

**OFFENDERS /EX-OFFENDERS NEEDS ANALYSIS INFORMATION**

**SUMMARY OF NEEDS HIGHLIGHTED:**

**FLOATING SUPPORT:** Increase in floating support is required to deal with significant evidence of barriers ex-offenders face in accessing and maintaining accommodation, accessing services, and rebuilding their lives following prison discharge. This need is supported, though not quantified by commissioned research, but can be estimated at **385** people per year requiring support in this regard (average 700 prison leavers returning to Plymouth, with 55% of those not receiving support from Probation service). Consideration needs to be given to specific focus on numbers released to no fixed abode (with no support from probation) – with an estimated **89** ex-offenders in this category who are likely to have difficulties in accessing housing, and where focussed support could help to prevent high re-offending rates within this group.

**ACCOMMODATION BASED SUPPORT:** Commissioned research does not identify a need for further supported accommodation, though providers identified high demand for their accommodation based support. It is unclear whether the shortage of general needs accommodation where support can be provided on a floating basis. Due to the potential high levels of demand, this is a priority area of research to explore needs.

**1. The scale of potential need:**

**Prison leavers returning to Plymouth:** An average of 8538 people are released from the 12 South West prisons annually, with an estimate, generalised from quarterly returns, suggesting around 700 prisoners returning to Plymouth annually.

HM Prison Service, South West: Cited Swing, December 2003, July 2004 and November 2004.

**2. Indicators of need for housing support for ex-offenders:**

**Rough sleeping/housing needs for ex-offenders:** Figures differ somewhat in relation to ex-offenders who are likely to have no fixed abode, with HM Prison Service South West (citing Swing, June 2003) stating that 44% of those returning to the South west do so with 'no fixed abode', and Social Exclusion Unit (2001) data stating that 37% of prison leavers have nowhere permanent to live, and details of actual releases from South West prisons showing that proportions are perhaps lower than this.

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Details of quarterly releases from South West Prisons			
	7-9/2003	4-6/2004	7-9/2004
<b>Total prisoners released in period</b>	3193	2273	2299
<b>(Total prisoners released who had served less than 12 months)</b>	1797 (56.3%)	1125 (49.6)	1097 (47.8%)
Prisoners released to permanent accommodation	2132 (66.8%)	1353 (61%)	1338 (60.1%)
Prisoners released to bail/probation hostels		130 (5.9%)	116 (5.2%)
Prisoners released into supported housing		38 (1.7%)	39 (1.8%)
Prisoners released as transient/short-term accommodation		197 (8.9%)	213 (9.6%)
Prisoners released as 'no fixed abode'	808 (25.3%)	500 (22.6%)	519 (23%)
Prisoners released to unknown destinations	253 (7.9%)		

Local research identified that prison leavers emphasised the importance of accommodation for their stability, but that service providers appeared to have only limited success in helping ex-offenders to access social housing. Services for Vulnerable Adults in the South West, GOSW, 2004.

CORE DATA – Housing Association annual information re. lettings during the period April 2003 to March 2004: indicates that 10% of their total supported housing lettings were allocated to ex-offenders on their release from prison.

**Access to Probation Officer Support:** 55% of those released from prisons served less than 12 months – and therefore have no requirement to work with the Probation Service. However these prisoners often have substantial offending histories and the highest rate of reconviction. Prisoners serving less than 12 month sentences not only have the highest and most persistent re-offending rates but also represent the largest proportion of Prisoners discharged as no fixed abode.

**Family and support:** Year on year the prison population has increased, despite this the number of recorded family visits decreased by 33% in the preceding 3 years to 2004.

- Self reporting by sentenced prisoners show 45% to have lost contact with their family after leaving Prison (SEU Report, cited Swing 2004).
- 22% of prisoners who were married when entering prison, became divorced or separated (ibid).

The social consequence of marital breakdown has a direct impact on a prisoners release back into the community. A shortage of accommodation, poor support networks, and an increase in re-offending rates all contribute to social exclusion. Social Exclusion Unit 2001.

**Potential to re-offend:** Nearly 60% are convicted of another crime within two years. Social Exclusion Unit 2001.

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**Need for literacy support:** 50% of prisoners were found to have reading skills at or below the level of an 11 year old. Social Exclusion Unit 2001.

**Mental health issues:** Around 70% of prison inmates were found to have two or more mental health problems (the most significant being personality disorder). Social Exclusion Unit 2001.

**Drug use:** 60-70% of prisoners were found to be using drugs before imprisonment. Social Exclusion Unit 2001.

**Other issues:** 67% of prisoners were unemployed before imprisonment, and around half had no GP. Nearly half have a history of debt. 27% had been in care as a child. Social Exclusion Unit, 2001.

### 3. Commissioned research regarding needs:

**EKOS Plymouth Vulnerable Groups Housing Research:** A total of 185 different service addresses were contacted, across client groups, and results were statistically modified in order to represent Plymouth in totality – though where organisations not contacted offered unique service provision, the findings will not reflect their services. (PATH, The Ship, and Westcountry Housing Association completed the survey in relation to this client group. Stonham did not provide information).

Organisations reported that 341 ex-offenders were receiving support from their services in Plymouth (7% of total clients who approached services for support).

Client Type	Number of Clients	Support required	Type of support where stated	Number
Ex-offenders	341	No – Zero Low 321 Medium 2 High 18 N/K - Zero  (Low support = 1-2 hours; medium 3-6 hours; high 6+ hours)	Floating	323
			Visiting	0
			Warden	0
			Peripatetic warden	0
			Alarm/on call system	0
			Day time staff on site with emergency call out	0
			24 hour cover with sleeping staff	14
			24 hour cover with waking night staff	4
			Live in landlady/landlord	4
			Anything else	0

No shortfalls in the provision of actual accommodation were identified for ex-offenders. Shortfalls were identified in relation to the provision of housing related support for ex-offenders - the data is not client group specific, but 39% of organisations said there was insufficient quantity, 7% said there was insufficient

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quality, and 5% a combination of both, with 6% giving some other reason and 3% unable to say.

### ACTIV8 Provider Survey:

The following organisations were surveyed with regard to demand for their services:

Name of provider	Referrals between April – Sept. 03	Service users taking up service in period	Waiting list?	Perception of demand
Stonham – Hillcrest	Decant was in operation – referrals not representative.	N/a	Not appropriate	Perception of high demand.
Stonham – Townsend House	24	10	Not appropriate.	Referrals in time period represent average level of demand.
PATH – Probation	131	85	No.	Felt to be a demand for service but work was needed to increase referral rates from Probation.
Mon Abri (primary service user group drug and alcohol – but majority of people taking up are prison leavers).	10	10	Normally 3-4	Perception of high demand – don't always record all calls but many more requests for accommodation than they can deal with.

### 4. Drugs and alcohol – the link with offending

**100% OF THOSE WHO ARE RECEIVING COMMUNITY DRUG TREATMENT IN PLYMOUTH ARE (EX)OFFENDERS.**

**Criminal Justice interventions related to drug and alcohol dependence and misuse in Plymouth:**

	2002-2003	2003-2004
Total number of drug related arrests	13,822	10,530
Total number of offenders <u>commencing</u> drug treatment and testing orders	48	44
Total number of successful <u>completions</u> of drug treatment and testing orders	Unknown	15

**Increase in crime as a result of drug use:** Drug related crime in Plymouth has increased by 31% since 2001, and alcohol related crime increased by 29% over the same period, and offences committed while drunk increased by 37%. For the same period alcohol misuse is attributed to 80-90% of all violent crime in the City of

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Plymouth on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, recorded crime 2001 to 2004.

### 5. Information about needs highlighted through consultation

#### (a) Provider Forum 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2004:

- Poor processes in place i.e. re. co-ordinating services.
- Need to have honest communication from e.g. Probation about the risks. Some kind of secure information sharing vehicle – possibly build on web-based system used for joint assessment process.
- Need to find a way to manage/work with risk, rather than exclude clients because of risk.
- Clients are more of a risk to society if they are on the streets.
- Common assessment procedure across agencies required.
- Ex-offenders feel barred from services and need advocacy.
- EKOS information is incorrect – only Townsend House is listed as accommodation for ex-offenders and this is not the case.
- Need for more services, especially for mentally disordered offenders.
- Providers requesting more information on how the City Council prioritises housing applications.

#### (b) Service user consultation 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2004:

Focus Group notes Townsend House  
2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004

Present: 8 male and 1 female clients

##### 1. Priorities

Clients were agreed that appropriate move on accommodation was their highest priority. There was a lack of both local authority and housing association vacancies and a perception that both ignored ex-offenders. It was felt that the accommodation available in the private sector was generally of poor quality and presented financial barriers where 1 months rent and significant deposits were required in advance. Clients felt that there was a lack of security in the private sector relative to Council or RSL properties. Support was important and access to someone, with knowledge of the services available, who would advocate on behalf of clients, was a priority.

##### 2. Trouble accessing services.

Clients felt that they had trouble accessing all services and that ex-offender status was a barrier.

##### Accommodation.

Lack of suitable move on accommodation was highlighted. The information given to offenders about their future accommodation options was neither

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accurate nor realistic. The shortage of accommodation and lack of employment opportunities increases the likelihood of re-offending.

### Support

The need for support was emphasised, in particular the need for advocacy to access all services. It was felt that there is a lack of information on who to approach and how to access services, that there was also a lack of respect for individuals and that, in some cases, staff training could be improved. The lack of supported placements on work programs also presents a barrier to good quality accommodation and self-respect.

### Changes to services

The single issue, which clients focussed on, was the lack of empathy and respect in the system and the need to improve two-way communication. In the case of Supporting People service providers, improved staff training could resolve the problem but the perception persisted that ex-offenders are not treated with respect by many of the statutory agencies and do not have fair and equal access to services available when compared to other client groups.

- 7 **The prioritisation exercise:** Using a prioritisation 'ladder' and a set of cards with housing support related tasks depicted on them (together with some blank cards that participants could use to fill in their own priorities) the service user group prioritised the following tasks.

Category	Points
Finding accommodation	17
Maintaining a home or tenancy	8
Help to get support from other agencies	4
A befriender or peer support	4
Culturally specific services	3
Skills to socialise	3
Help, advice or support re safety and security	2
Ability to call for help	1
Emotional support or non-specialist counselling	1

(NB a higher points total = greater priority afforded to the task).

## 6. Youth offenders

**Fixed term exclusions from school:** These have risen by 59% to 886 in 2002/2003 – for girls this increase has been even more pronounced – 139%. Almost 800 of this number is attributed to disruptive behaviour. (Crime and Disorder Audit 2004: 81).

**Experiences as a youth affecting later offending:** Convicted prisoners are 13 times more likely to have been in care as a child, and 10 times more likely to have been a regular truant from their school education. Furthermore, past research has shown

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86% of excluded pupils were known to the Police with an average of 6 offences each.  
Crime and Disorder Audit 2004: 24.

**Rate of offending in young people:** Mori's Youth Survey in 2004 indicated that over a quarter of mainstream pupils had committed a criminal offence in 12 months. Young people excluded from school represent 60% of this figure. 79% of this figure committed serious offences while 50% of the same number were involved in assaults.  
Crime and Disorder Audit 2004: 83.

### 7. Plymouth Probation Service – support provided

#### Caseload snapshot as at 31.10.2004

Type of order	Amount of cases held
Community rehabilitation and community punishment and rehabilitation order	307
Custodial punishment orders	110
Custodial sentences – pre-release	319
Custodial sentences – pre-release?	98

In addition to this, custodial sentences of less than 12 months and released without licence or criminal justice intervention are estimated at 4 to 5 per week.