

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: LF/CS/00341/14

Christine Chapman AM
Chair
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

1 April 2014

Dear Chris,

Housing (Wales) Bill: Stage 1 Committee Report - CELG Committee

Your Committee's report highlights members' concerns about meeting the housing needs of former prisoners as a result of the changes in the Bill to the current priority need categories. In light of this, I thought it might be helpful if I provided an update on the action that is in hand to improve current arrangements.

You may recall I wrote to you on 19 February 2014, enclosing a note to the Committee on the Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group. I established the group with the intention that all current and former prisoners will be able to access the improved homelessness services that will result from Part 2 of the Bill. The note described the Group, its membership, and issues and priorities that have been identified. I also outlined its planned work. My ultimate goal is to have in place a national standard for the housing support provided to prisoners and this is represented in the attached work programme.

Please find attached information on the action that has been taken and additional action, the arrangements for which are in hand. Given the commitment that has been shown by the wide range of organisations that are involved in the group, I am confident that arrangements to support prisoners with their accommodation needs prior to release, and where necessary housing issues upon remand, will be significantly improved. The latter is particularly important to help avoid a loss of home for those on remand or in prison for relatively short periods.

I am committed to better support for all prisoners, including those who are vulnerable. As I have already indicated, I am also reinforcing our commitment to meet the needs of vulnerable people by amending the Bill to refer to physical and mental health and disability, as well as including a definition of vulnerability.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you or any members of your Committee have any further queries on the Group and its work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carl Sargeant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'C' and a long, horizontal tail.

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**Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group
Work Programme 2014/15: Key elements**

	Action	Timeline
1	Prisoner Accommodation and Resettlement Working Group established	January 2014
2	Initial meetings (3) to scope issues and develop work programme	January/February 2014
3	Initial project needs identified	February/March 2014
4	Initial briefing prepared on developments in Wales to inform tenderers for Community Rehabilitation Company contracts	February 2014
5	Project: Mapping of existing services and provision to identify support systems in place, gaps and further development needed – project commenced	March 2014
6	Project: Scoping and development of a female prisoner pathway proposal	March 2014
7	Project: Sub-group formed for co-ordination of pathways for all prisoners in Parc Prison, with a particular focus on vulnerable prisoners with a mental health needs.	March 2014
8	Reducing Re-Offending Strategy introduced (relevant to the group's work)	March 2014
9	Project: Mapping of existing services and provision – initial report (see note below table)	April 2014
10	Development of Statutory Guidance: Drafting sub-group established	April 2014
11	Project: Mapping of existing services and provision – Regional Development Events (3)	April/May 2014
12	Project: Parc Prison – project commenced	May 2014
13	Project: Mapping of existing services and provision – final report, including report from Regional Development Events	May 2014
14	Review of existing projects: Review and critical appraisal of support delivered through existing project funding streams – reviews commenced	May 2014
15	Project: Female prisoner pathway project - project commenced	June 2014
16	Review of existing projects: Review housing related support offered to former prisoners under the Supporting People programme – commence evaluation	June 2014
17	Statutory Guidance: Draft guidance available and reviewed	September 2014
18	Review of existing projects: Conclusions and recommendations from review and critical appraisal of existing projects	October 2014
19	Project: Parc Prison – interim report	October 2014

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20	Review of existing projects: Review housing related support offered to former prisoners under the Supporting People programme – final report	November 2014
21	Project: Female prisoner pathway pilot – interim report	December 2014
22	Publish national standard for providing housing support to prisoners	December 2014
23	Training programme designed in light of findings from pilot projects and national standard	December 2014
24	Project: Parc Prison– final report	March 2015
25	Project: Female prisoner pathway– final report	March 2015

Note:

Initial feedback from the mapping pilot project identified opportunities for additional studies and/or pilot projects. These are being considered and will inform future expansion of the Group's work programme.

- Prevention work between Swansea Housing options team and Swansea Prison
- Anglesey Housing support pilot project
- Regional hub approach
- Cross border hub approach
- Reciprocal arrangements
- Pilot "A Better Chance" protocol, developed between criminal justice partners in 2006, across North Wales
- Addressing issues for leaving temporary accommodation