

Accommodation for Prison Release Offenders.

At the Reducing Reoffending Steering Group meeting concern was raised regarding a long standing issue of a lack of accommodation for offenders post sentence being released from prison. This matter has often been raised at Community Safety Partnership and Integrated Offender Management meetings, however, the response has been limited and reflects the low level of available suitable accommodation in Local Authority areas.

It is clear that attempts to help offenders to rehabilitate and resettle are being significantly hampered by offenders being released back in to the community without the stability of accommodation as a basic need. The ability of those offenders or indeed agencies, such as the NPS, CRC or Health, to support these offenders equally becomes problematic in terms of continuity of contact, making appointments, accessing benefits or securing Education, Training or Employment.

A recent article in the Police Professional (21st June 2017) goes as far as to say, following their own research, that the Through the Gate services are failing. Only 2 of 98 prisoners assessed had been found accommodation and 10 started their licence period with no fixed address. More widely it is said that 1 in 7 prisoners are being released without knowing where they would sleep the first night.¹

The figures (below) from HMP Bullingdon help demonstrate the concern;

Accommodation Profile (extract) – Sept 2016 – May 2017			
Month	Housed	Not Housed or Not Known	Total Released
September 2016	73 (76%)	23 (24%)	96
October 2016	67 (64%)	38 (36%)	105
November 2016	47 (84%)	9 (16%)	56
December 2016	68 (69.4%)	30 (30.6%)	98
January 2017	72 (62.6%)	43 (37.4%)	115
February 2017	43 (66.2%)	22 (33.8%)	65
March 2017	50 (64.9%)	27 (35.1%)	77
April 2017	76 (67%)	38 (33%)	114
May 2017	113 (77%)	34 (23%)	147
TOTAL	609 (69.76%)	264 (30.24%)	873

Members of the Reducing Reoffending Steering Group have been asked to help escalate these concerns and Board members are invited to consider how to support and raise awareness of the issue more widely to help influence any possible change.

David Colchester, LCJB Programme Manager

¹ Police Professional (21st June 2017) article by Adam Button following an interview of Dame Glenys Stacey, HMCI of Probation and Frances Crook, CEO of the Howard League for Penal Reform.