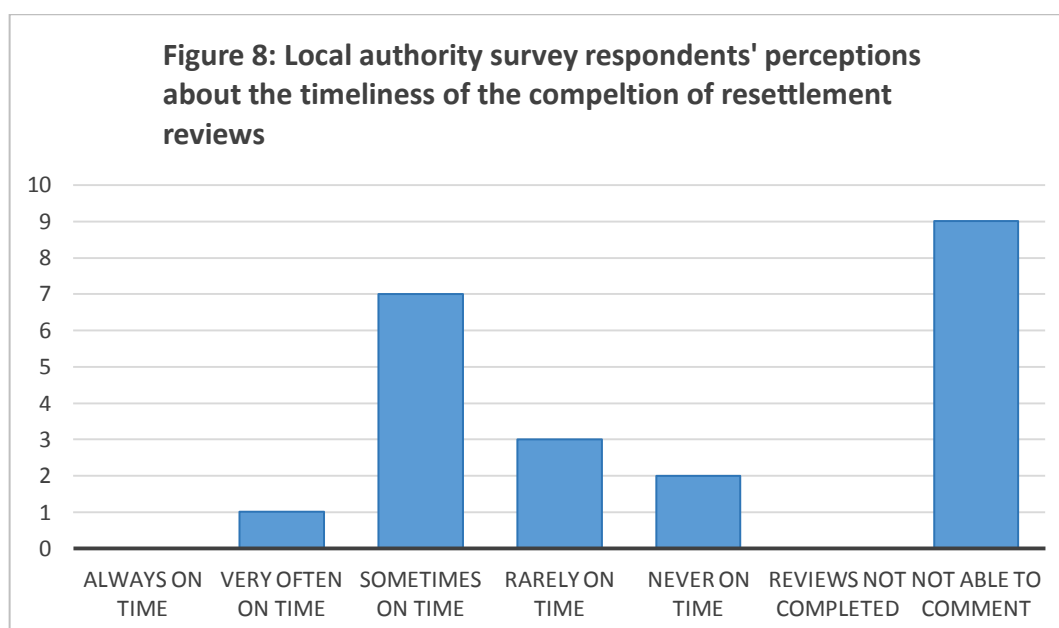
- 5.1 Professional stakeholders considered that helping prison leavers find accommodation before release was associated with positive outcomes for them and the community to which they returned. Homelessness, for example, was associated with reoffending:

Offenders coming out on high risk, they could offend on day one, we haven't got time to say yeah come out we will hook you up with a housing officer and you can start looking and then, before then, they have offended. So we can't take that risk (Community based stakeholder).

- 5.2 Prison leaver respondents who were interviewed also linked their likelihood of reoffending with their accommodation status.

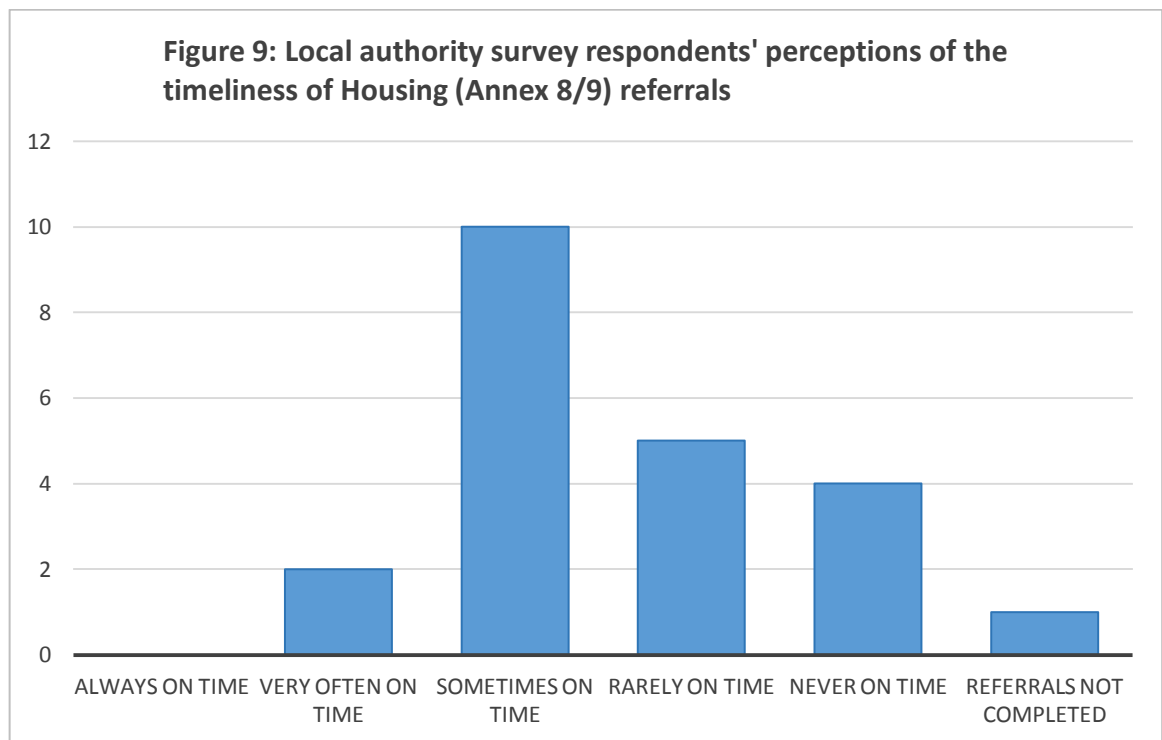
If you don't have that then you have nothing else to build on. If you don't have that you can't get a job, if you don't have that you can't be certain about anything else in the future (Prison Leaver Respondent).

- 5.3 In relation to helping prison leavers find accommodation, local authority survey respondents were asked to comment on their experiences of the timeliness of the completion of resettlement reviews (expected 12 weeks before a prisoner is released):



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=22 answered this question)

- 5.4 Local authority survey respondents largely considered themselves to be unable to comment on whether housing needs were reviewed in a timely manner during the resettlement stage of a prisoner’s sentence (n=9). Of those who could comment, one considered reviews were ‘very often’ completed in a timely fashion but seven considered they were only ‘sometimes’ completed in this fashion. Conversely five considered they were ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ completed in this way.
- 5.5 Local authority survey respondents were asked about the timeliness of National Pathway (Annex 8/9) referrals. As the figure below indicates, only two respondents indicated they were ‘very often’ timely. The reminder chose descriptors which suggested their experience of receiving referrals in a timely fashion was inconsistent.



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=22 answered this question)

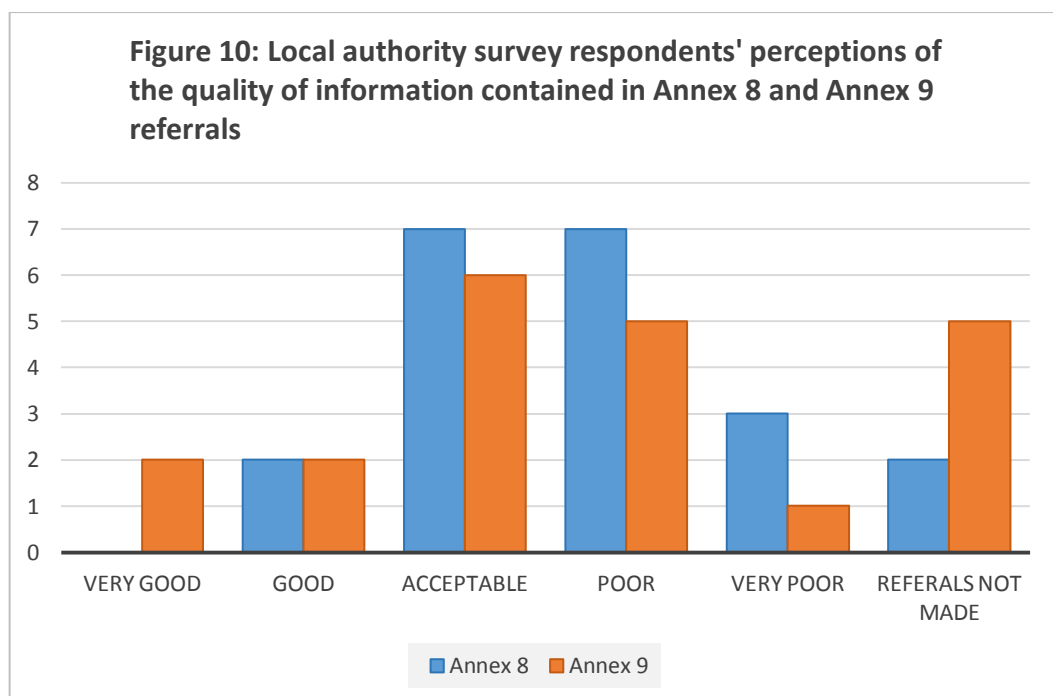
- 5.6 Local authority stakeholders who were interviewed were less equivocal. They considered that housing referrals were usually submitted late giving them insufficient time to engage with prison leavers prior to release. This tendency was described as particularly acute in relation to referrals from prisons dealing with a large number of reception and resettlement cases (primarily Altcourse, Cardiff and Swansea):

5.7 The following account from a local authority stakeholder is representative of how the process for receiving referrals was perceived by this group of respondents:

We are having to chase people constantly for information, we are getting the Annex 8 sometimes 2 weeks before discharge, sometimes a day before discharge and we have had them the day of discharge. We are still getting same day presentations (Local authority stakeholder).

5.8 The approach to sampling predetermined that the prison leaver respondents would have been seen for the purposes of completing housing referrals. However, it did not appear that many had been seen 66 days before they were due to be released. Most had been seen recently and therefore within 1-6 weeks of release. Only in a third of the cases was this potentially explicable because the prison leaver respondent had arrived in custody and immediately entered the resettlement window

5.9 Returning to the local authority survey, respondents were asked a follow up question about the quality of information contained in the Annex 8 (Housing referral) and Annex 9 (NPS/CRC Risk assessment):



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=21 answered this question)

5.10 This question drew mixed responses with 10 respondents stating that the information contained in Annex 8s was 'poor' or 'very poor', and 7 stating such information was 'acceptable'. Fewer people considered the information contained within the Annex 9s they received were 'acceptable' (n=6), with a similar number stating the quality of information was 'poor' or 'very' poor (n=6). More than twice as many of the respondents suggested Annex 9s were not completed (n=5).

5.11 During interviews local authority stakeholders were asked about the quality of Annex 8 and Annex 9 referrals. They also suggested the quality of such referrals were usually poor :

The information we receive from prisons is a basic form which generally says that housing needs are being addressed by sending the referral to Housing! (Local authority stakeholder).

Forms are sometimes completed very basic and not giving us as a local authority much information. Many of the forms are completed and say the same thing (Local authority stakeholder).

5.12 Local authority stakeholders linked the poor quality of housing referrals to a number of factors, the first being that some were completed by the prison leaver themselves or by one of their peers in prison.

They are given the referral form but they fill it in themselves which means we don't get the information that we need (Local authority stakeholder)

If they are completed by peers, the prisoners don't always want to tell them all the stuff that's going on with them. We have had some that have said there are no issues there, they have come in and they are like actually I" have got mental health issues", I've got this, I've got that, I just couldn't tell them" (Local authority stakeholder).

- 5.13 Prison leaver respondents were critical of practices that involved their peers completing housing referrals on their behalf. Here, their concerns related to the potential negative ramifications of disclosing personal details:

It was a prisoner that came around and did it, it wasn't like it was their job in prison but it wasn't like official so I don't know if I would feel comfortable really discussing it with them anyway (Prison leaver respondent).

He was just an inmate, I would imagine he was a peer advisor. The only trouble I had with that was basically he handed it to me and walked away. (Prison leaver respondent).

- 5.14 The second reason local authority stakeholders said that the quality of information provided in housing referrals (Annex 8) and risk assessments (Annex 9) could be poor was that there was not enough time to properly assess a prison leaver's need when a prisoner was only in custody for a short time:

Those with longer and more serious sentences tend to receive a more pro-active service than others which then leaves some offenders with ...more frequent offending patterns sometimes left with late/limited referrals (Local authority stakeholder).

I think if they are longer term, they are more likely to get a more seamless service because there is more time to organise (Local authority stakeholder).

- 5.15 Prison leaver respondents were also aware that the resettlement experience could vary according to the length of sentence:

Most girls have only got little sentences anyway so they are out within 6 or 7 weeks so they don't get to be seen, the longer you have got here the more help you will get (Prison leaver respondent).

Like I say, because I'm only doing 30 days it's like you don't really get to do much you know what I mean in those 30 days (Prison leaver respondent).

- 5.16 A third and final reason local authority stakeholders suggested that the quality of housing referrals (Annex 8) and risk assessments (Annex 9) could be poor was that up to date information about a prisoner might not be available or accessed to inform completion of such forms. That was clearly the case where such referrals were completed by peers but not one Prison Based Stakeholder who was responsible for housing referrals suggested they routinely accesses OAsys for the purposes of making housing referrals. Accordingly, in most cases, referrals were based only on what the prison leaver told the referring peer or TTG officer:

Referrals are either not received or when they are, they are received within just a few days of release and the information is not detailed enough to make any decisions, and often not even enough to undertake substantive further enquiries (Local authority stakeholder).

- 5.17 Many local authority stakeholders provided accounts of prison leavers, previously unknown to them, presenting at the housing office on the day of their release. The perception was that this sometimes happened because processes for identifying prison leavers in need of a housing intervention could be flawed. A range of processes whereby prison leavers were identified as in need of housing services on release seemed to exist. In some prisons all prison leavers would be seen and asked about their housing circumstances whereas in others the service depended on self-referral. Raising questions about its purpose, the BSC2 did not seem to be a reference point for housing related interventions during the resettlement window in any of the prisons that were visited.

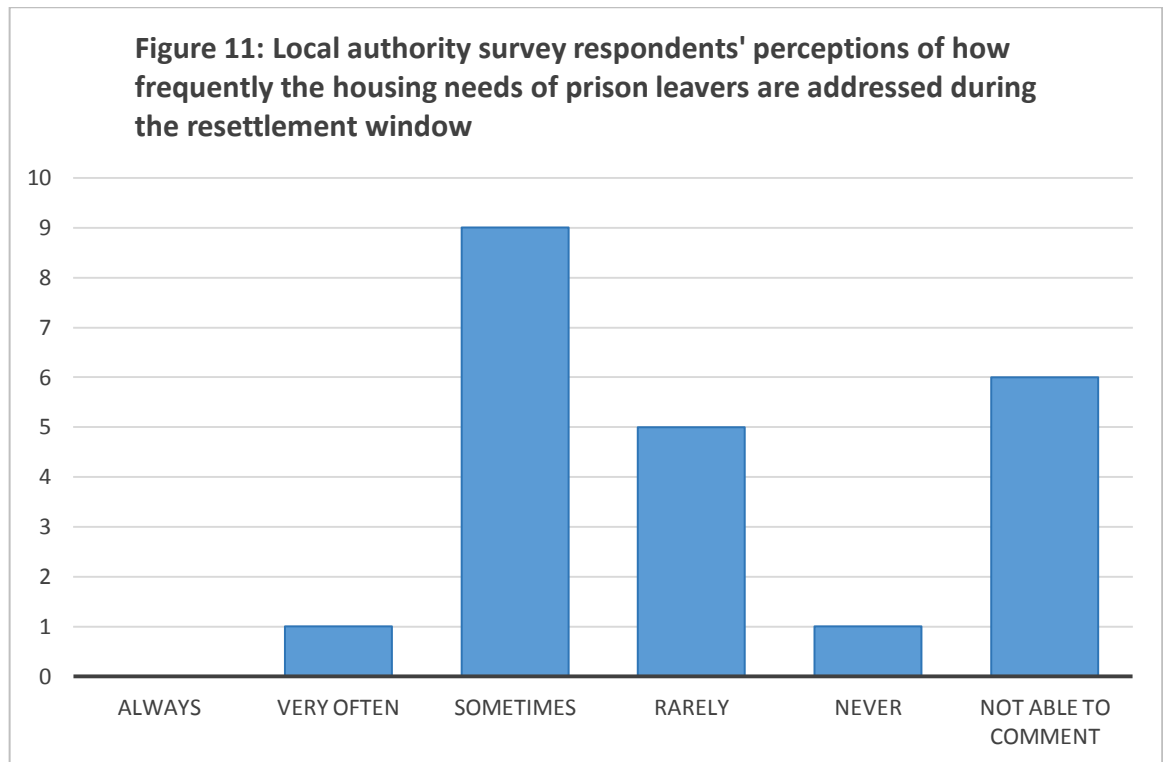
5.18 Whilst some 'on the day of release' presentations were considered to be inevitable because a prison leaver may not have declared their potential homeless situation or had served a very short sentence (often on recall), most such presentations were considered to have been avoidable had the National Pathway been followed. In the following extract, a Responsible Officer illustrates how the National Pathway might not be implemented:

With a lot of the cases, we don't have the homeless application sent to us, then we can't add our risk assessment...So, on release they're coming in and saying they're homeless, so we're then having to do that then on the day, and then housing is saying 'well we didn't know about this guy, cos no one's contacted us beforehand' (Responsible Officer).

5.19 Lack of alignment between the procedures that apply in advance of a prison leaver being released from custody and TTG service provision increased the likelihood that housing needs would not be addressed before release. Requests for licence conditions are intended to be sent to Responsible Officers in the community on a PD1 form "no later than 28 days prior to the offender's release". Thus the point at which Responsible Officers are required to formally consider the residence conditions that should apply on release does not coincide with when the issue of housing is (or should be) explored by TTG staff (i.e. 66 days before release):

What we are finding as well is they will give you an address and people will think everything is fine and then in 2 weeks prior to release the offender manager in the community has to fill out a PD1 and say we approve this address and all of a sudden ..."we don't approve" ...so then everybody starts running round trying to deal with them (Local authority stakeholder).

5.20 Local authority survey respondents were asked to evaluate the service provided to prison leavers before they were released from custody. They were invited to choose a statement that best reflected their experiences of how frequently housing needs were actually addressed (irrespectively of referrals made) during the 12 week Resettlement Stage:



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=22 answered this question)

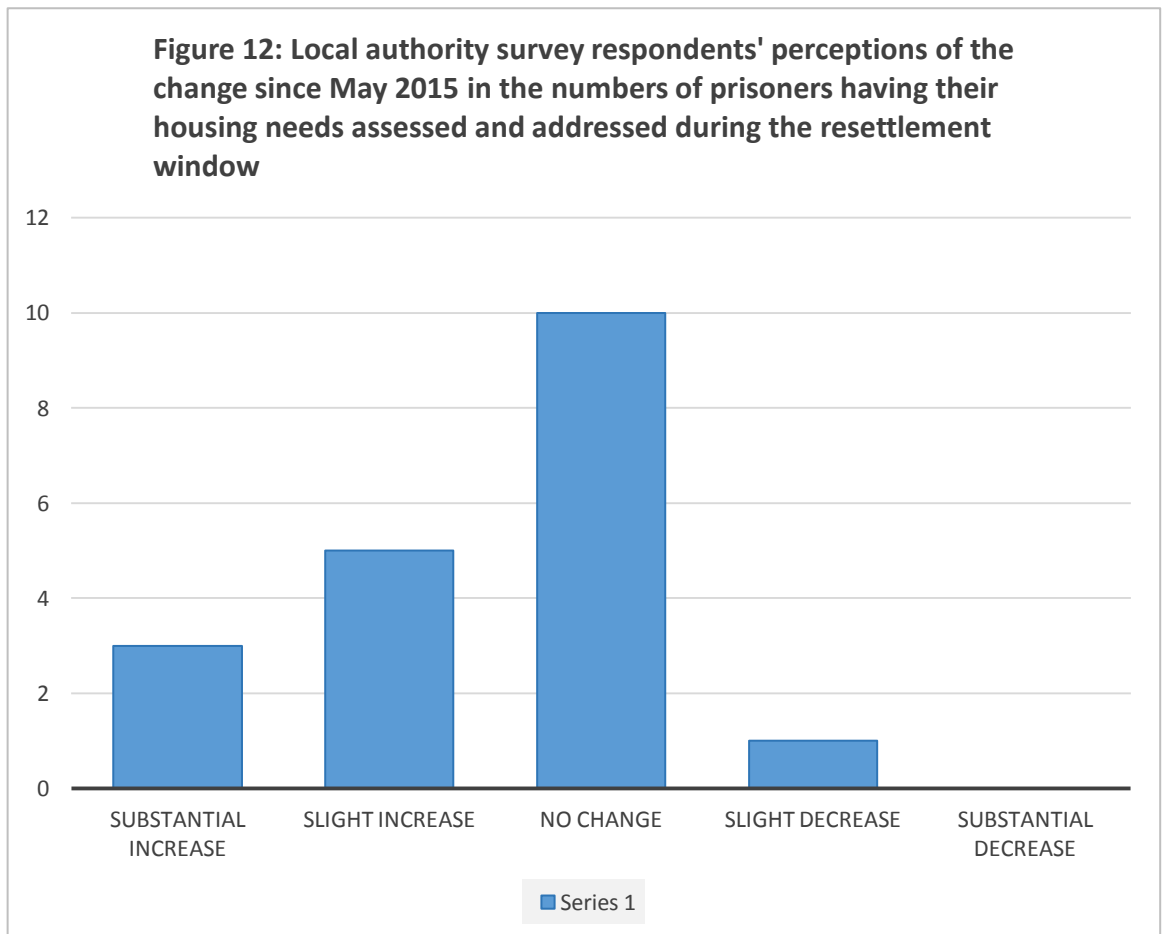
5.21 Here, it may be noted that some local authority survey respondents were unable to comment on this issue (n=6). One respondent considered housing needs were addressed 'very often'. However, nine considered that housing needs were only 'sometimes' addressed and five considered that such needs were addressed only 'rarely'.

5.22 During interviews, professional stakeholders were much less divided in their views and most not directly involved with such provision assessed the TTG housing services as being poor:

I don't think Through the Gate is working..., I won't get anything and I'm the one who's actively trying to chase them for information....I'm not sure what they're trying to do to resettle (Responsible Officer).

If I'm honest I think there's not enough workers to do everything....., I don't think there was any new staff so there all this extra workload there isn't enough bodies on the ground to do all the work that needs to be done (Prison based stakeholder).

5.23 Local authority survey respondents were asked to assess how the situation had changed since May 2015 and whether there had been any changes (increases or decreases) in the number of prisoners having their housing needs assessed and addressed during the resettlement window. Responses to this question are presented below:



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=19 answered this question)

- 5.24 As indicated in Figure 12 above, notwithstanding some criticisms of how the National Pathway was operating, most local authority survey respondents considered the situation was 'no worse' since the National Pathway was implemented (n=10). More encouragingly perhaps eight respondents considered that there had been a 'substantial' or 'slight' increase in the number of prison leavers having their housing related needs assessed and addressed during the resettlement window.
- 5.25 Almost all of the prison leaver respondents interviewed at wave 1 for this study could recall a housing application having been completed by or with them. However, very few said they had received a response to this application and only four said someone external to the prison and associated with housing had then come in to see them. Those that did recall getting a response said they had received a letter which was of very little help to them, containing, for most, only a statement about their ineligibility for immediate housing on release:
- It basically said that I am not priority and that was it, it's all I can remember really, it mentioned my age (Prison leaver respondent).*
- 5.26 Local authority stakeholders indicated that prison leavers referred to them were, more often than not, known to them. Thus a prison visit for assessment purposes was not always considered necessary. Local authority stakeholders made reference to the potential for staff to visit prison leavers to assess housing needs prior to release where that might be useful. However, only in one local authority area which dealt with relatively low numbers of prison related referrals was this described as being routine practice.
- 5.27 Local authority practices with prisoners due for release seemed to prioritise activities associated with establishing whether s68 duties were owed. So getting late referrals or poor quality information from prisons and/or probation providers was primarily described in terms of the impact this had on staff abilities to assess eligibility for temporary accommodation:

If you were to follow The Pathway, it should be that you have a look at whether there is or isn't a priority need to begin with or whether you think there may be and then obviously if there is a priority need you will be looking at some kind of temporary accommodation on release (Local authority stakeholder).

When we get a referral, well what we usually do then is we will make the section 75, 73 decision and we would do the priority need or no priority need at that point (Local authority stakeholder).

- 5.28 Many local authority stakeholders referred to an expectation that decisions about s68 duties would be made within 10 working days of receiving a housing referral about a prisoner. Two prison based stakeholders, however, considered it inappropriate to assess for priority need status before a prisoner was released. It was suggested by one of these respondents that early decision making was a mechanism for avoiding the costs associated with accommodating prison leavers in the community (whilst a fuller assessment of their priority need status was carried out).
- 5.29 In the Local authority survey, respondents were asked to comment on how they assessed vulnerability amongst prison leavers. Responses indicated that a key 'prisoner' specific criteria was the length of sentence. Local authority survey respondents perceived that a link existed between serving a lengthy sentence, institutionalisation and subsequent vulnerability:

Consideration will be taken of the duration of sentence, type of sentence received and also consideration of any issues that may have taken account in custody alongside any other health and welfare issues present (Local authority Stakeholder).

The length of sentence and how that has impacted on the individual, any vulnerability that may have impacted on an individual's ability to cope with the adjustment (Local authority Stakeholder).

- 5.30 Many of the prison leaver respondents interviewed at wave 1 were serving shorter sentences. Yet they presented themselves to researchers as being institutionalised and physically frail, mentally disturbed or substance dependent. Very few of these prisoners suggested that they had been given priority need status.
- 5.31 Some local authority stakeholders seemed unaware of the possibly that because of the frequency and cumulative impact of the short sentences they experience, institutionalisation may also be a significant problem for some shorter term prisoners.
- 5.32 Some Responsible Officers also perceived that the bar for being assessed as vulnerable was set high:

Quite a few, certainly the majority of the people I work with have got mental health issues, yet when we're flagging this up to the Local authority, it doesn't really seem to make much of a difference (Responsible Officer).

Unfortunately, despite having a psychiatric report and medications that the schizophrenia was managed, he attended as we informed them and he had a risk assessment and because his schizophrenia and mental health state were managed he was not considered to be a priority (Responsible Officer).

- 5.33 Local authority stakeholders suggested that being designated 'vulnerable' primarily rested on the ability to provide written medical evidence of physical or mental ill-health. This is despite the fact part 7 of the National Pathway places expectations that undiagnosed as well as diagnosed mental and physical health needs are taken into account when considering post release services:

She told us that she suffers from PTSD, but she's not been formally diagnosed and every time, you know, that she goes to see the GP he kind of, wants to refer her on, but she doesn't kind of comply, or she misses appointments, so there's no formal diagnosis (Responsible Officer).

- 5.34 Local authority stakeholders referred to the importance of medical evidence but described barriers to accessing information about prison leavers from prison health care staff

You might get snippets of information but trying to access information about what's happened whilst they have been in prison is really really tough (Local authority stakeholder).

- 5.35 Prison based stakeholders were critical of the homelessness services provided to prison leavers prior to their release by the local authorities. They understood that referrals were not assertively acted upon and so prison leavers were frequently being released as homeless. Alternatively, that prisoners are simply told to report to the housing options team on release whereupon 'help to secure' activity would begin in earnest:

Well last month I completed 24 housing applications, 24 HRA's were completed by OM's and I didn't have a single response back from any housing (Prison based stakeholder).

Some LAs won't do anything until they are released so the 56 days doesn't trigger until they are released at all (Prison based stakeholder).

- 5.36 Amongst some community based stakeholders and Responsible Officers it seemed the expectation that nothing would be done about a prison leaver's accommodation needs until they were released had become normalised and unremarkable:

He should have had the housing application when inside, but we don't necessarily get a response from them, because they then depend on that person going in to present to them on that day (Prison based stakeholder).

They won't assess until day of release... What matters is the Local authority's assessment and that's not until they come out (Prison based stakeholder).

- 5.37 Low expectations around 'help to secure' activities seemed to be shared by TTG staff at one prison who, in response to a statement by a Prison Leaver during interview that they had not heard back from housing, commented:

I think I have had something through for you actually, I think it's in the office in an envelope, your personal housing plan, it doesn't really tell you anything, it probably says you're not priority, but I've got that in the office but I will send it down to you, I'll drop it on the wing to you this afternoon (Prison based stakeholder)

- 5.38 Prison based stakeholders suggested PHPs were infrequently completed and those that were done were generic and formulaic:

The reasonable steps requirements for some Local Authorities it just seems like they are cutting and pasting when we see the letters it just seems nothing is being done specifically for the needs of that person and it's just becoming a box ticking exercise (Prison based stakeholder).

I don't like the letters....it's very standard other than just changing the name at the top of the letter saying that an application has been done (Prison based stakeholder).

- 5.39 Local authority stakeholders described different practices in relation to the production of PHP. Some suggested PHPs were not produced in their area prior to a prisoner being released. Those that said they were produced added that there were practical difficulties in trying to engage which prison leavers which could cause many plans to be formulaic.
- 5.40 The Housing (Wales) Act was intended to change the relationship between local authorities and people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by promoting a partnership approach to addressing homelessness. Practical difficulties engaging with prisons and prisoners made such a philosophy difficult to adopt with prison leavers. For the most part local authority staff perceived they were denied access to prison leavers. Liaising with TTG staff, arranging to come to visit prison leavers or having online or telephone conversations with them were associated with practical difficulties:

We can't get the contact of the prisoner to discuss the property to be able to pass on, our idea was we would use the resettlement officer to bounce through photos of the properties so they can have a look but there's no response there. The resettlement team quite often can't get on the wing, they will make appointments and I will phone and say 'what happened?' and they would say 'we couldn't get on the wing today', information just doesn't flow in and out (Local authority stakeholder).

- 5.41 In turn prison leaver respondents were denied access to the means to become active in finding solutions to their own homelessness e.g. information, phone, newspapers:

Why can't you in the last month of your prison sentence have a place ...where you have internet access and stuff like that, I'm not going to be thinking of breaking out of jail when I only have a few weeks to go. So they can use the phones themselves and get things sorted. (Prison leaver respondent).

- 5.42 As a result 'help to secure' activities by local authorities might also only amount to sending prison leavers information:

We send them information, how to look for private rent, where to look for private rent, how you can access grants and funding to be able to look towards bonds or rents in advance, we give them all that information, we send it to them (Local authority stakeholder).

- 5.43 Prison leaver respondents were very critical of how they were communicated with and informed about developments during the resettlement window:

I'm trying to keep in touch with everyone all the time and let them know, I have phoned this person and say "this is what's happening on this date" and "I'll let you know blah blah blah". There's no communications, basically you're just being left on that wing just thinking "I'm going to be homeless they haven't sorted anything out for me" (Prison leaver respondent).

- 5.44 During wave 1 interviews very few prison leaver respondents referred to ongoing activities associated with helping them to secure accommodation. Some references were made to courses that used to be available to prison leavers and related to 'being a good tenant', but they had been discontinued. Prison leaver respondents who did talk of efforts being made to secure them accommodation described practices that seemed 'last minute' and often triggered by the 7 day pre-release review:

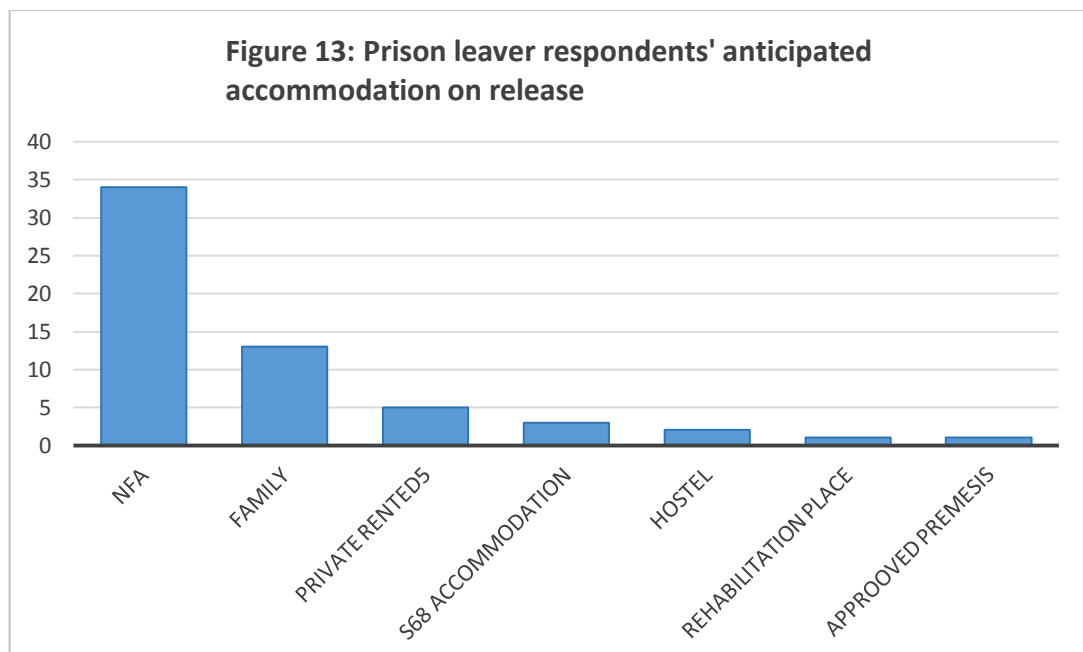
They called me over, I was on the phone with the women, council official....someone refused two places, they asked me if I would go there, I said "I would prefer not to but if I had to I would go there" but they haven't offered me anything yet. She's going to try today because I am out on Tuesday. (Prison leaver respondent).

5.45 That being said, examples of assertive efforts being made to assist prison leavers with accommodation before they were released emerged. Such examples were mostly related to practice in south Wales and involving PREP workers:

The xxxx straight away after I put my referral forms in within a few weeks, under a month, they came and visited me, I was surprised (Prison leaver respondent).

There was a fantastic resettlement officer ...and we just joined efforts and we fought really hard and she got a xxxx place. They are like gold dust, she was really lucky to have it, she settled in so well, she's starting to integrate into the community, but the support she has from is phenomenal, just excellent (Prison leaver respondent).

5.46 As previously stated, 75 prison leavers were interviewed in custody, 67 of whom were due for release. 59 of these respondents were engaged in discussions about their release plans. At the time they were interviewed these 59 anticipated the following destinations on release:



Base: Self report by 59 of the 67 prisoners interviewed at wave 1

- 5.47 Of the 34 prison leaver respondents who reported expectancies around being NFA, 7 referred to some ongoing activity (above and beyond the Annex 8 referral being submitted) associated with attempts to make accommodation available to them. Three prison leaver respondents reported they had been assessed as vulnerable and eligible for temporary accommodation.
- 5.48 Of significant concern was that so few respondents could provide a concrete release address. As well as the 34 who anticipated being NFA, 5 of the 13 prison leaver respondents intending to return to family referred to their intentions still being subject to approval by providers of probation services.
- 5.49 Local authority stakeholders identified barriers to ensuring prison leavers had accommodation to go to on release from custody. References were made, for example, to difficulties “holding accommodation” in advance of a prisoner being released because a landlord would lose rental income:

You've got prison resettlement teams saying "he's out in two weeks" and I'm like "I know he's out in two weeks but right now I can't say one way or the other" (Local authority stakeholder).

- 5.50 References were also made to landlords in the private rented sector and hostel managers being risk averse and wary of accommodating ex-offenders:

Offenders who have a poor track record, who have gone in and out of prison, over a number of years and who are now ending up coming out, 'there's nothing for you, very sorry, (Community based stakeholder).

In this area the hostel has got to the point now, they're not taking people on probation, they don't want to place people on probation, in the hostel in this area ... I think there's been historical problems around their behaviour, drug use and things like that. (Community based stakeholder).

- 5.51 Notwithstanding this, some housing providers in north Wales referred to voids in the properties that might have been filled by referrals from prison leavers.
- 5.52 Prison leaver respondents described the experience of approaching release without a fixed address as anxiety provoking and stressful. Very few did not provide an account of their state of mind during wave 1 interviews in custody that did not resemble the following example:

Well someone was meant to come and let me know what's going on with the form I filled in but like I said no one has come back to me and let me know what's going on yet...9 times out of 10 I break down into tears because, I don't know, its fear of the unknown and that's a big thing with anxiety (Prison leaver respondent).

6. Findings: Post-Release Stage

6.1 Findings

6.1.1 Local authority stakeholders gave different interpretations of the legislative duties owed to prison leavers. Some understood release from prison constituted a change of circumstances for all prison leavers and prompted a new assessment of owed duties. Others, however, understood the clock continued to tick from when the first duty (usually s73 help to secure) was accepted:

We don't give them another 56 days, you know I think what the law says is "reasonable steps" so I look at it and think "what have I been able to offer to that person" (Local authority stakeholder).

So they come to us, we make that decision that there is no priority need, we assist them for 56 days, for those 56 days they are in prison so they come out and have had the 56 days so we can say "oh we are done now-ta ta"(Local authority stakeholder).

6.1.2 Some community based stakeholders referred to prison leavers being required to attend housing offices on the day of release and if they failed to do that, their cases would be discharged:

If they say to them they have to attend housing options on the day of release, if they don't turn up for whatever reason they just discharge the duty (Community based stakeholder).

6.1.3 Across the stakeholder respondent groups, a range of projects and services were identified that were available to house and/or support people leaving prison. Some were identified as specialist and only for people leaving prison, whilst some were generic in nature. There was considerable variation between Local Authorities in terms of the types of accommodation available e.g.: hostels, core and cluster models and floating support with varying staffing levels and cover arrangements. Yet

there was very little evidence of cross border working to meet need. All local authority stakeholders referred to prisoners potentially having help to access the private rented sector and some access to bond and advance deposit schemes.

- 6.1.4 Two local authorities provided temporary accommodation to all prisoners for 14 days where the need arose. That is to say they had access to a shared facility that only housed ex-offenders. Another referred to 'floor space' they could make available for anyone not in priority need but facing street homelessness. Such designated spaces were not preferred by prison leaver respondents who considered them to be poor quality options that placed them at higher risk of reoffending:

I know what the houses are like that the council give out and it all depends where it is, if it's one of those shared houses with loads of people in I'm just going to end up in prison, it's not where I want to be (Prison leaver respondent).

But there's lots of people who won't use here, because they see it's only being used by people who've got substance addiction. So, lots of people won't come because they're worried about how other people might be (Community based stakeholder).

- 6.1.5 That being said, in areas where such provision was absent, and the alternative was street homelessness or using night shelters, developing such provision was often commended:

I think you should go into a hostel or something somewhere not leave you homeless...so if they are going to be left on the streets of course... give them somewhere to stay, shared house or something, help them (Prison leaver respondent).

- 6.1.6 A few Responsible Officers considered that the NPS or CRC could consider developing its own provision for prison leavers along the lines of the Approved Premises and BASS models:

We use the Approved Premises for the high risk offenders. I sometimes think, rather than looking at charitable organisations we should take responsibility, like BASS housing, which we tend to use for people on remand and they have somewhere to move on to. I think if we had that, to be able to move into for a minimum period of time, 3 months then moving on (Responsible Officer)

Let the Probation have their own accommodation for people to move into. Like Approved Premises but for all, not just high risk. It would be easier than them just coming out (Responsible Officer).

6.2 High/Medium/Low Risk prison leavers

- 6.2.1 Finding suitable accommodation for higher risk offenders was considered challenging. This was especially so when they were presenting as homeless at short notice because of the additional time required to source placements that took account of the risk of serious harm the offender may pose to others. In the case of high risk offenders, such placements could frequently be unsuitable because they necessarily involved close proximity to others who might be vulnerable or whose vulnerabilities were unknown because they had been placed by another Local authority:

If you are dealing with an RSO because we are not the only people placing in these B&Bs, people from out of the area are placing and don't tell us. So we have placed people thinking it's perfectly safe because we don't have anybody there, any women or children and it turns out one of the authorities down the road has placed a 16 year old there and haven't told us (Local authority stakeholder).

6.2.2 Some high risk offenders were managed under MAPPA. In most of these cases this seemed to facilitate more joint working between agencies to address housing issues:

So with xxxx, because he's a MAPPA case that involves all agencies getting around a table. Way before he's released we're planning for it, housing is one of those agencies, so because of that it helps significantly (Responsible Officer).

6.2.3 Local authority stakeholders showed variable knowledge of criminal justice processes related to prison leavers posing a high risk of serious harm to others. Some local authority stakeholders were unsighted on the status difference between being a High risk offender and a 'MAPPA nominal' and an offender subject to 'MAPPP processes'. Thus some understood all MAPPA cases were high risk, subject to pre-release supervisory/risk meetings 6 months prior to release and excluded from consideration under the National Pathway:

There's a lack of understanding and they said to me, "if someone's MAPPA level 2 that means they are high risk and if they are MAPPA level 1 they are low-medium risk" and I said "well that's not the case" (Responsible Officer).

MAPPA cases are excluded from the National Pathway, they get dealt with at the 6 month stage...it's all of them whether they are level 1,2 or 3 offenders, high or low risk (Local authority stakeholder).

6.2.4 Linked to this, some Responsible Officers understood that offenders released into Approved Premises were still in the 'secure estate' and therefore they should be eligible for services when they left. Conversely the Housing (Wales) Act was understood by local authority stakeholders as conferring priority need status only on prison-leavers.

We have seen a massive increase in prisoners being released to an Approved Premises, without LA knowledge. And then presenting to us for move on plans, so they are bypassing the entire pathway. Probation officers are somehow managing to get them into AP without a move on plan and then a day or two into being out of prison and in the Approved Premises, coming to us for a move on plan. So we are like “no sorry” (Local authority stakeholder).

- 6.2.5 Intriguingly whilst many local authority, community based, and Responsible Officer respondents referred to MAPPA arrangements, IOM was rarely mentioned. This was surprising as IOM arrangements might well have applied to many of the prison leaver respondents a subset of whom seemed to be homeless and in and out of prison regularly and in that regard, prolific offenders.
- 6.2.6 Responsible Officers gave different accounts of how offenders became eligible for IOM status. Some understood it was reserved for high risk cases, others understood it was dependent on being a class A drug user. Local variations in terms of eligibility for IOM supervision were evident.
- 6.2.7 High Risk Offenders were supervised by NPS staff who maintained case management (including OAsys and sentence planning) responsibilities for a prisoner throughout their custodial experience and on release in the community. This greater degree of involvement, associated with a likelihood many high risk offenders would have to spend a period of time in Approved Premises on release, meant fewer concerns were expressed about how the housing needs of high risk offenders were addressed, than medium/low risk offenders.
- 6.2.8 Prison leaver respondents assessed as medium or low risk of serious harm were supervised by the Wales CRC. The level of supervision afforded to these respondents, often via ‘In Touch’ hubs, was minimal. This ‘light touch’ was explained by Responsible Officers in the CRC with reference to high caseloads:

Our caseloads have gone up and at the moment, I'm on 70, there's people on caseloads of 100, so the issue is that you will concentrate on the people you see on a day to day basis, you will have an awareness of so and so's in custody now, that's on the back burner. (Responsible Officer).

- 6.2.9 That being said, instances of CRC staff showing considerable compassion to prison leavers and levels of dedication beyond what might be procedurally expected also emerged:

The guy I've got coming out, he's so vulnerable [...] it's such a shame. I went over to (supermarket) in my lunch break, I got a flask and 12 cans of soup. I thought I'll keep them in the cupboard, he can come in every day and I can warm them up and refill his flask for him, at least he's got some access to something hot, give him a pound to go and get some bread ...and a bottle of Lucozade to at least try and keep his energy levels up, because I think he was flagging (Responsible Officer).

6.3 Gender

- 6.3.1 Professional stakeholders considered that engagement with female prison leavers was more assertive than was the case with male prison leavers. This was associated with many female prison leavers having parenting or care duties, or vulnerabilities conferring priority need status upon a greater proportion of them:

My experience has always been that with the female offenders, you can always argue the case for vulnerability, although I know males can be equally as vulnerable. But, in the situation with the housing officer, if she's got previous of being abused and the rest of it, maybe they're more likely to assess risk in that scenario, than with a male that in a sense has been the perpetrator (Responsible Officer).

6.3.2 Fewer female prison leavers were interviewed. Those that were interviewed narrated longer histories of engaging with housing service providers than male prison leavers. They narrated histories involving more entrenched substance misuse problems and exclusion from properties. Compared to male prison leaver respondents, however, they seemed to have more people actively involved in their cases as they neared release.

6.3.3 Whilst engagement with female prison leaver respondents seemed more fulsome, services to meet their needs were described as more limited. Female prison leaver respondents often perceived themselves 'at risk' in a system that catered primarily for men:

I was in a hostel a couple of years back, I was put in the position where there was all men in the hostel, and probation put me in a vulnerable place (Prison leaver respondent).

6.3.4 Many high risk offenders are placed in Approved Premises as a condition of their release. However, there are no Approved Premises for females in south Wales, and only places for two females in north Wales. Female prison leaver respondents referred to barriers to resettlement when they had been placed in Approved Premises in England:

So I had to go to....stay at a hostel in..... and I became homeless from that hostel because it was too far away from home and I didn't know anyone, I had no support whatsoever because my family live in Wales so I just never stayed there and ended up homeless (Prison leaver respondent).

6.3.5 One of our female prison leaver respondents referred to having been the subject of a multi-agency meeting. Another had been linked in with a Women Centre on release which helped to address complex and multiple needs. The south Wales based Women's Pathfinder project was not mentioned but Responsible Officers, however, referred to it as being a useful multi-agency forum wherein the needs of some female prison leavers would be explored prior to their release from prison:

The Women's Pathfinder.... they have regular meetings which I attend as much as I can so if someone is in custody and they have a tenancy then probation and other support providers basically want to know what happening, it's more a communication opportunity with different agencies (Responsible Officer).

6.4 Prisoner Engagement in the Community

6.4.1 It is in the nature of the process by which sentences are calculated that a disproportionate number of prison leavers are released on a Friday. Where prison leavers have considerable distance to travel home this could mean they present as homeless late on a Friday afternoon when probation offices and housing departments are winding down for the weekend:

So I have a backlog of offenders coming out on a Friday, the numbers that you've got to get from, say Eastwood Park, Bristol and they've got to get here and they've got to get over to the housing department before they shut, otherwise even if help is set up it's not going to be until the Monday (Responsible Officer).

6.4.2 Prison leaver respondents interviewed at wave 2 of the study, and who kept appointments, referred to being offered some assistance in finding accommodation by the Local authority. Responsible Officers also spoke of help to secure accommodation being available:

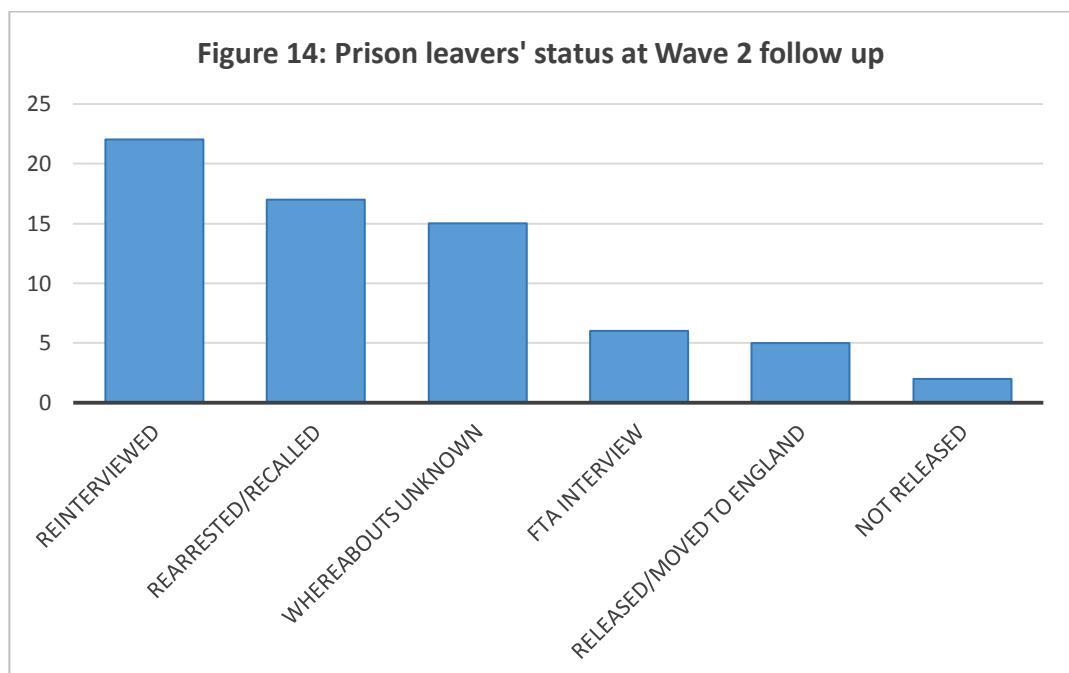
So at the minute he's still got a 'care of' address, he's still NFA, they will make; in fairness to the Local authority in this area, they will help us and assist with a month's rent in advance and we'll help him secure a bond. Then it's up to him to find a private place to rent (Responsible Officer).

6.4.3 However newly released prison leavers were identified as being quick to disengage from services:

Quite often they just won't even bother going to housing anymore, they either don't like where they are put or they don't get housed for whatever reason or they will go and sit and wait for an hour, won't be seen so they leave (Community based stakeholder).

6.4.4 Responsible Officers and local authority stakeholders referred to the importance of motivating prison leavers to attend appointments and engage with housing and other services in the community e.g. alcohol counselling. Motivating and engaging with prison leavers, however, requires particular skills and staff in local authority housing departments seemed to vary widely in their training and experience. Some had formal training in counselling and had worked in the criminal justice system and so were familiar with motivational interviewing and engaging with people with diverse needs. Others had administrative and policy related backgrounds, however, and were more attuned to their procedural and legal responsibilities.

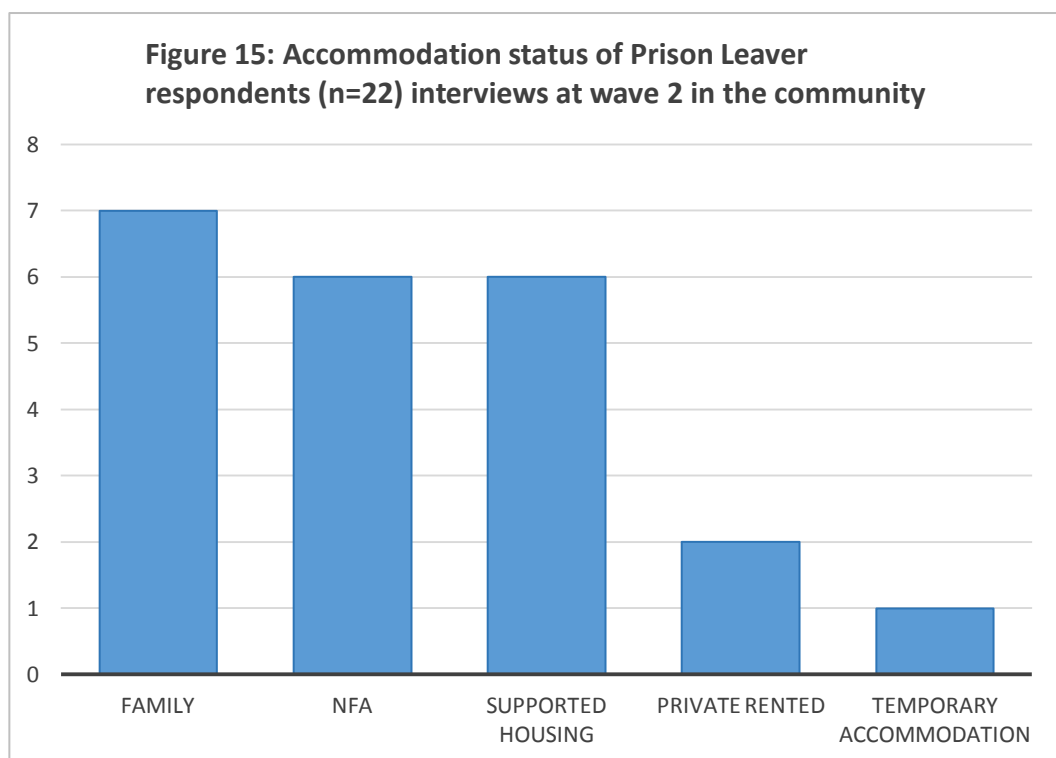
6.4.5 At wave 2, 67 prison leaver respondents could still potentially be followed up. Attempts to do this led to 22 wave 2 interviews taking place:



Base: 67 Prison leavers eligible for follow up and wave 2 interviews

6.4.6 A seemingly large number of prison leaver respondents had been returned to custody (n=17). It was not possible to re-interview these individuals and so accordingly it is not possible to comment on the role their accommodation status had to play in this outcome. However 15 of those recalled had discussed their accommodation plans with researchers at wave 1 and of these 9 had anticipated being NFA.

6.4.7 Twenty two prison leaver respondents were re- interviewed. During interviews they reported their accommodation status at that point as follows.



Base: Self report by 22 prison leavers interviewed at wave 2

6.4.8 In the above figure the NFA category includes those who described unsettled patterns of living, either with friends/sofa surfing, making use of night shelters/hostels, or street homeless. Accordingly 'family' includes only those arrangements described by respondents as having some stability.

- 6.4.9 Of the 22 prison leaver respondents who were interviewed 15 referred to having some contact with the local authority housing team after they were released from custody. Nine of the prison leaver respondents said a housing organisation/helping agency had also become involved with them and helped them find accommodation.
- 6.4.10 These 9 prison leaver respondents gave accounts of being actively assisted with accommodation by individuals clearly aligned with a housing organisation or agency providing support to homeless people. Seven were steered into a hostel and then four onwards into supported accommodation and one into the private rented sector. Another prison leaver respondent was helped to access a bond to secure private rented accommodation.³
- 6.4.11 It is not possible to draw specific conclusions about which agency provided which forms of assistance to prison leaver respondents in the community. This is because prison leaver respondents frequently did not identify which agency helped them, referring instead, usually by first name, to specific workers.
- 6.4.12 Two prison leaver respondents specifically referred to being helped by the local authority by being placed in temporary accommodation. Three, however, suggested that the only help they were offered was in the form of a tent and sleeping bag.
- 6.4.13 Seven prison leaver respondents suggested they had repeated contact with the local authority housing team on release but that this had not been helpful. However, here the possibility that the help they then talked of receiving from another agency was brokered by the local authority seems to exist.
- 6.4.14 Prison leaver respondents and Responsible Officers seemed to assess local authorities' performance primarily on their ability to find emergency accommodation for prison Leavers. The medium and longer term help work that they might undertake to help prison leavers secure accommodation was not always recognised or valued:

³ The circumstances of some of these prison leavers had then changed in the weeks following release

They don't seem willing to present without an offer of accommodation (Local authority stakeholder).

They disengage with us immediately on release when they know we are not offering anything immediately (Local authority stakeholder).

- 6.4.15 A subset of prison leavers were identified by professional stakeholders as being least well provided for by arrangements for providing services to prison leavers. This subset comprised prison leavers, well known to housing services, who were homeless on entering prison and had long histories of substance misuse. They were prison leavers who seemed caught in a revolving door of serving short prison sentences followed by relatively brief periods in the community (often on the streets, sofa surfing or in hostels) before they reoffend and are recalled or imprisoned once again:

Some people are in and out, they might go back in for 2 weeks and then they're out again.... The people that tend to be on that revolving door..., so it tends to be 14 days back in custody and then ...back to square one every single time (Responsible Officer).

The problem is, until she gets stable accommodation and stable address, services can't work with her and she can't get a stable address because she doesn't comply and work with services, it's like, stuck between a rock and a hard place (Responsible Officer).

6.4.16 These individuals were difficult to house because they had a history of tenancy failures:

PRS landlords are sometime reluctant to take some former offenders as a number of individuals are known to landlords (Local authority stakeholder).

Prisoners become well-known to housing associations and so their offending behaviour, combined with often poorly run tenancies, make landlords reluctant to offer further tenancies (Local authority stakeholder).

6.4.17 Some of the prison leaver respondents in this research presented as meeting the criteria for being considered 'Revolving door' homeless prison leavers. They perceived themselves to be poorly provided for and unlikely to receive help. They described their situation in wave 1 as follows:

I suffer from depression and anxiety and a few times I think "where am I going, what am I doing" because my last few times I've ended up on a same day recall because I have had nowhere to go and I just had a drink and probation gave me a recall, it's a vicious circle (Prison leaver respondent)

Exactly what is going to happen on Friday is I'm going to go to a meeting, they are going to give me £46 I'm going to go to probation, they are going to go, "where are you staying?" "Why are you asking me that? You know I'm not staying anywhere"... and I'll just go for a beer because it's going to be the weekend anyway...and I would have had a couple of beers and say "alright" and pass out and then end up back here again (Prison leaver respondent)

6.4.18 These 'revolving door' prison leaver respondents considered it likely they would reoffend if they were homeless on release. Moreover they considered they would reoffend on purpose because custody was preferable to street homelessness:

If there is absolutely nothing, there is no way I am staying on the streets, I'll just do something to come back here, that's all it is just back and forward (Prison leaver respondent)

I'm in every year to tell you the truth..., I'm on the street like three months and I need a break so I come here, I do things on purpose, it's getting worse on the streets, my health goes down, my drug habit goes up I'm sick of this so I'll just get nicked, just to get out for a bit (Prison leaver respondent)

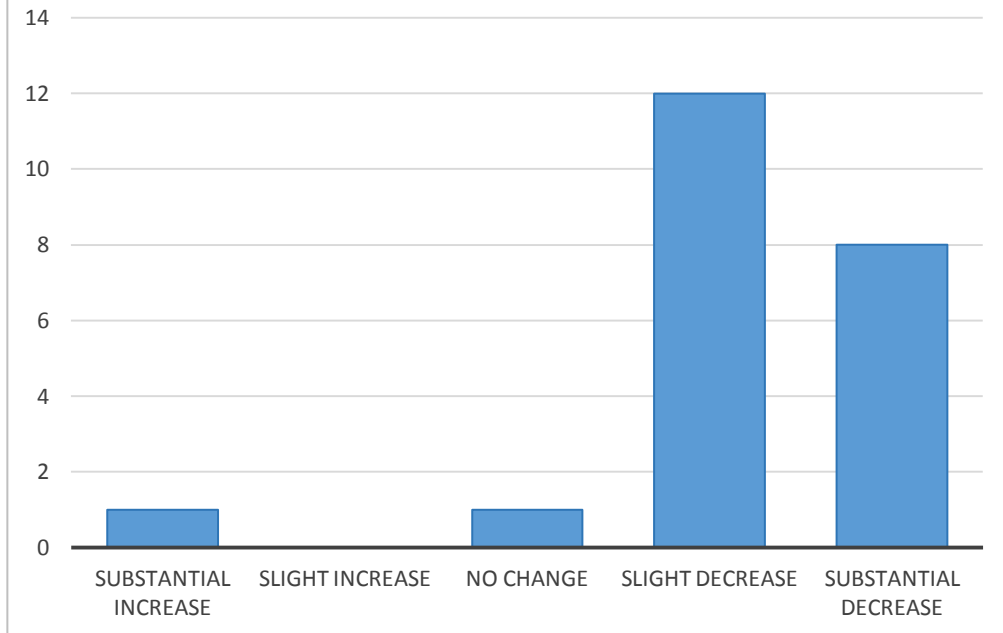
6.4.19 Responsible Officers also referred to some homeless prison leavers deliberately re-offending in order to have shelter in prison:

I know people who come out and offend, literally to go back into prison, because they have a roof over their head and 3 tidy meals, it's warm. I went to see one this week and he said 'yes sometimes I do that, because I come in and I've got a nice place, I've got 2 mattresses on my bed' It's quite sad isn't it? (Responsible Officer)

6.5 Priority Need Status

6.5.1 Respondents to the local authority survey were asked to assess what impact removal of automatic priority need status had on the number of prison leavers eligible for temporary accommodation in their area. As the following figure indicates, perhaps unsurprisingly, almost all local authority survey respondents considered that the removal of automatic priority need status had led to reductions in the number of prisoners eligible for temporary accommodation:

Figure 16: Local authority survey respondents' perceptions of the impact removing automatic priority need status has had on the numbers of prison leavers eligible for temporary accommodation in their area.



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=22 answered this question)

6.5.2 Nonetheless, local authority stakeholders were mostly supportive of the decision to remove prisoners' automatic priority need status. Accounts here focused on several issues, the first being the morality of providing advanced status to an individual who had offended over an individual in a similar position who may not have offended:

It was felt that accommodation priority need wasn't having the desired effect and you can have two comparable individuals, the only difference being one had been in custody and one hasn't and that person would have priority over accommodation compared to the other and that wasn't perceived as fair (Local authority stakeholder).

6.5.3 In addition the previous system of conferring priority need status on all prison-leavers was understood by some local authority and community based stakeholders as having created a perverse incentive to re-offend:

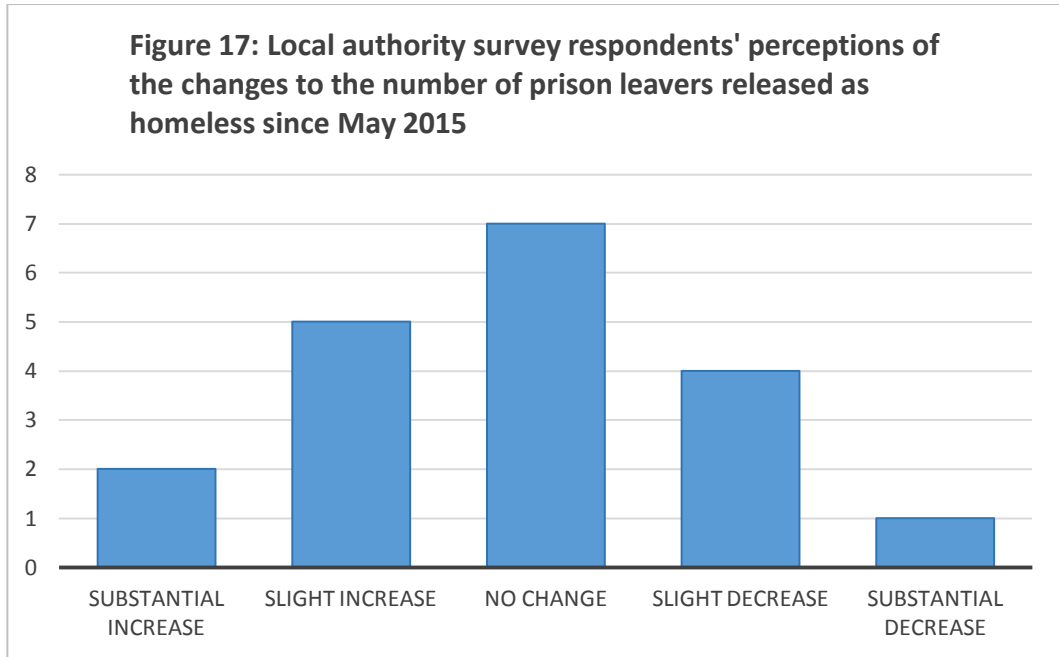
It didn't work, prison leavers automatically assumed that once they lost their temporary accommodation or whatever, they could go and commit an offence go back to prison, then come back out and we would accommodate them again so people would always say to us, "if you're not going to accommodate me I will go and commit a crime and then you have got to accommodate me" (Local authority stakeholder).

- 6.5.4 Support for removing the automatic priority need status was also based on the perceived weaknesses of a system that sought to address homelessness simply by providing qualified rights to shelter. Local authority stakeholders suggested that whilst the previous approach meant some prison leavers were occasionally offered temporary (often B&B) accommodation, the benefits associated with this could be very short term:

I think with the automatic 28 days intention we would say you know in the past "there you go there's the accommodation", 28 days later you are out and that's it, really not do much with them (Local authority stakeholder).

They came out and ...so they would have their 28 days and then they would be found, more often than not, to be 'intentionally homeless' and given their notice to leave with no real help then for moving on (Local authority stakeholder).

- 6.5.5 In the local authority survey opinion was split in relation to whether there had been an increase or decrease in the numbers of prison leavers released as homeless since the National Pathway came into operation:



Base: Survey of 22 local authorities (N=19 answered this question)

6.5.6 As the figure above shows, opinion was fairly evenly split between those who considered there had been some increase or some decrease in the numbers of prison leavers released as homeless since May 2015.

6.5.7 Where an increase was said to have arisen, this was attributed to supply side housing issues and more prisoners being released as homeless where previously they would have been provided with temporary accommodation. Accounts of no change or decreases in the number of prison leavers being released as homeless focused on prison leavers not presenting themselves to housing services or finding their own solutions to homelessness once it became clear that temporary accommodation would not be provided:

Actually a lot of people are going back to last known addresses, finding solutions for themselves, there's not been that huge rise that perhaps we thought there might be (Local authority stakeholder).

Last year we were surprised that the fact that it didn't seem to go up hugely so people are either like I said staying where they were when they went in and thinking "I'm not going to be a priority on accommodation I might as well keep my house" ...so people do try to get other solutions back home or friends and family are helping them (Local authority stakeholder).

- 6.5.8 In contrast to this, prison based stakeholders and Responsible Officers were critical of the removal of automatic priority need status for prison leavers. Their criticism focussed on unmet needs but it was also the case that revised arrangements had confronted them with the issue of homelessness and risk management in a way that had not previously been the case:

If I had a case which was in prison and they were NFA it was highly likely that they would be given temporary accommodation when released. So it was never something I needed to worry about. (Responsible Officer).

So, in terms of making assessments of risk...we could offer an alternative when they had a priority need...But now we can't give an alternative and it's a lot more difficult to police where people are actually staying (Responsible Officer).

- 6.5.9 Very few of the 75 prison leaver respondents who were interviewed in custody were serving their first prison sentence. Thus most were in a position to compare how their housing needs had been assessed and addressed over time. Many of these prison leaver respondents lamented the loss of automatic priority need status. For some automatic eligibility for housing had provided them with some stability on release from prison:

Right listen, that 28 day thing, made the world of difference for me, it gives me time to adjust, I can ask them to stay while I'm going through all the rigmarole of getting a doctor because I needed an address to get a doctor and I have been told they have to give you a sick note and medication, and you have got that time then to sort your money out, so your money is actually going in because you don't get it when you come out, you have to sort it out and it can take 3 or 4 weeks (Prison leaver respondent).

- 6.5.10 That being noted, most of these prison leaver respondents still went on to describe their past experiences in negative terms. They and some Responsible Officers referred to prison leavers being placed in low standard shared accommodation with other prison leavers not all of whom were committed to avoiding substance use and/or crime:

The minute I came out of there they re-accommodated me. I don't like to judge people but they put me with a load of people that I really should not be associated with, people who take drugs, I only drink and I like to keep that to myself, I don't want to be in a community so yeah I was back in within about a month of leaving (Prison leaver respondent).

They gave me accommodation, like a hostel but they gave me a week to get somewhere and after that week they chucked me out, they gave me a list of people to phone up for private rent but nowhere took DSS and that (Prison leaver respondent).

- 6.5.11 Local authority stakeholders valued the leverage new conditional rights to housing gave them. It was linked to better engagement in the housing process by prison leavers:

There is an increase in the average duration of stay in accommodation as those in accommodation are, in the main, engaging better with services in order to then sustain this accommodation and potentially secure more permanent accommodation (Local authority stakeholder).

We are able to actually tighten up the processes and actually have consequences for actions now, whereas before we would get very very frustrated with the rebounds that would often come from prisons where they have needed accommodation, think nothing of it and go back, so for us that has been a positive really (Local authority stakeholder).

6.6 Intentional Homelessness

6.6.1 Many of the prison leaver respondents who were interviewed had histories of failed placements and exclusions based on problematic behaviour. A perception amongst Responsible Officers was that some were excluded from homeless services because of this. In those cases the mechanism by which this exclusion was achieved was for them to be assessed as intentionally homeless:

I just feel that everywhere we go; she's not eligible for temporary accommodation, because she got kicked out of her temporary accommodation on two separate occasions this year, so it was for her own behaviour, substance misuse and aggressive behaviour (Responsible Officer).

Most people I'm having coming out now are considered not vulnerable, or intentionally homeless because they've left bills and debt through previous, or they've smashed a window, or otherwise breached their tenancy agreements in the past and therefore they will be offered advice and support, but they won't be offered emergency accommodation leading to a tenancy (Responsible Officer).

- 6.6.2 A concern here was that some assessments of intentionality seemed sensitive to the likelihood that accommodation could be found as opposed to being focussed on the issue of intentionality itself. The prison leaver respondent discussed in the first extract (above) had been accommodated and then evicted for problematic behaviour from several placements. She presented as in need of high levels of supervision and support but on release she had been assessed as intentionally homeless and issued with a tent. Accounting for this the Responsible Officer, however, refers primarily to the difficulty of finding somewhere that could manage the prison leaver's behavioural problems.

6.7 Local Connections

- 6.7.1 S68 and S73 duties are blind to intentionality and local connection. As a result a concern when the Housing (Wales) Act was implemented was with the potential for local authorities with prisons within their borders to receive an increased number of service requests. Asked to comment on the issue, professional stakeholders did not identify this as a concern that had come to fruition.
- 6.7.2 In the local authority survey, stakeholders suggested that their typical response to receiving an application from a person/household with no local connections was to provide assistance whilst counselling them back to their local area where a final s75 duty might be owed:

The Authority would assist where required and provide details to the person concerned on their options explaining possible outcomes so that they are able to make an informed choice around whether to proceed with an application with the Council (Local authority stakeholder).

- 6.7.3 However, during interviews whilst asserting their own practices were compliant with the legislation, local authority stakeholders frequently castigated practices at neighbouring local authorities where the perception was that local connections were assessed too early:

Prisoners have disclosed to the team previously that other Local Authorities have refused to assist because of no local connection even though they meet priority need (Local authority stakeholder).

Other areas are far too ready to send them back 'to whence they came from' as it were without exploring with them why they don't want to return (Local authority stakeholder).

6.8 Supporting People and Support Services

- 6.8.1 In the survey, local authority stakeholders were asked what changes, if any, had been made since May 2015 to the availability and use of Supporting People services for prison leavers. Answers here coalesced around two themes. The first focused on funding and services being the same or better:

I do not believe there has been a change in commissioning since May 2015 (Local authority stakeholder).

There has been an increase in the use of Supporting People services for prison leavers and there are closer working relationships (Local authority stakeholder).

Floating support, tenancy support and any other criminal justice accommodation we have available hasn't stopped, the supported people funding still continued (Local authority stakeholder).

6.8.2 Local authority stakeholders also perceived that the level of support offered to prisoners in the longer term was better than it was before the National Pathway was introduced:

We have gone out to offer support in private accommodation as well, because we are housing more in private, supporting people have done it so we can cover social housing and private accommodation (Local authority stakeholders).

I think because of the pathway prisoners are being supported a lot more than maybe they were in the past so in a sense it is quite a good thing and very anecdotally I've heard a couple of people say that prisoners are getting a much better deal that they used to (Local authority stakeholders).

I think that people coming out of custody are now placed in more appropriate accommodation for their needs rather than into temporary accommodation... we are a lot more conscious to make sure someone has some long term support in place, rather than just "oh you're housed now it doesn't matter". (Local authority stakeholders).

6.8.3 A prison leaver respondent concurred with the assessment. Reflecting on her past and current experiences she commented:

They just gave you a letter and said take this letter to housing and I think that was because they had to house you for 28 days but I think since then they have started doing as much as they can for you ...I think with the letter like you were guaranteed something but I think now you get more support. You fill the forms in and they are aware of you coming out and I think it's better you get the support (Prison leaver respondent).

6.8.4 The second theme that arose in relation to Supporting People funding related to such funding being used to enable better delivery of the National Pathway (which is discussed in more detail later):

6.9 Final duty

6.9.1 Most local authority stakeholders considered that there had been a slight or substantial reduction in the number of adult prison leavers becoming eligible for s75 final duty. Accounts of this, however, were mostly positive in that many respondents referred to this arising by dint of other duties being successfully discharged:

The number has slightly reduced for two reasons. Firstly, individuals are engaging with services during the Section 73 duty and as such are then securing accommodation before any consideration is given to section 75 duties being owed. Secondly, there has been a higher level of engagement in terms of sustaining temporary housing for offenders in part due to this and then obtaining the duties owed under Section 75 (Local authority stakeholder).

6.10 Discharging Duties

6.10.1 As already noted, some professional stakeholders referred to difficulties discharging duties because some prison leavers were 'well known' and difficult to house because they have previously engaged in anti-social behaviour:

6.10.2 Local authority and community based stakeholders also referred to difficulties discharging duties because there was a gap between the need for affordable housing for prisoners and supply:

We have issues in identifying suitable privately rented accommodation, particularly for single applicants under the age of 35 (Local authority stakeholder).

have seen my colleagues and myself spend days phoning around landlords, phoning around estate agents to try and find accommodation for people, but you look in your average estate agent and they'll have a flat for rent and it'll say 'No DHS' no benefits, so straight away you've got a problem. (Responsible Officer).

6.10.3 Depending on the local authority areas concerned, the preponderance of holiday homes, the rural nature of the authority, the presence of students or large infrastructure projects could impact on the availability of accommodation for prison leavers who tended to be single males:

In the summer especially hotels have a business- they don't need the housing options team to book rooms so it's very difficult to find the accommodation (Community based stakeholder).

xxxx is a University county, the landlords here don't have a thirst for accommodation because it's already fulfilled because they have students they don't need us (Local authority stakeholder).

7. Findings: Better Practice

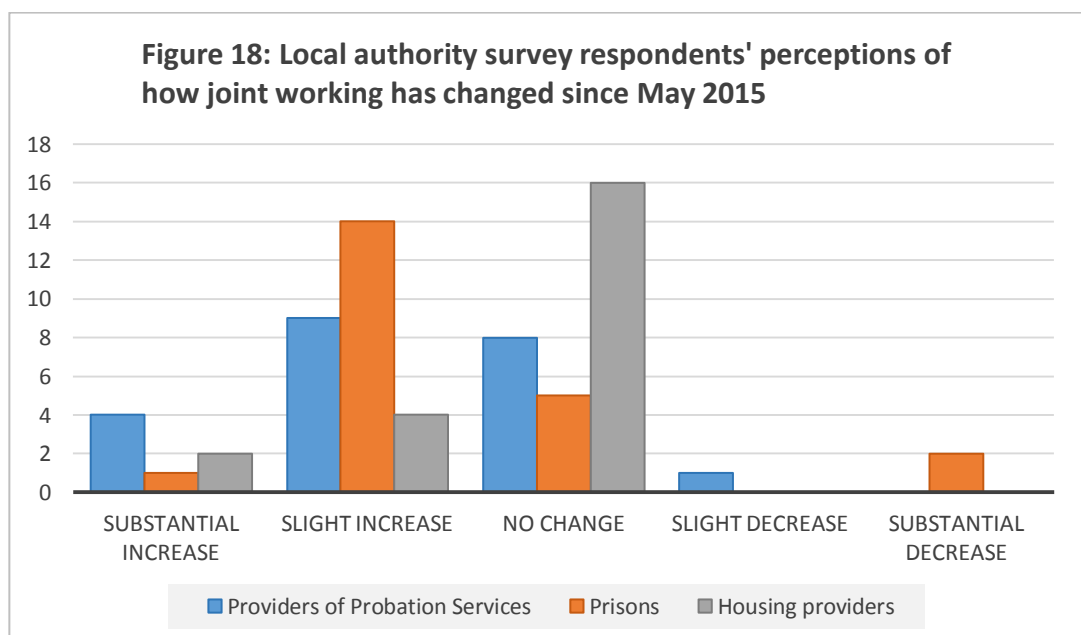
7.1 Joint Working and Information Sharing

7.1.1 Professional stakeholders referred to problems with information flows between agencies. Nonetheless, they also referred to recent improvements in joint working between agencies engaging with prison leavers:

Generally the feedback is information sharing services has got a lot better. The way in which Local Authorities and gate services are talking together they are much more closely linked now and the way in which they are working within the prison service before release is now working much better (Local authority stakeholder).

And the council as well and I think, probably due to changes in legislation, but the council are more on board, (Community based stakeholder).

7.1.2 The following figures illustrate responses to an invitation in the Local authority survey to select a statement to describe how, if at all, joint working with criminal justice agencies and housing providers had developed since May 2015:



Base: Survey of 22 local authority areas (22 responded to this question)

- 7.1.3 As may be noted, 13 local authority survey respondents considered that there had been a ‘substantial’ or ‘slight’ increase in joint working with providers of probation services since May 2015. 15 local authority survey respondents considered that there had been a ‘substantial’ or ‘slight increase’ in joint working with prisons since that date.
- 7.1.4 Eight local authority survey respondents considered there had been ‘no change’ in joint working with providers of probation services, and five were of the same view in relation to joint working with prisons. Perceptions about joint working with housing providers were that there had been less change.
- 7.1.5 A subset of survey respondents referred to historical good levels of joint working which had been maintained or built upon as a result of new processes:
- We have always had positive relations with probation and housing providers (Local authority stakeholder).*
- With prison referrals / risk assessments coming through before release we have more joint working with CRC / Probation and also with prisons. Previously we would have some involvement with these agencies, but not as a matter of course for a released prisoner who is homeless (Local authority stakeholder).*
- 7.1.6 That being said, it should be reiterated that positive evaluations of joint working existed alongside fairly critical accounts of experiences in accessing and sharing information about prison leavers. Reference has already been made to the difficulties Local authority stakeholders had with regards to receiving Annex 8 and 9 details. Many local authority, prison based and community based stakeholders referred to difficulties accessing information from each other. It was suggested this created problems all along the National Pathway in managing risk and ensuring individuals were assisted into appropriate accommodation. The following respondent gave an account of risk being heightened because information was not shared:

We even had one person... we placed him and it was only afterwards we found out that he was a registered sex offender from a different LA and no-one had told us, not even his probation officer (Local authority stakeholder).

- 7.1.7 Communication and information sharing was described as being more seamless where staff knew each other personally rather than procedurally. This was likely to be the case where a SPOC existed for prison leavers in a local authority area or where a local authority staff member dealt with a single prison and/or probation service contact over housing issues:

I think what is difficult is not knowing who to contact and having to go through switchboards, in both directions to speak to the LA or for them to speak to us... so a SPOC is easier because without one it's quite tricky then to sustain those relationships on the ground (Responsible Officer).

It's just the whole networking thing really, putting faces to names...they are getting that relationship build up so it is making it a lot easier (Local authority stakeholder).

7.2 Pathway Adaptations

- 7.2.1 In some local authority areas, adaptations had been made to the National Pathway some of which were funded from the Transitional Fund or Supporting People grant. Such adaptations were associated with perceptions of more positive outcomes for prison leavers.
- 7.2.2 One example of such an adaptation was the PREP project operating across parts of south Wales. Local authority and other stakeholders gave different accounts of the strategic and practical arrangements that existed and allowed tasks that would otherwise have fallen within the remit of the Local authority to be delegated to PREP staff. Such staff attended prisons to engage with prison leavers after it had been assessed they were not eligible for temporary accommodation on release. They provided support

in finding accommodation and associated tasks such as sourcing bonds, furniture or references:

XXX liaises between the prisons, probation, ourselves and any other agency that may be involved. So before they are released, we have been notified 56 days before they come out, we have been notified of their release date, we have got a risk assessment and we have got a needs assessment and any other information we need like previous history of where they have lived and things like that (Local authority stakeholder).

7.2.3 Staff with knowledge of the PREP project were largely positive about the way it worked to engage prison leavers with services. For some, however, the PREP scheme was problematic because access to it relied on an early judgement about vulnerability and eligibility for s68 duties:

We shouldn't be making a decision about priority at that stage that was my reservation about that. I'm not entirely comfortable with that model (Community based stakeholder).

7.2.4 Some respondents referred positively to a new initiative called "Justice Cymru". Justice Cymru staff had been embedded in CRC teams in south Wales with a remit to take referrals and help all offenders find and/or deal with accommodation issues. Some referrals, would be for those due out of prison:

It's almost like a coordinating role with prison releases that have come out no fixed abode, they are non-priority, they have possibly presented to the LA on numerous occasions in their life time (Justice Cymru worker) will sort of coordinate then really between the LA and the offender... helping those hard to reach people to engage in a way (Community based stakeholder).

XXX have actually provided a housing advocate, who is actually based in this office so many days a week and he offers advice and signposts people in the right direction, that's a good link for us and knowing housing legislation, if things go wrong, xxx knows he can come in and see xxxx, so that area of stuff is covered (Responsible Officer).

- 7.2.5 Some housing providers in north Wales were especially positive about the Justice Cymru initiative because they perceived they had gaps or voids in their tenancies that the development might address:

There just seems to be a big disconnect between the number of prisoners I assume are leaving on a weekly basis and the amount that are trickling down through us.... this Justice Cymru thing hopefully tighten it up and make it more direct. (Community based stakeholder).

- 7.2.6 As was the case with PREP workers, however, professional stakeholders gave different accounts of the strategic and practical arrangements that allowed tasks that would otherwise fall within the remit of the local authority, to be delegated to Justice Cymru. The potential that PREP staff and Justice Cymru staff might engage with the same prison leaver also seemed to exist.

- 7.2.7 The PREP services and Justice Cymru initiative were more established in south Wales during the fieldwork for this research. Thus professional stakeholders from south Wales were less likely to be pessimistic about the way the National Pathway was working than professional stakeholders in the north. That being said, professional stakeholders in the north engaged exclusively with prisoners accommodated some distance from them and in England. The distances involved for some created additional barriers to engaging with prison leavers.

- 7.2.8 In north Wales HMP Berwyn is nearing the point at which it will be running at its operational capacity. If this prison becomes the resettlement prison for those from north Wales, the expectation would be that resettlement activity would be better orchestrated for Welsh prisoners in north Wales. This would be because prison leavers from north Wales would be

accommodated nearer their home areas; in a prison that probation service providers, local authority and housing staff could more easily visit; where TTG services would be provided by the Wales CRC which is attuned to the Wales legislative, political and social policy context.

7.2.9 In one local authority, a SPOC for prison leavers within the local authority housing team encouraged NPS staff to contact them in advance of an offender attending court and, potentially, being sentenced to custody. In those instances advanced planning could be undertaken to avoid or deal with homelessness at the point of sentence. The added value associated with this approach was the improved information exchange and closer links between providers of probation services and local authority staff dealing with prisoners.

7.2.10 In one area in south Wales the housing SPOC met with probation staff on a monthly basis to identify relevant cases due for release. In another south Wales area, an officer with the NPS had been designated the SPOC for housing issues. This officer received advance notifications from one prison of all prisoners from their area due to be released and who had been seen by the resettlement team:

So they would send me a list of the prisoners they were due to see, I would then encourage the offender manager to contact the resettlement officer and discuss the plan... make sure that the housing application is done, we will forward the risk assessment and just opening that communication (Responsible Officer).

7.2.11 In one Probation office a MAPPA accommodation sub-group had been formed which included five housing managers and a number of registered social landlords. This group looked at ways to get relevant offenders into accommodation and had established a process to refer those prisoners who were in need of accommodation on release to the Local authority at the six-month planning stage in line with the MAPPA planning process.

7.2.12 Less critical evaluations of accommodation provision made for prison leavers were associated with the aforementioned pathway developments. However, accounts of their value were also associated with references to a singularly motivated and energetic staff member who had championed the adaptation from the outset. They were also linked to areas with relatively lower number of prison leavers. Thus, the portability of these adaptations was not clear and some had faltered on those occasions when the originating staff member had been redeployed.

7.2.13 In the context that many prison leavers had to report to their Local authority housing office on release, the contribution that the PACT service had begun to make was noted by prison based and community based stakeholders. PACT staff meet prison leavers at the prison gate, keep in touch with them and even take them to appointments with providers of probation services and housing teams:

They will agree to come and pick lads up which is good because we have got lads who have got alcohol problems and ...he's not going to make it to probation, and he's not going to make it to the council, PACT is good in the sense that they can pick them up and take them to their appointments and be with them (Community based stakeholder).

That's a really good service, because they take them to housing and the council and then they get taken to their temporary accommodation (Responsible Officer).

7.2.14 A concern for some community based stakeholders, however, was that the PACT service was only available at a cost to prisoners supervised by the NPS and thus tended not to be utilised in some areas.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 As critical as professional stakeholders could be of the operation of the National Pathway, most evaluated its development as a step in the right direction. This understanding seemed to derive from a perception that The Pathway ‘in principle’ provided access to services for prison leavers. However the commitment and capacity of some organisations to meet demand along the pathway was understood to be limited. CRCs and TTG providers were singled out in this regard by professional stakeholders who also suggested that some local authority housing teams had more to do in terms of moving beyond a procedural and administrative approach to practice and engaging more assertively with prison leavers to help them secure accommodation. More prison leavers may be homeless on release from custody but the level of support provided to those eligible for housing related interventions is considered by many to be better in the medium and longer term than before the National Pathway was introduced.

8.2 The Welsh Government should:

- Continue to evaluate and promote implementation of the National Pathway.
- Develop systems for monitoring housing outcomes for prison leavers.
- Review PLC delivery contracts to ensure they adequately reflect workload demands and contain contingencies in relation to staff absences.
- Develop a system that encourage more cross border working between local authorities to meet housing need
- Remove ‘intentional homelessness’ as a disqualification criteria for housing.

8.3 The Ministry of Justice and HMPPS should:

- Review CRC contract compliance and how the needs of prison leavers are being managed under the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda.
- Devise systems to monitor ex-offenders' accommodation status after release from prison.
- Review the purpose and use made of BCS1 and BSC2.
- Establish processes for re-assessing housing needs at the point of sentence and not just on remand. This will require making it possible for the BCS2 Resettlement Plan to be updated.
- Develop auditing processes that include a timeliness and quality assessment of housing referral and risk assessment (Annex 8/9) practices.
- Establish processes at court to fast track referrals to housing teams where individuals receive short prison sentences/standard recalls
- Ensure that housing referrals are completed only by professional staff.
- Provide the prison local authority area with a quarterly list of prisoners due for release and an indication of their accommodation status.
- Review the inclusion criteria for IOM to ensure 'revolving door' offenders, who move quickly into and out of prisons are provided with the most intensive and potentially most supportive access to services.
- Develop Approved Premises facilities for High Risk females.
- Work within the three regional resettlement meetings to fine tune processes to ensure the smooth running of the National Pathway.
- Work with Resettlement prisons to facilitate controlled access to the internet within the custodial environment to facilitate resettlement activity.

- Explore the possibilities of aligning release and accommodation planning arrangements so that licence conditions have to be identified (via the PD1) 66 days before release.
- Explore potential for developing provision for prison leavers along the lines of the Approved Premises and BASS models.

8.4 The Wales CRC and NPS Wales should:

- Develop auditing processes that include a timeliness and quality assessment of housing risk assessment (Annex 9) practices.
- Link with local women centres to ensure access to gender specific services that can contribute to addressing the complex and multiple needs that most female prison leavers have.
- Review the operation of In-Touch hubs to ensure all prison leavers are actively supervised and monitored during the community phase of their sentence.
- Explore the advantages of having dedicated staff (SPOC) to work with prison leavers as per the 'throughcare' team model.
- Work within the three regional resettlement meetings to fine tune processes to ensure the smooth running of the National Pathway.

8.5 Local authorities should:

- Establish mechanisms for auditing and providing feedback to prisons, NPS and CRC on the timeliness and quality of Annex 8 and Annex 9 referrals.
- Explore the benefits of delegating to dedicated staff the task of engaging and work with prison leavers in custody who are not in priority need (as per the PREP model).
- Ensure all prisoners are interviewed (via video link, on the phone, or in person) for the purposes of assessing housing preferences.
- Develop individualised plans (PHPs) for all prison leavers which link them into meaningful housing options in the community prior to release.

- Ensure copies of PHPs are provided to the prisoner, the prison resettlement team and responsible officers.
- Develop robust internal auditing processes that include a timeliness and quality assessment of PHPs.
- Engage with housing providers to develop a system of providing prisoners who voluntarily give up tenancies on reception with some form of 'advance standing' on release.
- Review the thresholds and evidential requirements associated with conferring priority need status paying particular attention to the relevance of the harm attendant on repeat prison sentences.
- Reassess the priority need status (sec68 eligibility) of all prisoners following release.
- Assess all individuals who present within 7 days of being released from custody on the basis that they are 'Prison Leavers'.
- Train staff in principle of good offender motivation and engagement
- Work within the three regional resettlement meetings to fine tune processes to ensure the smooth running of the National Pathway.
- Continue to promote practices that focus on preventing and relieving homelessness and not just assessing priority need/ sec 75 eligibility.
- Develop partnerships that incentivise private sector provision of accommodation for prison leavers.

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