

Written Submission to the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee: Inquiry into Rough Sleeping

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in Wales is a directorate within HMPPS that delivers offender management services across Wales accounting for the unique delivery landscape in Wales. HMPPS in Wales aims to enable close partnership working between key devolved and non-devolved services in support of our core strategic aims to reduce reoffending, prevent victims and protect the public. This includes ongoing engagement between the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Welsh Government, Wales Office and other key partners. The Executive Director of HMPPS in Wales is responsible for the National Probation Service (NPS) in Wales, public sector prisons (PSPs) in Wales including HMP Berwyn and has contract management responsibility for the Wales Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and private prison HMP Parc.

As at December 2017 HMPPS in Wales manage around 4,270 offenders in custody which will increase to nearer 5,500 as HMP Berwyn reaches its capacity.¹ At any time HMPPS in Wales will supervise over 16,000 offenders in custody or the community.² Earlier studies undertaken for prisons across England and Wales demonstrate the importance of a continued focus and partnership approach to getting individuals into accommodation. In a 2012 study on homelessness in prisoners, 15% reported that they were homeless before entry to custody.³ In 2014/15 approximately 11% of people released from custody had no settled accommodation which is defined as any housing which is permanent independent housing.⁴

HMPPS in Wales welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry into Rough Sleeping. We recognise the significant link between accessing and retaining suitable and sustainable accommodation and desistance from offending. Accommodation is critical in the successful management of risk and harm and in supporting an individual to turn away from crime. This submission will cover the following areas:

- Ministry of Justice Housing Strategy
- The current estate in Wales - Approved Premises and Bail Assisted Support Scheme.
- Through the Gate (TTG) and Resettlement Provision.
- Operational impact of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-figures-2017>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2017>

³ Ministry of Justice (2012) Accommodation, homelessness and reoffending of prisoners, London: Ministry of Justice

⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/449925/mi-addendum.pdf - Adobe Acrobat Pro.pdf. For a definition of settled accommodation please see p.73.

- Next steps and priorities for HMPPS in Wales.

Ministry of Justice Housing Strategy

HMPPS is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). The UK Government recognises that access to suitable accommodation is an important foundation for supporting an individual to reduce their likelihood of reoffending. Everyone leaving custody should have a safe and suitable home to go to on release. This can provide a stable platform which supports other areas such as accessing health services and gaining employment which contribute further to reducing reoffending.

In November 2016, the MOJ published its Prison Safety and Reform White Paper.⁵ The White paper outlined several areas that the Government intended to address, including improving accommodation outcomes for offenders released from prison. Overcoming the many barriers offenders face to securing suitable accommodation is something that MOJ cannot do in isolation and a partnership approach with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Welsh Government will deliver joint strategies to improve access to housing for those being released from prisons in England and Wales. This work will build upon existing support for those at risk of homelessness and develop pilots to support offenders to access and sustain tenancies on release from prison.

The current estate – Approved Premises and Bail Accommodation and Support Services.

Approved Premises

HMPPS in Wales have four Approved Premises (APs) in Wales (Bangor, Ruabon, Cardiff and Swansea). Each have 23 to 26 beds for male offenders. APs are a vital resource, providing enhanced monitoring and control for male offenders who are predominantly prison leavers and assessed as posing a high risk of causing serious harm. An AP is an environment which encourages successful reintegration back into communities, supports public protection and opportunities for rehabilitation. A priority for HMPPS in Wales is to increase the provision of AP places in Wales to meet the demand requirements.

It is recognised that APs are temporary placements and Local Authorities must work with offenders during their placement to prevent homelessness on release; usually through Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). HMPPS in Wales work closely with Welsh Government and on a regional basis through MAPPA Coordinators to engage with Local Authorities to prevent homelessness of high risk offenders and to reduce the risk they pose to the public.

Bail Accommodation and Support Services (BASS)

The MOJ provides suitable temporary accommodation for individuals on Bail, Home Detention Curfew, Additional License Cohort through the contracted-out Bail Accommodation and Support Services (BASS). BASS operates across England and Wales and is currently delivered by Stonham. This contract is due to end in June 2018 and there is a new tender process underway. The service is provided for offenders

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/565014/cm-9350-prison-safety-and-reform-_web_.pdf

on Bail, Home Detention Curfew and Additional License Cohort for medium to low risk offenders.

The Additional License Cohort includes:

- Offenders leaving prison custody having served a sentence of less than four years who do not have accommodation on release. They must also meet the BASS eligibility criteria on risk.
- Places can also be offered to offenders on license in the community who are at risk of recall due to the loss of suitable accommodation. They must also meet the BASS eligibility criteria on risk.

There are currently ten properties in Wales which offer a total of 31 bed spaces. There are six beds for female offenders and 25 for men. The provider is able to change this ratio dependent on demand.

Through the Gate and Resettlement

As a result of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) 2014 all adult prisoners can access 'Through the Gate' (TTG) resettlement services. This is a tailor-made package of support which starts with the individual on entry to custody and is continued in the last 12 weeks before release. This service aims to make sure that offenders are located as close to home as possible and includes addressing offenders housing and accommodation needs.

The Wales CRC deliver TTG services across all prisons in Wales apart from HMP Usk. To make sure that Welsh women in custody in England are appropriately supported through their resettlement, The Wales CRC also deliver in HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal where a number of Welsh women are held.

Operational impact of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014:

To manage the operational impact the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, particularly the change in priority status for prison leavers, the Prisoner Accommodation Resettlement Working Group (PARWG) was established. It was a multiagency group chaired by Welsh Government of which HMPPS in Wales were integral. Other members included the Wales CRC, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Homelessness Network, Local Authorities, HMP Eastwood Park and key voluntary sector organisations.

The groups' remit was to ensure that Welsh prison leavers benefitted from the same preventative approach to homelessness as citizens within the community and to minimise the risk of homelessness for prison leavers. There were a number of positive outputs including:

- Publication of the National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults Leaving in the Secure Estate.
- Jointly created information leaflets and posters for prisoners, disseminated across all prisons in Wales and key prisons in England (where population of Welsh prisoners were highest,) printed by HMP Parc's printing press.
- Jointly created leaflets for private landlords to encourage the housing of prison leavers.

- The National Probation Service and Welsh Government delivered joint training events on the Act and the National Pathway process across Wales for National Probation Service Community Rehabilitation Company, prison and LA staff.
- Wales Community Rehabilitation Company co-produced the Through the Gate ‘good tenants’ group work intervention with Welsh Government to equip prisoners with the necessary skills to secure and maintain tenancies.

Welsh Government, HMPPS in Wales and others worked extremely closely to develop The National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults Leaving in the Secure Estate, launched in December 2015. This has been key to supporting the operational implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The associated guidance clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of each organisation involved and how they should interface to prevent homelessness on release. The PARWG oversaw the implementation of the Pathway and the group has been paused to await the outcome of independent research on the Pathway’s effectiveness.

The Pathway is accompanied by additional resources to support its delivery. Welsh Government has funded Prison Link Cymru which provides support services for short-term prisoners on entry to custody alongside The Wales CRC. This can help prisoners to retain their tenancies and/or maintain housing benefit claims to avoid risk of homelessness on release. Where this is not possible Prison Link Cymru support prisoners to relinquish their tenancies and/or claims to avoid debt which may act as a barrier to securing housing on release.

Welsh Government and HMPPS in Wales also continue to fund an Accommodation Pathway Officer which is a unique post in Wales. This post has enabled us to:

- Establish and chair regional Prisoner Accommodation Resettlement Groups across Wales.
- Carry out regular deep-dive exercises, comparing records held by HMPPS with Local Authority records to determine if the Pathway process is being followed and to overcome any identified barriers.
- Continue to roll out multi-agency training to support criminal justice and Local Authority staff on collaborative working.
- Support close local partnership working and intervene in critical or complex cases to prevent homelessness where possible.

The emphasis of the Pathway is to minimise the use of emergency accommodation through prevention and partnership working. There are, however, occasions where accommodation is not secured prior to an offender being released. All prisoners released in Wales are supervised by either the NPS or The Wales CRC and in cases where an individual is a rough sleeper all steps will be taken to best support that individual to find suitable accommodation. This includes securing temporary emergency accommodation, referrals to the Local Authority and additional services offered by The Wales CRC to support individuals back into stable accommodation.

Next steps and priorities for HMPPS in Wales:

As we have outlined there is a lot of good work and progress in relation to the provision of housing and appropriate support for offenders. However, we understand how critical sustainable accommodation is not only for offenders in Wales but also their wider network including family, dependants and significant others.

HMPPS in Wales have commissioned an Accommodation Project as part of a broader internal programme of change and improvement across the directorate. An Accommodation Steering Group has been established with representation from Welsh Government and other partners to support the direction and implementation of this project. This project is progressing:

- Working with the MOJ to make sure devolved differences and ways of working are reflected in the Housing Strategy.
- Reviewing internal and external partnership arrangements through the National Pathway to ensure its effective and successful operation across HMPPS in Wales.
- Learning from best practice interventions across Wales and the UK to support the development of accommodation solutions that build capacity and supply of housing for offenders.
- Building and developing relationships across social housing and the private rental sector.
- Increasing AP provision including the exploration of virtual APs in partnership with Local Authorities. This includes accommodation for women and their dependents resettling in Wales.
- Exploring options for integrating offender employment opportunities and Welsh Government's aims to increase housing across Wales.
- Reviewing and implementing any potential recommendations for HMPPS in Wales as a result of the forthcoming independent evaluation of the Pathway.
- Understanding the impact of the Welsh Government Rough Sleeper Count Report due for publication this year.

HMPPS in Wales look forward to the outcome of this important enquiry. We remain committed to working collaboratively with our partners to improve accommodation outcomes for all our offenders and to minimise the risk of homelessness.