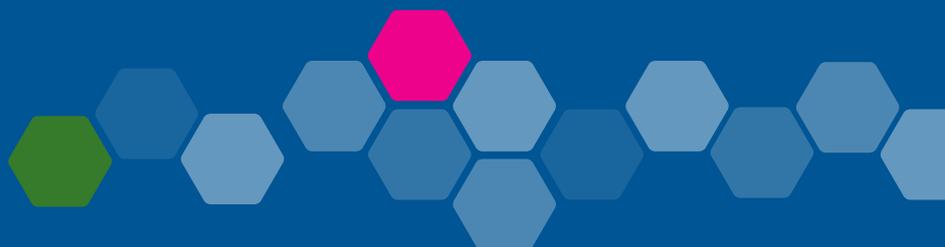


Housing and Reoffending: Supporting people who serve short-term sentences to secure and sustain stable accommodation on liberation



PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

**Housing and Reoffending:
Supporting People Who Serve
Short-term Sentences to Secure
and Sustain Stable Accommodation
on Liberation**

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June 2015**

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym	Definition
B&B	Bed & Breakfast
BBA	British Bankers' Association
CAB(x)	Citizens Advice Bureau(x)
CIU	Community Integration Unit
CJA	Community Justice Authority
CJSW	Criminal Justice Social Work
CoSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
CRP	Community Reintegration Project
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
G.P.	General Practitioner
HDC	Home Detention Curfew
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HMPYOI	Her Majesty's Prison and Young Offenders' Institution
HMYOI	Her Majesty's Young Offenders' Institution
ID	Identification
NFA	No Fixed Abode
NHS	National Health Service
pgh	Paragraph
PR2	The SPS national prisoner records system
PSP	Public Social Partnership
RAG	Research Advisory Group
RRCF	Reducing Reoffending Change Fund
RRP2	Reducing Reoffending Programme Phase 2
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SPS	Scottish Prison Service
SWF	Scottish Welfare Fund
TSO	Throughcare Support Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report presents the findings of research to provide evidence and understanding to inform the development of policy and practice for preventing homelessness, securing stable accommodation and improving housing outcomes for those who serve short-term sentences in Scotland. The research was carried out between February and June 2015.

Background and context

2. A Ministerial Group on Offender Reintegration was established in October 2013 to improve integration between the justice system and wider universal services. The Group recognised that many professionals believed there to be links between finding and / or keeping stable accommodation and reducing reoffending among this group. One of its recommendations was to commission research into the housing experiences of people who served short-term prison sentences in Scotland,

3. Previous research in Scotland has demonstrated significant costs to the public purse from homelessness and reoffending (Scottish Government and CoSLA, 2009; Audit Scotland, 2012), and studies have shown the importance of community support structures, and accommodation in helping promote desistance (e.g. Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Reid Howie Associates, 2004; McNeill et al, 2012; Loucks, 2007).

4. Research has highlighted that people who serve short sentences can have a range of housing problems and can find it difficult to obtain and keep accommodation when released (summarised in Shelter, 2015a). A few studies have suggested that housing-related services can help improve housing outcomes for those who serve short sentences (e.g. Reid Howie Associates, 2004; 2013), but research has also highlighted difficulties in accessing these services (summarised in Shelter, 2015a).

Research questions and methods

5. This research set out to examine the views of **individuals** who serve short sentences and **staff** of services working with them, to discover:

- The types of housing issues faced by people who serve short sentences, and their impact at three key points: on imprisonment; during a sentence and approaching release; and on release.
- Housing-related services available to address these issues, and indications of improved outcomes.
- Gaps in the availability and consistency of services, and barriers to their effective delivery or receipt.
- Suggestions to improve housing-related services and outcomes.

6. The research involved the following strands:

- A Scotland-wide service and practice mapping survey.
- Interviews with 45 people serving, and 29 who had served short sentences.
- Interviews with 146 key professionals (from: prisons; Housing Options Hubs; third sector organisations and partnerships; housing associations; social work services; Community Planning Partnerships and Community Justice Authorities).
- A review of relevant literature and evidence.
- Reporting and the development of suggestions for next steps.

Housing issues and their impact

7. Housing issues for those who serve short sentences were found to be common at all stages. Most of those in the study had, at some time, lost their accommodation while in prison, and almost all had lost their possessions, in some cases more than once. Some had experienced vandalism where accommodation had not been made secure, or incurred costs where services had not been cancelled. Some had not made necessary accommodation-related arrangements for dependent relatives or pets prior to being imprisoned.

8. Examples were found where individuals' housing circumstances had changed during a sentence, or where financial problems had negatively affected the chance of obtaining accommodation on release. Some individuals had never had their own home, nor gained independent living skills, and consequently many individuals had left prison with no accommodation arrangements having been made.

9. The transition back to the community was described by individuals in the study as difficult and stressful. Most had been homeless on release at least once, and many had slept rough, or on sofas and floors. Some had left prison expecting to return to the family home, but had been denied entry. Many examples were found of individuals who had left prison without support or possessions, and who had found it hard to live independently.

Impact of housing issues

10. Many participants stated that, where housing issues were not resolved, this could make it difficult to find or keep accommodation. Most said that housing issues could have a negative impact on health (physical and mental health; drug or alcohol use; and overall well-being). They could also create barriers to employment (e.g. difficulties finding and keeping work without a permanent address; problems looking "presentable" with limited facilities).

11. There was a common view among both individuals and staff that housing issues made desistance from offending less likely. Most individuals said they had committed offences directly or indirectly as a result of their housing circumstances, and many had done so to be returned to custody (e.g. for shelter, warmth, food and safety). Housing issues could also make it difficult to access other services tackling issues that may contribute to reoffending.

The need for services

12. Given these issues, the study found that individuals may need support from housing-related services, at all stages, to prevent homelessness and other problems.

13. On imprisonment, services are needed to provide support with:

- Keeping existing accommodation, or giving it up by the appropriate legal process.
- Securing existing accommodation.
- Retrieving and storing possessions.
- Making appropriate accommodation-related arrangements for any dependents.

14. During a sentence and approaching release, services are needed to provide support with:

- Changing housing circumstances.

- Developing independent living skills.
- Making financial arrangements for release.
- Identifying accommodation for release.

15. On, and following release, services are needed to provide support with:

- Obtaining accommodation.
- Moving in to accommodation.
- Responding to changing housing circumstances.
- Managing and sustaining accommodation.
- Accessing other services and support (e.g. health; money; employment).

Housing-related services and improved outcomes

16. The housing-related services providing support at different stages were: prison services (particularly on imprisonment; during a sentence and approaching release); housing services (all stages); reintegration services (particularly during a sentence and approaching release; on and following release); and other specialist services with expertise in working with particular groups, such as women or disabled people, or in tackling specific issues such as financial problems, homelessness or addictions (particularly during a sentence and approaching release; on and following release).

Availability of services

17. There were prison staff in all establishments who could help identify housing issues, provide basic support and make referrals.

18. Housing services were available in some form, in all prisons, through a range of different arrangements. Seven prisons had a housing service based in prison and seven had housing services visiting to a regular programme (with one having both). One did not have a housing service except by request from an individual or staff member. Housing services (local authority, housing association and third sector) were available in all local authority areas for people on, and following release.

19. Reintegration services were available, in some form, in all prisons, with Throughcare Support Officers (TSOs) deployed by the SPS in all but one establishment; four Public Social Partnerships (PSPs) and some smaller reintegration services available to particular groups in particular prisons. All of these reintegration services would work with people on, and following release, as would criminal justice social work services in all local authority areas.

20. Eleven other specialist services were noted that would work with some people in custody (e.g. from particular areas, or in specific groups). Additionally, Jobcentre Plus and the NHS provided support with benefits and health, which could impact on housing outcomes. These specialist services could also work with people in the community, as could a range of other community-based services (e.g. food or furniture projects, money advice services etc.).

The nature of services

21. The actions taken at all stages were found to vary within and between services, but examples were found of services providing support to address all of the types of housing issues faced at the three stages by people who served short sentences. There were also many examples of services working together at a local and regional level.

22. On imprisonment, prison and housing staff would help with Housing Benefit claims, contact a landlord and consider other possible arrangements they could make (e.g. to recover possessions; secure a property etc.). Some housing staff would explore options such as sub-letting or joint tenancy, and around half of the local authorities said they would provide support to give up or transfer a tenancy.

23. During a sentence and approaching release, around two thirds of local authorities would carry out an assessment of housing need; some would continue, or make “live” a housing application; and around a quarter would consider pre-allocating accommodation for release. A small number of third sector specialist services would identify accommodation and a support package. Some housing staff would enable homelessness applications to be made, or appointments for the day of release.

24. All prisons could, in principle, enable people to tackle rent or mortgage arrears, and some provided short courses on tenancy or independent living skills. There were examples of work being done to enable individuals to obtain identification; begin benefit claims and applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund; and make other arrangements for release.

25. On, and following release, housing, reintegration and some other specialist services would support individuals to obtain and move into accommodation. Most reintegration and a few other specialist services would pick people up from prison, go with them to a housing appointment, and help them move in to accommodation.

26. All social housing providers could provide accommodation, if available, and tenancy sustainment support. Reintegration services would generally provide on-going support for a period in the community after release, and other specialist services could address any issues requiring their own particular areas of expertise.

Evidence of improved outcomes

27. There was a common overall view that there were early indications that addressing housing issues could lead to improved outcomes relating to:

- Housing (e.g. keeping accommodation or making alternative arrangements; and securing and sustaining accommodation on release).
- Health (e.g. improved access to healthcare; improved mental health; improved safety; less risk of drug or alcohol misuse; better relationships with family);
- Employment (e.g. improved chance of getting, or sustaining education, work or volunteering).
- Reoffending (e.g. addressing the range of problems that may contribute to reoffending; and staying out of prison for longer periods).

Gaps in, and barriers to delivery or receipt of housing-related services

28. Despite the extensive work detailed above, the research found that many people who serve short sentences do not currently receive the housing-related services they need, largely related to the fact that there was no consistent pattern nor level of provision across Scotland.

Pattern of housing-related services

29. Variations in availability of housing services in prisons meant many individuals could not access such a service. Even where available in a prison, most housing staff could only

work with residents of designated local authority areas, and not all housing services could visit all prisons, making consistent provision difficult.

30. The complex pattern of eligibility for, and availability of reintegration and other specialist services, combined with the fact that people from a local authority area could be held in a range of prisons, also made it difficult for them to deliver comprehensive support in prison (where this was part of their service) and on, and following release.

The level of provision

31. Even where services were available, variations in practice could lead to gaps in services, with differences in the nature and level of support provided at all stages.

32. In prison, there were differences in whether housing services would: carry out homelessness prevention work; take a Housing Options approach; explore options to retain a tenancy; carry out housing needs assessments; enable homelessness applications; and allow individuals to make prior appointments for release.

33. On, and following release, there were some differences in whether reintegration and other specialist services would provide transportation, advocacy and / or other support, and in the length of time for which services could be provided.

34. For some issues, service provision at different stages was seen to be limited (e.g. recovery and storage of possessions; exploring alternative ways of paying rent, or tenancy transfer; pre-release tenancy preparation; obtaining ID; tenancy sustainment work in the community).

35. A shortage of social housing and a high demand in most areas was seen to make it difficult to secure stable accommodation on release. There was seen to be a particular shortage of accommodation appropriate for those leaving custody (e.g. centrally located one-bedroomed flats; supported accommodation; emergency accommodation; private lets; and housing association accommodation).

Cross-cutting gaps and barriers

36. There were seen to be cross-cutting gaps and barriers at all stages. These were:

- A lack of overall strategic approach to housing-related services.
- Limited monitoring, and gaps in the statistical information available and its use.
- A lack of overall structure, and joined-up approach to housing and reoffending.
- Resource limitations, including accommodation, funding and staffing.
- Gaps in knowledge and awareness of housing issues and services available.
- Barriers due to the attitudes or behaviour of staff, individuals and neighbours.
- The impact of (non-housing) policy and practice (e.g. welfare and sentencing).

Suggestions and next steps

37. There was seen to be a need for a coherent overall approach, and for all people who serve short sentences to have access to the same level and quality of services and support.

38. There was also seen to be a need for: joint working and information-sharing; adequate resources; improved monitoring; increased knowledge and awareness of housing issues

and options; and work to tackle inappropriate attitudes or behaviour by service providers or recipients.

39. The authors recommended the next steps as follows:

1: The Scottish Government, the SPS, social housing providers and community justice partners should give consideration to how best to ensure consistent services are provided in prison to give advice and support with housing issues to those who serve short sentences. Any resulting plans for action should be in keeping with other Government justice strategies.

2: The SPS and social housing providers should give consideration to setting out a consistent standard for providing services in all prisons to give advice and support with housing issues to those who serve short sentences, and on release into the community including adoption of a Housing Options approach.

3: Consideration should be given to Community Justice Scotland having national leadership of housing and reoffending overseeing the development of improved local support through monitoring of the new national strategy for community justice and the national performance framework with local partners

4: The Scottish Government, the SPS and social housing providers should give consideration to facilitating information-sharing on housing problems (including for example arrears) between their services, at national and local levels. The aim of this would be more joined-up service delivery and a lack of duplication.

5: The Scottish Government, the SPS and social housing providers should give consideration to how outcomes for those who serve short sentences can be recorded, making best use of existing data sources. The aim of this would be to record the scale and nature of any issues and identify any improvements.

6: The SPS should give consideration to ensuring that relevant staff receive basic Housing Options and advice training to ensure that clear information on housing is given to individuals who serve short sentences.

7: The Scottish Government and the SPS should give consideration to providing information to policy makers and professionals in other areas (for example, sentencing, health, social security) about how they could contribute to achieving positive outcomes for people who serve short sentences through consideration of housing issues.

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1. The Ministerial Group on Offender Reintegration was established in October 2013 to address the demand for better integration between the justice system and wider universal services, and to focus attention on the role of non-justice sector contributions to the reintegration of individuals transitioning from custody back to our communities.

1.2. The Group recognised that many professionals working in housing and criminal justice believed there to be links between finding and / or keeping stable accommodation and reducing reoffending among people who served short-term prison sentences in Scotland¹. For that reason, one of the Group's recommendations was to commission research into the housing experiences of this group (Scottish Government, 2014b).

1.3. The purpose of the research was to find out: what sort of housing problems people who serve short sentences may face; the housing-related services available to them (and any gaps)²; and the impact of these services in addressing the reported problems. This report presents the findings.

Aim of the research and research questions

1.4. The aim of the study was to provide evidence and understanding to inform the development of policy and practice for preventing homelessness, securing stable accommodation and improving the housing outcomes for those who serve short sentences in Scotland. The Scottish Government set out six research questions:

1. What is the extent and nature of issues and barriers that people who serve short sentences in Scotland perceive they have surrounding finding and keeping a home at trigger points before, during and after imprisonment? (Addressed in Chapters 2 and 4.)
2. What is the extent and nature of issues and barriers that people who serve short sentences in Scotland have surrounding finding and keeping a home at trigger points before, during and after imprisonment, as perceived by the SPS, criminal justice social workers, housing officers and others that may have insights into the difficulties they face? (Addressed in Chapters 2 and 4.)
3. What types of services (including but not exclusively supported housing for women) that focus on improving housing outcomes for people who serve short sentences in Scotland are delivered by local authorities as landlords and registered social landlords and the third sector? (Addressed in Chapter 3.)
4. What (if any) early indications are there of improved outcomes (related to housing, health, employment and potentially reoffending) that these services contribute to and how? (Addressed in Chapter 3.)
5. What impact do difficulties with housing have on other known difficulties faced by people who serve short sentences including getting and keeping employment and dealing with health issues including substance abuse? (Addressed in Chapter 2.)
6. What are the practice recommendations for preventing homelessness and securing stable accommodation that will enable the Scottish Prison Service (SPS)

¹ In Scotland, a short-term sentence is four years or less - referred to as a "short sentence" in this report.

² For the purposes of this study, housing-related services were taken to include any services which may enable (either directly or indirectly) service users to obtain or sustain housing.

and housing organisations to improve the housing outcomes for people who serve short sentences in Scotland? (Addressed in Chapter 5.)

Context for the research

1.5. Before presenting the findings, it is important to set the research in its wider context with a brief summary of:

- Existing research relating to housing issues and “desistance” from offending (i.e. the process of reducing, and ceasing reoffending).
- Policy developments and legislative provisions affecting support to address housing issues for people who serve short sentences in Scotland.
- Developments relating to reintegration, and support with housing issues.
- Planned changes in community justice in Scotland.

1.6. The context is complex, and this section provides a summary, with a more detailed review in Annexe 2. Annexe 7 provides full bibliographic references.

Existing research relating to housing issues and desistance from offending

1.7. Research in Scotland has shown that there can be significant costs to the public purse from homelessness and reoffending. The Prevention of Homelessness Guidance (Scottish Government and CoSLA, 2009), for example, cited the average cost of a “typical” example of homelessness as £15,000, with costs of around £83,000 for a more complex case. The total economic and social costs of reoffending have been estimated at around £3 billion a year (Audit Scotland, 2012).

1.8. In the last 10 years, understanding has developed of the process by which individuals stop offending, and the factors that can affect this. Research has described “desistance” as a complex and highly individual process (McNeill et al, 2012). It can take a number of years and may require a lot of support (Ministry of Justice, 2013).

1.9. Research in Scotland has highlighted the importance of community support structures in helping promote desistance (McNeill et al, 2012). There is evidence that appropriate and stable accommodation are critical to this (NACRO, 1999; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Rough Sleepers Unit, 2002) and that loss of accommodation can make it less likely that people will stop offending (Carlisle, 1996; Reid Howie Associates, 2004; Loucks, 2007).

1.10. People who serve short sentences can have a range of housing problems, listed here and explored in more depth in Annexe 2 (pgs A2:18-34), including: rent or mortgage arrears; loss of possessions; loss of accommodation; homelessness; inappropriate and / or poor quality accommodation; difficulties in sustaining a tenancy; and barriers to obtaining accommodation as a result of the nature of an offence (Carlisle, 1996; HMI Prisons / HMI Probation, 2001; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Loucks, 2007; Reid Howie Associates, 2001; 2002a). Some factors can exacerbate and vary the housing issues people face such as: experiences of domestic abuse (Scottish Executive, 1998; Reid Howie Associates, 2001; Scottish Government, 2012); disability (Reid Howie Associates, 2001; 2004; 2009; 2013; Bottoms et al, 2004; Loucks, 2006; 2007; Prison Reform Trust, 2012); and age (Justice Committee, 2013).

1.11. Many people who serve short sentences have housing problems before they are imprisoned including: homelessness; living in poor quality accommodation; and arrears

(Reid Howie Associates, 2004; Bottoms et al, 2004; Houchin, 2005; Loucks, 2007; Audit Scotland, 2012; Shelter, 2015) and housing issues can also be a consequence of serving a short sentence (Carlisle, 1996; Weaver and Armstrong, 2012). Further, people who serve short sentences can find it difficult to obtain and keep accommodation when they are released (Reid Howie Associates, 2004; 2015; Loucks, 2007; and summarised in Shelter, 2015). Relatedly, evidence suggests that people who leave prison can be ill-prepared to live independently (Loucks, 2007; Reid Howie Associates, 2009).

1.12. There has been relatively little research to date about the housing-related services available to people who serve short sentences. A few studies have suggested these can help improve housing outcomes (Reid Howie Associates, 2004; 2013), but research has also found that people who serve short sentences can have difficulty accessing services (HMI Prisons and Probation, 2001; Reid Howie Associates, 2001; 2004; 2013; and 2015 forthcoming; Loucks, 2007; and summarised in Shelter, 2015) and there can be a “postcode lottery” of provision (Reid Howie Associates, 2004).

1.13. There is also evidence to suggest that there are not enough smaller properties which may be suitable for people leaving custody, and these are subject to high levels of demand (Scottish Government, 2013). Research has also suggested that there can be a shortage of supported accommodation (Reid Howie Associates, 2004).

Policy developments and legislative provisions

1.14. A number of aspects of housing and other legislative provisions are particularly relevant to housing-related services for people who serve short sentences. Many people leaving custody are homeless or threatened with homelessness (Carnie et al, 2013) and the most relevant legislation is that which relates to supporting them.

1.15. Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended in 2001 and 2003 by the Housing [Scotland] Act 2001; and the Homelessness etc. [Scotland] Act 2003) sets out the powers of, and duties on local authorities to deal with applications for housing on the grounds that people are homeless, or threatened with homelessness. The key provisions, in summary, are that anyone is entitled to settled accommodation where the local authority has reason to believe they are unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness. The legislation also requires a local authority to provide temporary accommodation for a reasonable period while enquiries are made about the application.

1.16. Section 2 of The Housing Scotland Act 2001 gave local authorities a duty to ensure that advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is available to “any person in the authority’s area”. Since 2010, this has generally been achieved through a “Housing Options” route. The Scottish Government describes this as a process which starts with housing advice when someone approaches a local authority with a housing problem, and involves considering their options and choices in the widest sense, with a focus on early intervention (Scottish Government, 2011).

1.17. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced a new duty for local authorities to assess and provide housing support to homeless households. This came into effect on 1st June 2013.

1.18. Housing Benefit and other benefits can be important for people who serve short sentences (and can affect whether someone can pay their accommodation costs while in custody, and keep their accommodation until they are released). When an individual is

remanded in custody or sentenced to custody, their eligibility for Housing Benefit changes, and their eligibility for other benefits may end (Citizens Advice, 2015).

1.19. Those remanded in custody are entitled to Housing Benefit for up to 52 weeks, but those sentenced to custody are only entitled to any Housing Benefit if there is a reasonable expectation that they could resume a tenancy within 13 weeks, and intend to do so. Where this is the case, their accommodation costs can be met for 13 weeks (less any period spent on remand during which Housing Benefit was paid). Housing Benefit (along with some other benefits) is being replaced by Universal Credit and the period for which accommodation costs can be met is changing to six months. The new limit applies to people in prison, both those on remand and who have been sentenced.

1.20. In some cases, individuals may be able to transfer their tenancy to another person (usually a family member). Eligibility for this depends on the type of tenancy and other factors such as the presence of rent arrears (Shelter, 2013a). Alternatively, it may be possible to sub-let a tenancy for the period of custody, and eligibility again depends on the type of tenancy and the terms of the tenancy agreement (Shelter, 2013b).

1.21. Where someone sentenced to custody is not entitled to Housing Benefit, and has no other options available to meet their accommodation costs, landlords generally require the tenancy to be surrendered (Shelter, 2015). Where a landlord has reason to believe that a tenant has left their accommodation (or abandoned it) without telling them, they can institute abandonment procedures which, if proven, will result in the tenancy being terminated (Shelter, 2013c). These actions may be taken, for example, to prevent a build-up of arrears, and assist a landlord in their responsibility to make the best use of their housing stock.

1.22. A landlord seeking to end a tenancy for other reasons could use eviction proceedings. This may happen, for example, where people in custody have arrears, or where the nature of their offence has breached the terms of their tenancy. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced “pre-action requirements” which social landlords have to follow in these circumstances. These include giving the tenant clear information about their tenancy agreement, exploring eligibility for Housing Benefit, identifying sources of advice and assistance and, potentially, agreeing a payment plan for arrears (Shelter, 2012).

1.23. Individuals leaving custody have the right to apply to the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF). This is funded by the Scottish Government and operated by local authorities. It gives crisis grants and community care grants to provide a safety net in an emergency, or to enable people to live independently or continue to live independently, avoiding the need for institutional care. The practical effect of this is that individuals leaving custody may be able to obtain funds towards meeting the costs of establishing a tenancy (Scottish Government, 2015c). The Welfare Funds (Scotland) Act 2015 places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide welfare funds, and will come into force in April 2016.

Developments relating to reintegration, and support with housing issues

1.24. The Scottish Government, the SPS and their partners are committed to reducing reoffending, and have put a range of actions in place designed to contribute to this. All of

those serving short sentences are eligible for voluntary throughcare³ support from their local authority social work service.

1.25. An important additional development has been the deployment by the SPS of 41 Throughcare Support Officers (TSOs) who work directly with individuals to help them prepare for, and make a successful transition from custody into the community, and make progress towards desistance. This involves developing an asset-based individualised plan, acting as an advocate on an individual's behalf and encouraging motivation to change through sustained engagement with key services. TSOs work collaboratively with individuals, families, other prison staff and partner agencies.

1.26. The Scottish Government has provided short and long-term funding to a variety of projects through the Reducing Reoffending Programme Phase 2 (RRP2), and specifically via the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund (RRCF). Six Public Social Partnerships (PSPs) have been set up, three of which work directly with individuals leaving custody (New Routes PSP; Shine PSP; and BAFC⁴ Moving On PSP). A further PSP has been established at HMP Low Moss, with funding from the Scottish Government, The Robertson Trust and the Big Lottery.

1.27. The need to access and sustain suitable accommodation is one of the SPS's nine key "Offender Outcomes" designed to guide its work on housing issues (SPS, 2013). Following the publication of the Organisational Review (SPS, 2013), the SPS is in the process of rolling out a new approach to case management for those serving short sentences, alongside developments to the role of Personal Officers. The SPS has appointed a Policy Manager (Housing and Welfare) to develop and coordinate housing-related work across all prisons in Scotland (including private prisons).

Planned changes in community justice in Scotland

1.28. A new model of community justice for Scotland will be introduced from April 2017 (Scottish Government, 2015f). This will involve local strategic planning and collective delivery of community justice services, and will place duties upon a defined set of community justice partners.

1.29. A new body, Community Justice Scotland (CJS), will be created to provide leadership for the sector and enhance opportunities for innovation, learning and development. CJS will provide quality assurance and improvement support to partners as required, to enable improved outcomes.

1.30. The new arrangements will have a focus upon collaboration, with statutory partners engaging with the third sector, community-based organisations, people with a history of offending, families, victims of crime and communities. There will be a focus on a strategic approach to commissioning, with CJS working with partners and stakeholders to develop this.

³ Throughcare involves the provision of a range of services to people from when they are first remanded or imprisoned, through their time in custody, and following their release (*adapted from the National Objectives and Standards for Social Work Services in the Criminal Justice System*).

⁴ BAFC represents Barnardo's/Action for Children – the organisations which lead on the project.

1.31. An Outcomes, Performance and Improvement Framework, and a National Strategy for Community Justice, will set the direction and the basis against which planning can be carried out. Priorities for improvement will be set at a local level.

1.32. A period of transition is underway, with transition plans expected from Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) by January 2016 and the first community justice improvement plans from partners being in place from 2017/18. The Community Justice (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 7 May 2015 and provides the required legislative cover for the new model, which will also see the existing Community Justice Authorities (CJAs) disestablished.

Summary of methods

1.33. There were five strands to the research, described in detail in Annexe 1. These were:

1. A Scotland-wide service and practice mapping exercise, by survey.
2. Interviews with 45 people serving, and 29 who had served short sentences.
3. Interviews with 146 key professionals; including from: prisons; Housing Options Hubs; third sector organisations and partnerships; housing associations; social work services; CPPs and CJAs.
4. A review of relevant literature and evidence.
5. Reporting and suggestions for next steps.

The report

1.34. The report is in five chapters with seven annexes. The next three chapters present the research findings, and in the final chapter, the conclusions and next steps, as follows:

- Housing issues and their impact (Chapter 2).
- The pattern and nature of services available, and improved outcomes (Chapter 3).
- Gaps, barriers and suggestions (Chapter 4).
- Conclusions and next steps (Chapter 5).

1.35. Annexes provide more details of:

- Methods (Annexe 1).
- The research context (Annexe 2).
- The pattern and nature of housing-related services (Annexe 3).
- Statistical issues (Annexe 4).
- Housing issues affecting specific groups (Annexe 5).
- Suggestions to address gaps and barriers (Annexe 6).
- References (Annexe 7).

1.36. The report uses the term “individuals” to describe those who have served, or are serving short sentences, and “staff” to describe those working with them. The term “participants” is used to describe both individuals and staff. Distinctions are made between different types of housing-related service providers and staff (housing services / staff; prison services / staff; reintegration services / staff; and other specialist services / staff). Further details are given in Annexe 1.

1.37. Cross references to material in the main report use the abbreviation “pgh” and the relevant paragraph number (e.g. pgh 1.1). Cross references to material in an annexe also

use the abbreviation “pgh”, but with the relevant annexe and paragraph numbers (e.g. pgh A1:1).

2. HOUSING ISSUES AND THEIR IMPACT

2.1. This chapter describes the issues people who serve short sentences may face in finding and keeping accommodation (questions 1 and 2), and the impact of these (question 5). Annexe 5 provides evidence of these issues as they affect specific groups.

Housing issues facing people who serve short sentences

2.2. The research found that people who serve short sentences can face housing issues at three key stages: on imprisonment; during a sentence and approaching release; and on, and following release. The issues at each stage are described below. Several have been highlighted in previous research (see pghs 1.10-11, and pghs A2:11-41).

Issues on imprisonment

2.3. Housing issues on imprisonment were found to relate to:

- Keeping existing accommodation, or giving it up by the appropriate legal process.
- Securing existing accommodation.
- Retrieving and storing possessions.
- Making appropriate accommodation-related arrangements for any dependents.

Keeping existing accommodation, or giving it up by the appropriate legal process

2.4. A key issue highlighted on imprisonment was a need to take steps to enable individuals in custody to keep existing accommodation, or give it up by the appropriate legal process. Staff and individuals reported a risk that people may lose their accommodation as a result of inaction, or inappropriate action, at this stage.

2.5. Staff (particularly prison and housing staff) stated that individuals may need services to help:

- Identify and address any existing housing problems, or impending legal action.
- Inform a landlord of their change of circumstances and give a new contact address (e.g. to avoid the risk of abandonment proceedings).
- Inform the Housing Benefit (or Universal Credit) provider of their change of circumstances and their intention to return to their accommodation (to prevent their claim ending).
- Make a new Housing Benefit (Universal Credit) claim, where necessary.
- Inform their mortgage provider (where relevant) of their change of circumstances, and make any payment arrangements.
- Identify alternative ways of meeting rent or mortgage payments and / or make any transfer arrangements needed (e.g. co-tenancy; tenancy transfer etc.).
- Identify and address other debts (e.g. utilities).

2.6. Prison and housing staff stressed that, if it was impossible to keep existing accommodation, individuals may need services to help them give it up quickly, using the appropriate legal process (whether tenants or owner-occupiers). This would help avoid arrears, and improve their chances of getting accommodation in the future.

2.7. Staff noted that the level of input required would vary depending on the issue and the capacity of each individual, but, even in the case of apparently straightforward actions (e.g.

informing a landlord or Housing Benefit service of a change of circumstances), many people would need a service provider to: identify the need for the action; explain procedures; overcome any practical barriers; and, in some cases, make contact for them.

2.8. Most individuals in this study had, at some time, lost their accommodation while in prison, and almost all of the housing, prison and reintegration staff had worked with people in this position. Many gave examples of housing problems people had experienced on release because they had taken inappropriate, or no action at the start of their sentence.

Securing existing accommodation

2.9. A further issue on imprisonment, mentioned by several prison and housing staff, and individuals, was a need to secure existing accommodation (i.e. to ensure it was locked, appliances were switched off, and services cancelled). This would prevent accidental damage, vandalism, unauthorised entry and additional costs (to individuals and landlords) which could make it less likely that accommodation would be fit to go back to, or give up.

2.10. Staff (particularly prison and housing staff) stated that individuals may need services to:

- Arrange for someone to secure the property and switch off appliances.
- Cancel or change utilities and other services.
- Inform anyone involved in securing the accommodation of hazards (e.g. needles).

2.11. A few individuals and staff gave examples of problems where accommodation was not secured. These included one individual who could not return to their flat due to vandalism, and others who faced costs because appliances were not switched off, or services cancelled.

Retrieving and storing possessions

2.12. Virtually all of the individual participants in this research had, at some time, lost all of their possessions when imprisoned, sometimes more than once.

2.13. Staff and individuals described a need for services to retrieve and store essential personal possessions, as they may otherwise be disposed of by a landlord, or stolen. These included legal and financial documents (e.g. identification), irreplaceable personal items (e.g. photos and mementos), and essentials (e.g. clothes and household goods).

Making appropriate arrangements for dependents

2.14. Some participants (particularly prison, housing and social work staff) noted a need to make appropriate arrangements for dependents, to avoid housing or welfare problems for them. Dependents could include: a partner; and / or children and elderly or disabled relatives who may not be able to live independently. Prison staff and individuals also expressed concerns that pets could be left alone in accommodation.

2.15. Staff stated that individuals may need services to help them to:

- Pass on any relevant information relating to the property, if transferring a tenancy.
- Enable access to keys, bank accounts or cash to maintain the property.
- Arrange care (new or continuing) for dependent relatives (e.g. with social work).
- Make arrangements to retrieve and re-home pets.

2.16. A few examples were given where problems arose because such arrangements had not been made, as individuals had not expected to be remanded in custody, or to get a custodial sentence.

Issues during a sentence and approaching release

2.17. Housing issues during a sentence and approaching release were found to relate to:

- Changing housing circumstances.
- Developing independent living skills.
- Making financial arrangements for release.
- Identifying accommodation for release.

Changing housing circumstances

2.18. Prison, housing and some other staff described a need to address any changes to an individual's housing circumstances during a sentence (e.g. due to relationship changes, financial problems or legal action) that may mean the accommodation they planned to return to was no longer available.

2.19. Staff stated that individuals may need services to help them to:

- Monitor and respond to any changes in their housing circumstances.
- Contact their landlord or mortgage lender.
- Contact a solicitor or seek financial advice.
- Arrange appropriate alternative accommodation for release (see paragraph 2.26).

2.20. Several individuals and staff gave examples of people's housing circumstances changing during a sentence on relationship breakdown, or death of a partner or parent.

Developing independent living skills

2.21. A further issue was a need to ensure that those approaching release had the skills to manage their accommodation and live independently. Staff of all types suggested that people may need support to develop skills in, for example: managing a tenancy; healthy eating, basic cookery and domestic skills; budgeting and banking.

2.22. Several individuals in this study had never had their own home or bank account. A few had spent most of their lives in institutions. A few had never planned or cooked a meal from scratch, nor used a domestic washing machine or vacuum cleaner.

Making financial arrangements for release

2.23. Many staff (particularly prison, housing and reintegration staff) stressed the need to make financial arrangements for release, both to meet accommodation and other costs, and to avoid debts and arrears which could make it difficult to obtain accommodation.

2.24. These staff stated that individuals may need services to help them to:

- Deal with any debts or arrears arising during a sentence.
- Make an appointment with Jobcentre Plus staff.
- Apply to the SWF for clothing just prior to release, or for household goods once settled accommodation has been identified.
- Arrange access to a bank account and identification (ID).

2.25. Most individuals in this research stated that they relied on benefits for their income in the community. Several reported having had financial problems during a sentence which had affected their ability to obtain accommodation on release. Most, however, had started a benefits claim from custody in the past, and many had applied to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for crisis funding (although only a few had applied to the SWF).

Identifying accommodation for release

2.26. Many participants of all types stated that a key issue approaching release was the need to identify accommodation for people to go out to, to avoid the risk of homelessness.

2.27. A further issue mentioned by many staff (particularly prison, reintegration and other specialist staff) and several individuals, was the need to avoid people being released to accommodation that could expose them to: safety risks (e.g. abuse or violence); drugs and / or alcohol; peers who may exert a negative influence; and difficulties accessing services.

2.28. Many participants stated that, ideally, accommodation should be identified pre-release. Some local authority housing staff said that there could be practical problems with this, but that individuals should be given clear information about the processes to follow.

2.29. It was also noted that, if people who might benefit from supported accommodation were assessed early, necessary arrangements could be made. A small number of prison staff stated that early action was also important where an individual may need accommodation to qualify for Home Detention Curfew (HDC).⁵

2.30. Staff of all types stated that individuals may need services approaching release to help them to:

- Consider accommodation options and, if possible, identify an address on release.
- Enable assessments and start applications.
- Identify the correct procedure to present as homeless (if not already completed) including emergency or out-of-hours procedures.
- Identify how to obtain keys for pre-allocated accommodation.
- Ensure co-ordination of appointments (e.g. housing, G.P., Jobcentre Plus).
- Arrange for possessions in storage to be retrieved.
- Identify how to get items to enable independent living (e.g. clothes; furniture; food).

2.31. Most individuals in this study had experience of needing accommodation on release. People had been released to a range of accommodation in the past (including, in many cases, hostels and bed and breakfast [B&B] accommodation). Many had been homeless on release, and many had left prison with no accommodation arrangements in place.

Issues on, and following release

2.32. Housing issues on, and following release were found to relate to:

- Obtaining accommodation.
- Moving in to accommodation.
- Responding to changing housing circumstances.
- Managing and sustaining accommodation.

⁵ At the time of writing, new guidance on the requirements for HDC was expected in the second half of 2015.

- Accessing other services and support (e.g. health; financial advice; employment).

Obtaining accommodation

2.33. A key issue, raised by participants of all types, was a need to obtain accommodation on the day of release (for those who did not have this), to prevent people sleeping rough, or on sofas or floors. Prison, housing and reintegration staff noted that, for people returning from some prisons to some local authority areas, this would require them to complete a homelessness application on the day of release.

2.34. There was a widespread recognition that most people leaving prison would be housed in temporary accommodation in the first instance. In the longer term, a key issue was the need to obtain permanent accommodation which meets their needs.

2.35. Housing, reintegration and some other specialist staff stated that individuals may need services to help them to:

- Understand the process for registering as homeless.
- Ensure they had necessary documentation for identification.
- Get from the prison to a homelessness interview.
- Complete the interview process.
- Get to their accommodation, and move in (see paragraph 2.37 below).
- Apply for permanent accommodation.

2.36. The period of transition back to the community was mentioned by many participants as being difficult and stressful. Many individuals had previous experience of being homeless on release, and seeking accommodation from the local authority on the day of release. Many had slept rough, or on sofas and floors, or had been in accommodation which they considered inappropriate. Many had left prison with no support from services.

Moving in to accommodation

2.37. Several staff (particularly reintegration staff) said that there could be difficulties for people moving in to accommodation following release. These could arise on the day of release or later (e.g. if a tenancy was allocated after a period in other accommodation).

2.38. Housing, reintegration and other specialist staff stated that individuals may need services to help them to:

- Travel to their accommodation.
- Complete practical arrangements (e.g. collect a key; complete paperwork).
- Get utilities connected (and manage any contracts).
- Secure furniture and other essentials (if required).
- Inform family and service providers of their new address.

2.39. A few individuals indicated that everything they owned on their release from a previous sentence had fitted into a carrier bag, and they lacked the essentials to support living independently. A few staff gave examples of people having lived in accommodation without heating, lighting, furniture and household goods.

Responding to changing housing circumstances

2.40. Housing and reintegration staff highlighted a need to respond to changes to housing circumstances on, or following release (e.g. following relationship breakdown), which may

increase the risk of homelessness, rough sleeping, and sleeping on floors and sofas. Staff stated that people may then need urgent support to find alternative accommodation.

2.41. A number of examples were given by individuals and staff of people who had left prison expecting to return to the family home and were denied entry. Staff doing family support work gave examples where an individual's partner would not let them in, or had moved out, sometimes with their children. Staff working with young people noted that being denied entry could be a particular problem for them.

Managing and sustaining accommodation

2.42. Housing, reintegration and other specialist staff described issues for some people with managing and sustaining accommodation which could lead to loss of accommodation and homelessness. These staff stated that individuals may need services to help them to:

- Make financial arrangements (e.g. establish a bank account, get insurance).
- Ensure the payment of rent and other bills on time.
- Meet tenancy conditions.
- Cope with day to day living (e.g. finance; health; hygiene; nutrition).

2.43. Many individuals said they had found it hard to cope with independent living in the past.

Accessing other services and support

2.44. Reintegration and other specialist staff noted that individuals may also require access to other services (e.g. addictions, benefits, health, employment and financial). They stated that, without addressing problems of these types, it could be difficult for them to keep their accommodation, and avoid reoffending.

2.45. Staff stated that individuals may need services to help them contact:

- Reintegration services (third sector or social work).
- JobCentre Plus and local authorities (to apply for benefits and to the SWF).
- Health services (e.g. GPs; mental health services; drug and alcohol services; learning disability teams).
- Learning or employment support.
- Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CABx), money advice projects or Credit Unions.
- Other relevant organisations (e.g. volunteering opportunities; befriending projects).

The impact of housing issues

2.46. The findings presented above show the range of housing issues people may face at different stages. There was a common view that, at all stages, the nature of the issues could also vary by factors such as: gender; age; physical and mental health and disability; offence and sentence; geographical area and ethnicity. This has been noted in other research (pgs A2:11-17). Annexe 5 details the findings from this study on these issues.

2.47. Many participants stated that, where housing issues were not resolved, this could make it difficult to find or keep accommodation, and that housing problems could have a negative impact on health; employment; and desistance, discussed below.

Impact on health

2.48. Most participants said that housing issues could have a negative impact on health, including: physical and mental health; drug or alcohol use; and overall well-being. It could be difficult, for example, for people to get access to healthcare (e.g. to register with a GP) without a settled address, or get medication and treatment.

2.49. Staff of all types and several individuals gave examples of how housing issues had led to, or worsened mental health problems, including where they had contributed to stress, anxiety and depression, or had led to anger, frustration and fear.

2.50. Many individuals stated that living in poor quality accommodation, or lacking secure accommodation had reduced their confidence or self-esteem. Several mentioned having felt hopeless, or that they had no chance of ever obtaining their own accommodation.

Drug or alcohol use

2.51. Participants believed that housing issues and an increased risk of drug or alcohol misuse were linked. Individuals said that, even though they had been drug-free and sober in custody, the nature of their accommodation on release had made them vulnerable to substance misuse. Many staff and individuals saw this as a particular issue in some hostels, where they felt there was often peer pressure and ready access to drugs.

2.52. Individuals (and some social workers) stated that the conditions imposed by some B&B operators could increase the risk of substance misuse among those staying in their accommodation by requiring them to be out of their room for up to six hours a day. Boredom (which many associated with hostels and other temporary accommodation) was thought to be an additional risk factor.

Overall well-being

2.53. Participants of all types stated that housing issues, and the related stress, could lead to relationship problems and breakdown, which could affect overall well-being.

2.54. A key concern for individuals (and some specialist staff) was that people's accommodation was sometimes unsuitable for visitors. Several individuals mentioned restrictions on visitors in hostels or B&Bs, or said they did not want family members to see them in those surroundings. A few stated that they had been unable to have their children to stay because of their housing circumstances (e.g. women in hostels or temporary accommodation, or parents without a separate bedroom for a child of the opposite sex).

2.55. Staff and individuals raised concerns about personal safety in some circumstances. Women and young people were seen to be particularly vulnerable, and a few reported having felt unsafe in temporary accommodation. Examples were also given of women who had returned to violent partners because they felt they had no other option.

Impact on employment

2.56. Staff of all types (and a few individuals) described ways that housing issues could create barriers to employment. These included:

- Individuals being preoccupied with housing issues and feeling unable to take part in education, training or employment until these were resolved.
- Employers being unwilling to employ people without a permanent address.
- Difficulties in seeking work from accommodation a long way from a Jobcentre.

- Barriers to internet access to allow people to find and apply for work (e.g. lack of skills or confidence using the internet; distance from a library).
- Difficulties in applying for work or getting a bank account without an address.
- Difficulties looking clean and tidy (e.g. with limited storage, clothing or facilities).

2.57. One individual said they had lost their job for taking time off in two successive weeks to move between temporary addresses (with no choice and little notice of the moving date). Another missed an interview when a hostel did not forward mail to a new address.

Impact on desistance

2.58. Overall, as found in previous research (pgh 1.10), there was a common view that housing issues made it less likely that people would stop offending. Many participants described a “vicious circle” of housing and other problems, reoffending and return to prison. Most individuals said they had committed offences directly or indirectly as a result of their housing circumstances, and many said they had done so to be returned to custody.

2.59. Many staff and individuals believed that housing problems often meant that people found prison preferable to being in the community, having shelter, warmth, food, company, facilities, safety, and security they may not otherwise have. Many examples were given by prison staff and individuals of people who had had committed further offences because they could not cope with independent living (e.g. having had difficulties with household, financial or tenancy management).

2.60. Several individuals and staff stated that housing issues often led to loss of contact with other services, making it difficult to address other problems that might contribute to reoffending (e.g. addictions; mental health; lack of money). A few individuals said they had been so focused on housing issues that they had not engaged with other services in prison. Some described losing touch with services on, and following release (e.g. in temporary accommodation, or when living a long way from support). Staff gave examples of difficulties in contacting people who were sleeping rough, or in unstable accommodation.

Overview

2.61. This chapter has summarised participants’ views of the housing issues people who serve short sentences may face and the types of support they need to address these.

2.62. On imprisonment, this includes support to: keep or give up existing accommodation; secure property and possessions; and make arrangements for dependents. During a sentence and approaching release, this includes support to: respond to changing housing circumstances; develop independent living skills; make financial arrangements; and identify accommodation for release. On, and following release, this includes support to: obtain, move in to and sustain accommodation; respond to changing housing circumstances; and access other services and support.

2.63. Housing issues which were not resolved could have a negative impact on getting and keeping accommodation, and on health, employment and desistance.

3. THE PATTERN AND NATURE OF SERVICES AND IMPROVED OUTCOMES

3.1. This chapter describes the housing-related services available to those who serve short sentences (question 3), and early evidence of improved outcomes (question 4). Further details are given in Annexe 3. Gaps in the availability and consistency of these services, and barriers to their effective delivery are then explored in Chapter 4.

The pattern and nature of services

3.2. The survey and discussions with research participants examined the pattern and nature of housing-related services: on imprisonment; during a sentence and approaching release; and on, and following release, as well as the co-ordination of these services.

Services on imprisonment

3.3. This sub-section describes the housing-related services available on imprisonment, and how they identify and address housing issues.

Services involved on imprisonment

3.4. The survey and discussions found that the main services involved in working with individuals to tackle any housing issues they faced on imprisonment were delivered by prison staff and housing services.

3.5. Prison staff in all prisons helped to identify and address housing issues (pghs A3:30-35). This included contact with people immediately on their imprisonment, by reception staff (in all prisons) and first night centre staff (where available, e.g. HMP Barlinnie and HMPYOI Polmont), or prison staff with a specific role to work with individuals in custody to address personal issues they faced, such as Link Centre staff and Personal Officers (in all prisons).

3.6. Housing services were available to provide specialist housing input on imprisonment in some form in all prisons, through a range of different arrangements (pghs A3:15-29). This did not mean, however, that a housing service would be available to all individuals in a prison who experienced housing issues (see Chapter 4).

3.7. The seven⁶ prisons set out here had a housing service based in the prison. Of these:

- One was provided directly by a local authority (**HMP Barlinnie**).
- Three were provided by staff employed by a third party contracted by one or more local authorities (Foursquare in **HMP Edinburgh**; Aspire2Gether in **HMP Kilmarnock**; and West Lothian Council in **HMP Addiewell** on behalf of three councils).
- Three were provided by staff employed by a third sector organisation, or partnership (Sacro in **HMPYOI Cornton Vale**; CABx in **HMPs Inverness⁷ and Dumfries**).

⁶ Numbers in paragraphs 3.7-3.9 as at April 2015.

3.8. The seven prisons set out here had housing services visiting to a regular programme (of varying frequency)⁸. Of these:

- All had staff visiting from at least one local authority (HMPs Edinburgh; Glenochil; Greenock; Low Moss; Perth; HMPYOI Grampian; and HMYOI Polmont).
- Two had staff visiting from Shelter (HMP Perth; and HMPYOI Grampian).

3.9. At the time of writing one prison (**HMP Castle Huntly**) did not have a housing service, except housing staff visiting on request by an individual or staff member. Local authority, housing association and third sector housing staff said they could visit prisons to deal with specific cases, on request.

3.10. Reintegration and other specialist services may also be involved on imprisonment, if an existing client was reconvicted (pgs A3:36-44). They would otherwise have a limited role (although most TSOs would introduce themselves, and make individuals aware of their services).

Identifying housing issues on imprisonment

3.11. In all prisons housing issues on imprisonment were identified in similar ways (pgs A3:50-58):

- Reception (or first night centre) staff would identify immediate needs.
- Staff (generally from the Link Centre) would administer a “Core Screen” (an SPS tool to identify needs, including housing issues) within 72 hours of admission.
- Everyone admitted to custody would be invited (but not compelled) to attend an induction process, with a session on housing (generally delivered by SPS staff, but with a few examples of input from housing staff).

3.12. Some prison and housing staff gave examples of using additional methods, such as:

- The Improving Offenders Housing Outcomes Project gathering additional housing information at the Core Screen stage in HMP Perth.
- Other enhanced assessment arrangements in three prisons (the “Grampian Asset Profile” assessment at HMPYOI Grampian; Asset Inquiry Reports and the Low Moss PSP at HMP Low Moss; and reintegration projects at HMYOI Polmont).
- Multi-agency case conferencing (described in various ways) in five prisons (HMPYOI Grampian; and HMPs Perth, Greenock, Inverness and Dumfries).
- A list of admissions being given to relevant local authorities to identify any tenants in custody in three prisons (HMPs Dumfries and Perth; and HMPYOI Grampian).

3.13. Additional, less formal means of identifying housing needs mentioned included that:

- Anyone in custody could use a standard referral procedure, available in all prisons, to request services.
- As part of their day to day contact with individuals, any staff may identify issues.
- Peer supporters in HMP Low Moss may identify issues.

⁷ Inverness CAB and Shelter are part of a project called “SPAN” (the Scottish Prisoners’ Advice Network).

⁸ HMP Edinburgh had a housing service based in the prison and a visiting local authority service.

- Sources outside the prison may provide information (e.g. an individual's family members or friends; landlords; solicitors; community-based housing officers; social workers; or other support workers).

Addressing housing needs on imprisonment

3.14. A range of ways were found by which housing needs on imprisonment were addressed (pghs A3:67-83).

3.15. If a housing need was identified, prison staff stated that they would log it on the national SPS prisoner records system (called PR2). Some housing staff (e.g. in HMP Barlinnie and HMPYOI Grampian) said that they would then pick this up directly from the PR2 system, as they had their own access to this. Otherwise prison staff would generally contact the relevant housing service (in the prison, if available, or in the relevant local authority if not) to make a referral.

3.16. In three prisons (HMPs Barlinnie, Glenochil and Low Moss) local authority housing staff had reached internal agreements whereby any of them could provide initial support to a resident from any of the local authority areas involved, before referring them on to a housing staff member from their home area.

3.17. Housing staff would then take action, although the nature of this varied. Where someone did not have access to housing staff, then prison, reintegration and other specialist staff working with them may provide some assistance with housing issues.

3.18. The research found that most prison and housing staff would help with Housing Benefit (and Universal Credit (UC)) claims, and would inform a landlord that a tenant was in prison. Staff in two prisons stated that they encouraged all new admissions to complete a "change of circumstances" form, which they would forward to their landlord (and Housing Benefit and UC provider, if relevant).

3.19. Some housing staff indicated that they would explore whether other actions could be taken (e.g. sub-letting or a joint tenancy). Around half of the local authorities in the survey indicated that they would provide services to help an individual to give up or transfer a tenancy.

3.20. Housing and prison staff in all prisons reported that they would consider other action they may be able to take (e.g. to recover possessions; secure a property; or make arrangements for relatives and / or pets). A positive example was given in Dundee of a church project providing space to store boxes of personal belongings.

3.21. In addition, positive examples were given where housing staff would carry out detailed homelessness prevention work at this stage, or take a comprehensive Housing Options approach (pgh A2:90).

Services during a sentence and approaching release

3.22. This sub-section describes the housing-related services available during a sentence and approaching release.

Services involved during a sentence and approaching release

3.23. The survey and discussions found that prison, housing, reintegration and some other specialist services were involved in working with individuals to tackle housing issues during a sentence and approaching release. (pghs A3:15-48).

3.24. Prison services' input may involve Link Centre and Personal Officers, and others working routinely with individuals, such as: Family Contact and Visits Officers; and chaplaincy teams (in all prisons). Community Integration Unit (CIU) staff could also be involved (in HMPs Greenock and Inverness; and HMPYOI Grampian) (pghs A3:30-35).

3.25. The housing services found to be involved at this stage were largely the same as those mentioned at paragraph 3.7 above.

3.26. Reintegration services found to be involved included (pghs A3:36-44):

- SPS Throughcare Support Officers [TSOs] (in all prisons in the study except HMP Castle Huntly).
- New Routes PSP (for men under 25 in any of the 13 prisons holding men).
- Shine PSP (for women in any of the five prisons holding women).
- BAFC Moving On PSP (for males under 21 in HMYOI Polmont, returning to four of the 32 local authority areas).
- Low Moss PSP (for anyone serving a short sentence in HMP Low Moss).
- Smaller reintegration services (third sector-led, mentioned by eight prisons).

3.27. Other specialist services highlighted in the survey (11) included (pghs A3:45-48):

- Four working with people leaving custody at risk of homelessness and requiring support (e.g. YPeople, for people leaving HMP Low Moss; and Sacro, for people returning to Glasgow and Aberdeen from any prison).
- Seven working with specific groups with housing problems (e.g. Housing First, for drug misusers; or Cornerstone, for adults with learning difficulties and others).

3.28. Staff in all prisons noted that other organisations (e.g. Jobcentre Plus and the NHS) could also provide assistance to those approaching release with related issues such as benefits and health which, it was suggested, could impact on the likelihood of successful housing outcomes.

Identifying housing issues during a sentence and approaching release

3.29. All of the prisons were found to have similar arrangements in place for identifying housing issues approaching release (pghs A3:59-62). Around six weeks before their liberation date, all individuals would be called to the Link Centre for a basic assessment (by prison staff) of any support they may need on, or after release.

3.30. The research found that housing issues could also be identified through:

- TSOs' or other service providers' wider work.
- Assessments carried out by reintegration projects.
- Direct contact between an individual and a housing staff member.
- Multi-agency case management meetings.

Addressing housing needs during a sentence and approaching release

3.31. A range of ways were found by which housing needs during a sentence and approaching release were addressed (pghs A3:84-105).

3.32. Prison staff in all prisons said that, if housing issues were identified, they would make a referral to a housing service in the prison, if available (pg 3.7) or, if not, in the person's home local authority. The action taken by housing services was found to vary (pg A3:103):

- Around two thirds of local authorities in the survey reported that they would do an assessment of housing need at this stage.
- Some local authorities would keep an application for housing "live" whilst an individual was in custody or make it "live" prior to release; and some would enable a new application.
- Around a quarter of local authorities in the survey reported that they would consider pre-allocating accommodation for release.
- Some housing staff (following the policy of the individual's local authority) reported enabling people to make homelessness applications.
- Some (again following local authorities' policies) reported enabling individuals to make homelessness appointments for the day of release.

3.33. Where an individual did not have access to a housing service in prison, Link Centre staff, TSOs and other reintegration staff could provide a limited service to help with, e.g., information and organising appointments. A few would assist people to make homeless applications.

3.34. All prisons could, in principle, enable people to tackle rent or mortgage arrears during a sentence, with a few examples of people having paid some arrears from custody. At the time of writing, the SPS was planning to implement a standard process for this.

3.35. Examples were given of housing and reintegration services liaising with other services to co-ordinate appointment times for release, and make arrangements for individuals returning to distant local authority areas. A small number of examples were given of third sector specialist services working with people approaching release to provide accommodation and plan a support package (pghs A3:98-105).

3.36. Other examples of actions taken to address housing issues at this stage included (pghs A3:90-97):

- An SQA award on "Tenancy and Citizenship" introduced at HMP Dumfries (which, at the time of writing, was being made available to other assessment centres).
- Other short courses on budgeting and independent living skills (noted by staff in HMPs Barlinnie, Low Moss, Perth and Inverness; HMPYOIs Cornton Vale and Grampian; and HMYOI Polmont).
- Community Integration Units (in HMPs Greenock and Inverness; and HMPYOI Grampian).
- Pilot work to enable access to forms of ID (in HMPs Castle Huntly and Low Moss) and bank or credit union accounts (in HMPs Addiewell and Castle Huntly; and HMPYOI Grampian). At the time of writing, the SPS was working with the British

Bankers' Association (BBA) to improve access to bank accounts for all of those leaving custody.

- Support to begin benefit claims and SWF applications.

Services on, and following release

3.37. This sub-section describes the housing-related services available on, and following release.

Services involved on, and following release

3.38. The survey and discussions found that housing, reintegration and other specialist services were involved in working with individuals to tackle housing issues on, and following release (pghs A3:107-116).

3.39. Housing services found to be involved on, and following release included:

- Local authority homelessness teams and staff working with individuals in hostels, B&Bs and other temporary accommodation (in all areas).
- Local authority and housing association staff working with tenants to address their support needs while in a tenancy (all local authorities and housing associations).
- Third sector housing services such as Shelter (in all local authority areas).

3.40. Reintegration and other specialist services involved at this stage included those mentioned in paragraphs 3.26 and 3.27, and:

- Criminal justice social work throughcare services (in all local authority areas).
- Third sector services based in the community working with homeless men and women (e.g. YPeople, Sacro).
- Services working with women (e.g. 218 or Tomorrow's Women Glasgow).
- Other relevant community-based services (e.g. CABx, food banks, furniture projects, money advice projects, those working with other specific groups).

Identifying housing issues on, and following release

3.41. The survey found that the main formal processes for identifying housing issues on, and following release were Housing Options assessments by local authorities (pghs A3:117-119). Housing staff stated, in discussions, that these were broadly similar across all local authority areas.

3.42. In addition, some reintegration and other specialist staff stated that their own review processes would examine housing issues. TSOs and others noted that their day to day work may uncover such issues, and individuals themselves could also raise them. Further, any other service working with an individual could report housing issues not raised previously (e.g. where an individual did not recognise that they were homeless, but a member of staff picked this up).

Addressing housing needs on, and following release

3.43. A range of ways were found by which housing needs on and following release were addressed (pghs A3:120-148).

3.44. The survey and discussions found that housing and reintegration services would support individuals to obtain and move into accommodation (generally after the individual presented as homeless) and to maintain the accommodation (and address any further housing issues arising).

3.45. Housing, reintegration and other specialist staff, as well as individuals, gave examples of a range of different procedures across Scotland for people to present as homeless and seek accommodation on the day of release. Generally, this would involve attending a housing appointment.

3.46. Most reintegration staff (including TSOs and PSPs) and some other specialist services stated that they would pick people up from prison on release and would normally accompany them to a housing appointment and assist with moving in to accommodation, if needed.

3.47. The survey identified that all social housing providers could provide accommodation, if available, to people released from short sentences. Local authority housing staff stated that this may include, for example: B&Bs; hostels; other temporary accommodation; or (in a few cases) permanent accommodation. All housing association participants indicated that they could provide accommodation, if they had it, to individuals leaving prison who met their criteria (relating, e.g. to age, disability etc.). A few examples were also given of third sector organisations providing accommodation with additional support to people on release (e.g. YPeople; Sacro; Housing First; and Cornerstone).

3.48. Housing staff identified a few examples of work being done to improve access to private sector accommodation. These were:

- A third sector organisation (Shelter) in one local authority area (Dundee) making links to private landlords willing to house people who had served short sentences, provided the individual accepted six months' tenancy support.
- A local authority (Argyll and Bute Council) keeping a list of landlords willing to take people on Home Detention Curfew (HDC).
- A local authority (Fife Council) letting private sector properties for a minimum three year period, which were then sub-let to homeless people (with priority for those leaving prison).

3.49. All social housing providers (including: local authorities; housing partnerships; housing associations; and third sector organisations providing accommodation with additional support) stated in the survey and discussions that they could provide tenancy sustainment support to people in their accommodation. The level and type would vary with people's needs, and some examples were given of intensive support being provided via key workers or mentors.

3.50. Reintegration staff (including TSOs) identified that they would generally provide ongoing services for a period in the community after release (e.g. six weeks by TSOs, and longer by the PSPs). This could include services to help people to manage their accommodation (e.g. through one to one personal support, advocacy and advice; practical support; and referral on to any other service they may need).

3.51. All of the additional specialist services in the community (pg 3.40) would also be available on, and following release (if an individual met any eligibility criteria relating to age, gender, addictions etc.).

Co-ordination and joint working

3.52. The research found many examples of services working together at a regional and local level to address housing issues for people who serve short sentences.

3.53. A number of housing staff identified that Housing Options Hubs, which bring together groups of neighbouring local authorities to share knowledge and learning on Housing Options, would share good practice about work with those who serve short sentences.

3.54. Each CJA has identified housing as a specific issue in their action plans, although they do not have a role in co-ordinating housing and reoffending work.

3.55. As noted in paragraph 1.27, the SPS appointed a housing specialist in late 2014 with a remit to develop national policy, and provide advice and assistance to staff (including in the private prisons). Part of their role involves linking with partners, including the Housing Options Hubs and reintegration services (e.g. TSOs and PSPs). Within individual prisons, the research found that most support to address housing issues was co-ordinated by the Head of Offender Outcomes (as part of overall support for those in custody).

3.56. The survey and discussions found some examples of protocols and agreements aimed at co-ordinating services. Some covered more than one area, for example:

- The Improving Offenders Housing Outcomes project at HMP Perth which involved the SPS and four local authorities (Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth and Kinross).
- The Lothian and Borders Joint Protocol for the Housing and Support Assessment of Offenders, covering four prisons (HMPs Addiewell and Edinburgh; HMPYOIs Cornton Vale and HMYOI Polmont) and five local authority areas (East Lothian, Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian).

3.57. In other cases, individual local authorities had devised their own protocols (e.g. Prison Discharge Protocols developed by North Lanarkshire and Moray Councils in conjunction with the SPS). Some local authorities reported that the co-ordination of support to those leaving custody was covered by their overall homelessness prevention strategy (e.g. Renfrewshire Homelessness Partnership).

3.58. Housing staff based in some prisons, and those visiting on a regular basis would take part in wider prison case conferencing (pg A3:54) and many prison, housing and reintegration staff gave examples of local joint working on a case by case basis.

Early indications of improved outcomes

3.59. There was a common overall view that there were early indications that addressing housing issues could lead to improved outcomes in the areas highlighted at research question 4 (housing; health; employment and reoffending).

3.60. Much of the evidence given of these improvements was from small-scale work or the outcomes of individual cases, but those who provided examples believed that these held

useful lessons for achieving positive housing outcomes more widely for those who serve short sentences.

Housing-related outcomes

3.61. Housing and prison staff gave many examples of where their interventions had helped people keep their accommodation while in prison. A few staff stated specifically that the majority of individuals who engaged with a housing service while in prison were able to retain their tenancies, even where they faced complex difficulties. Staff in several prisons (e.g. HMPs Addiewell, Barlinnie, Low Moss and Perth) stated that proactive early action had led to a decrease in the number of abandonments and evictions.

3.62. Examples were given where staff had persuaded landlords to allow tenancies to continue, or where a tenancy had been transferred or a sub-let agreed. One housing staff member mentioned an eviction that had been suspended after their intervention. One housing association gave examples of cases where tenancies had been allowed to continue, and where the housing association had absorbed the loss of rent. Housing staff gave a few examples where people had been able to pay some arrears from prison which meant that they had been able to keep their home, or had been re-housed by their landlord on release, despite remaining arrears.

3.63. A number of examples were given of cases where individuals had given up an existing tenancy with support from housing staff, avoiding damaging their future housing prospects. One housing staff member from a third sector organisation gave an example of having been able to secure a guarantee that an individual would be re-housed on a like for like basis on release, provided they ended their existing tenancy quickly.

3.64. A few individuals gave examples where prison, housing, reintegration or other staff had managed to arrange for some of their possessions to be recovered and stored. It was noted that the retrieval of legal documents (e.g. ID) had made a big difference to their chances of getting a tenancy, opening a bank account and arranging utilities. In one case, third sector housing staff had assisted an individual to obtain compensation where a local authority had disposed of their possessions.

3.65. Work undertaken approaching release (by staff of all types) was also seen to have helped improve individuals' chances of finding or keeping accommodation on release. One housing staff member stated that no one working with them in prison had to present as homeless on release. Examples were given where assessments undertaken in custody had reduced the time taken for someone to get appropriate accommodation on release. A number of individuals said that having a housing appointment arranged before release had encouraged them to attend. A few gave examples of having been allocated supported accommodation by a third sector organisation or housing association while still in custody.

3.66. Several participants (including housing staff) stated that helping an individual to prepare for independent living would show a landlord that they could look after their home and meet their responsibilities. An example was given where one housing association had made a commitment to "fast-tracking" applications from people who took part in the "Tenancy and Citizenship" course in HMP Dumfries.

3.67. Staff and individuals gave examples where service provision on release had improved people's chances of getting or keeping suitable accommodation. These included cases where having a reintegration worker accompany an individual to an appointment had increased the chance of a positive outcome (e.g. by helping them keep calm,

understand and raise issues, and avoid communication difficulties and potential conflict with staff). Many individuals with experience of supported accommodation felt the additional support (particularly with rent and budgeting) had made it more likely that they would be able to manage their own tenancy later.

Health outcomes

3.68. A large number of individuals, and staff of all types provided examples of cases where they felt there had been a direct link between addressing housing issues and improving individuals' physical and mental health and well-being (and preventing the types of health problems (identified at pgs 2.48-2.50). Staff and individuals stated that stable accommodation generally made it easier to register with a GP.

3.69. Examples were given of positive health outcomes as a result of individuals having had a member of staff (at all stages) who cared about their situation, and could assist with housing issues. Individuals and staff gave examples where services to help get or keep a home, provide information, or otherwise tackle housing issues had led to a significant reduction in stress for individuals, or had led to improvements in their self-esteem, emotional well-being and self-confidence.

3.70. One individual described how having used a service to arrange storage for their possessions had been "a huge weight lifted". Individuals and staff gave examples where making arrangements with housing-related services before release had reduced people's uncertainty and fear. Some individuals noted that having had accommodation identified well in advance of liberation had improved their mental health.

3.71. There were examples where individuals' health and well-being was thought to have been improved by getting accommodation appropriate to their needs. A few women who had been given accommodation with additional support felt this had improved their personal safety (e.g. by avoiding the risks of sleeping rough or returning to a violent partner). Another individual described having felt more secure, as they were not bullied, and did not have strangers entering their room. A few individuals stated that being released to supported flats had helped them avoid returning to alcohol and drug misuse.

3.72. Reintegration and other specialist staff gave examples where suitable housing had led to improved contact and relationships between individuals and family members (e.g. children, parents or partners), and had contributed to better overall well-being for those involved. A few participants described where an individual's partner (and children) had been able to remain in their accommodation, avoiding stress and disruption for them.

Employment outcomes

3.73. There was a widely-held view that appropriate housing could help remove some of the barriers to employment, education and training (such as those identified at pgs 2.56-2.57) and make it possible to consider and pursue these options.

3.74. Prison staff gave examples where individuals had received early support to tackle housing issues and had been more settled and more likely to take part in education, training and employment-related opportunities in prison. Some individuals and staff mentioned cases where living in appropriate accommodation had enabled an individual to be more rested and presentable for an interview, or at work, so having a better chance of obtaining, or sustaining a job.

3.75. Housing and reintegration staff gave examples where a combination of accommodation and one-to-one support had enabled some individuals to take up a college place, find and keep a job, or become involved in community activities (e.g. volunteering).

Reoffending outcomes

3.76. There was a near-consensus view that addressing housing issues could have a positive impact on reducing reoffending. This was consistent with other research findings on housing and desistance (summarised in Chapter 1 and Annexe 2).

3.77. Evidence was presented in Chapter 1 about the complex range of issues that people who serve short sentences may face (pgh 1.10), and the importance of support structures in reducing reoffending (pgh 1.9). There was a clear view that co-ordinated access to services to help with the range of issues people faced (e.g. addictions, lack of money and possessions, mental health problems, unemployment etc., as well as housing) made reoffending less likely.

3.78. All reintegration staff (and several individuals) gave examples where staff had helped individuals identify and access the range of services they required (including housing) to address the sorts of problems that could lead to reoffending (pgh 3.77).

3.79. Many individuals and staff described instances where gate pick-up had helped ensure that individuals attended early appointments with housing and benefits services, minimising their risk of offending in the early stages after release. Some gave examples where the co-ordination of housing and other services had meant that people had been able to obtain food and other items, as well as accommodation, making the theft of basic essentials less likely.

3.80. The role of appropriate and stable accommodation in helping avoid risk factors which might lead to reoffending was noted in Chapter 1 (pgh 1.9). Many participants believed that placing an individual in appropriate housing circumstances reduced the likelihood of reoffending.

3.81. Specific examples given by staff and individuals included where a local authority had enabled someone to move away from their previous home area on release, which had kept them away from peers who they considered might have encouraged them into behaviour which could lead to reoffending. A number of individuals noted that not being placed in a hostel on release had, in their view, significantly reduced the risk that they would commit drug or alcohol-related offences.

3.82. A further issue raised in Chapter 1 (pgh 1.8) was the individual nature of progress towards desistance. A number of prison and reintegration staff suggested that services in the community could help people generally “get on the right path”. Several reintegration staff mentioned examples of individuals who had received services to help them to address housing issues (sometimes for the first time) who had been able to stay out of prison longer than before, and had made progress towards desistance.

3.83. One individual stated that getting their flat had been critical in making changes to “everything” in their life. Some individuals and staff stated that having accommodation to come out to would give people “something to lose” and deter them from reoffending.

Outcomes for service providers

3.84. Most comments on improved outcomes were about the positive impact on individuals who received services, but some were also mentioned for the services. Some staff, for example, suggested that joined-up practice led to better information-sharing and more effective use of limited resources than un-coordinated provision. A few gave examples where co-located services, or multi-agency discussions had, in their view, led to more co-ordinated work.

3.85. Several prison and reintegration staff stated that they had learned more about housing issues through advice and information from a housing specialist, and so were able to provide higher quality services than before. Some stated that, if housing were provided to people on release, this would reduce one cause of pressure on local authority housing staff, and enable them to better serve other client groups.

3.86. Several staff argued that investment in improving the quality of services provided to address housing issues would be cost-effective, as it would help avoid the high costs not only of homelessness, but also of consequent problems with reoffending, health, relationships, income and benefits etc.

Overview

3.87. This chapter has described the range of housing-related services available to people who serve short sentences. These are being provided by prison, housing, reintegration and other specialist staff, and can include: advice; information; practical and emotional support; accommodation; advocacy; and referral to others.

3.88. Examples have been found of early improvements to housing, health, employment and reoffending outcomes resulting from addressing housing issues. Joint working and information sharing between services, the coordination of support to individuals, and the provision of appropriate accommodation to meet an individual's needs have been highlighted as key elements of good practice.

3.89. Given the nature of housing issues (described in Chapter 2) and the role and impact of housing-related services in tackling these issues (detailed in this chapter), the importance of individuals having access to these services is clear. Chapter 4 details the gaps in, and barriers to the provision or use of these services, and summarises participants' suggestions about how these can be addressed.

4. GAPS, BARRIERS AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1. This chapter describes gaps in the availability and consistency of housing-related services, and barriers to their effective delivery or receipt (questions 1 and 2). Annexes 3-5 provide further evidence of these. This chapter also summarises participants' suggestions to improve housing-related services (detailed in Annexe 6).

Gaps and barriers in housing-related service provision

4.2. Although, as set out in Chapter 3 (pghs 3.3-10 and 3.38-40), many services are involved in addressing housing issues, there was a common view amongst almost all participants that many people who serve short sentences in Scotland do not currently receive the housing-related services they need.

4.3. A key finding of this research was that there was no consistent pattern or level of housing-related service provision across Scotland, with gaps in availability and consistency of services: on imprisonment; during a sentence and approaching release; and on, and following release.

4.4. Cross-cutting gaps and barriers were also found to affect services at all stages, relating to: a lack of overall strategic approach; limited monitoring; a lack of overall structure and joined-up approach; resource limitations; gaps in knowledge and awareness; attitudes and behaviour; and the impact of (non-housing) policy and practice.

4.5. All of these gaps and barriers are described below.

Gaps and barriers on imprisonment

4.6. Participants of all types stated that one of the main gaps in provision on imprisonment was a lack of consistent availability of housing-related services to people in custody, by prison or home local authority area.

4.7. There were variations in the availability of housing services in prisons, and the survey found that many individuals could not access these. Even if a housing service was available in a prison, most housing staff could only work with residents of designated local authority areas, so limiting the individuals who could receive this.

4.8. Further, as all of Scotland's prisons hold people from wide areas (in some cases more than 20 local authority areas), and most young people and women are held in national prisons (pghs A3:5-11), prison and housing staff reported that not all housing services could, in practice, send staff to visit individuals in all prisons (pghs A3:15-29).

4.9. Many individuals would be from home local authority areas where, for the reasons noted above, a housing service would not be available to them in their prison. Staff stated that these factors made it very difficult to provide comprehensive housing services to people in custody, or the same level of service to all individuals.

4.10. Prison, housing and other staff stated that, even where a housing service was available to an individual, variations in practice could lead to gaps in services. For example:

- Housing staff would not always work with people early in a sentence, and most local authorities focused largely on working with people closer to release.
- Homelessness prevention work was carried out in some, but not all prisons. Within prisons, this may vary by the home local authority area of the individual concerned.
- There was variation in whether options such as sub-letting or joint tenancy would be explored, and whether support could be given to address other issues (e.g. securing a property, or making arrangements for relatives and / or pets).

4.11. Identification of housing problems is the essential first stage in addressing the issue and many participants suggested that the Core Screen or induction processes did not always uncover housing issues (although, at the time of writing, the SPS was working to address this by revising the Core Screen form and guidance). Once problems were identified, gaps in services then came into play.

4.12. Housing staff identified a specific gap in services providing support to explore alternative ways of paying rent, or transferring a tenancy. Individuals, prison and housing staff felt that there was a specific gap in services to recover or store people's possessions on imprisonment and that, even when a need was identified, it was often difficult to find someone prepared to do this.

4.13. Barriers for non-prison services working in a prison setting identified by staff and individuals included:

- Delays in getting keys released from individuals' personal property in the prison, to allow relatives or nominees to gain access to accommodation.
- Difficulties for individuals in contacting landlords or banks from prison (e.g. cost of phone calls, and difficulties making calls at appointed times or during office hours).
- Technical issues with financial systems making it difficult for staff to set up payment plans for arrears (being addressed by the SPS at the time of writing).
- Limited time available for external services to work with individuals in prison.

Gaps and barriers during a sentence and approaching release

4.14. The main gap during a sentence and approaching release was (as on imprisonment), a lack of consistent provision of housing services.

4.15. This included the finding that many people had no access to specialist housing services (pgh 4.6) and, even where these were available, variation in actions could lead to gaps in support. For example:

- Not all housing staff would carry out assessments of housing needs before release, nor enable a homelessness application to be made from custody.
- Not all local authorities would allow an individual to make a prior appointment with their homelessness team for the day of release.

4.16. Where people approaching release did not have access to housing services, prison, reintegration and other specialist services could provide only limited support. At the time of writing, the SPS was working to increase staff knowledge of housing options, to enable them to provide more effective support. Some housing staff stated that housing issues were often brought to their attention too late for them to take effective action pre-release.

4.17. Prison and reintegration staff suggested that the complex pattern of eligibility for, and availability of reintegration services, combined with the fact that people from a particular area could be held in a range of prisons (noted at pgh 4.8), made it difficult for these services to deliver comprehensive pre-release support.

4.18. Many participants stated there were gaps in the availability of tenancy preparation work approaching release (e.g. budgeting and independent living skills courses). It was also suggested that there were limited opportunities to obtain suitable forms of identification. The SPS noted having plans in place to address both of these gaps.

Gaps and barriers on, and following release

4.19. A key constraint to enabling people to secure stable accommodation on release (mentioned by participants of all types) was an overall shortage of accommodation in most areas in Scotland. Many mentioned a general shortage of social housing, and housing staff noted some variation by geographical area, demand, and type of tenure (pghs A2:39-41).

4.20. There was seen to be a particular shortage of accommodation appropriate for those leaving custody, particularly one-bedroomed flats in central locations and supported accommodation. Other studies have also noted these issues (pgh 1.13). Several individuals reported having been told when they made a homelessness application that no emergency accommodation was available, and to “come back tomorrow”. A small number of instances were reported where someone had slept on a sofa or floor in a hostel.

4.21. Housing staff noted additional constraints in accessing private lets, partly due to landlords’ restrictions, but also because many individuals leaving prison could not afford deposits or rent costs. Some housing staff stated that those leaving custody could find it very difficult to access rent deposit schemes, which exacerbated this.

4.22. Some housing staff stated that the application of the Local Housing Allowance rate (which puts a ceiling on the amount of Housing Benefit payable) and the under-occupancy penalty (the “Bedroom Tax”) could limit individuals’ options (as for other tenants, although the Scottish Government provides funds to fully mitigate the loss of income from this reform).

4.23. Most housing association staff noted a high level of demand for their accommodation. Some mentioned difficulties with making this available on a specific day to link in with liberation, while still meeting their obligations in relation to overall occupancy levels and minimising rent loss.

4.24. It was also noted, that if an individual had committed a specific offence (e.g. related to drugs or arson), they may be excluded from some social housing (see Annexe 5).

4.25. Reintegration staff and individuals described difficulties caused if local authorities exercised their power to insist on an individual being able to demonstrate a local connection before agreeing to provide accommodation. This was seen to work against an individual making a fresh start, if they needed to move away from negative influences.

4.26. Several reintegration and other specialist staff, and many individuals, described

cases where people leaving prison had been given housing that was dirty, damaged, cold, damp, or lacking facilities. While it was not possible to assess these conditions against the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, these participants considered them unsuitable.

4.27. There were examples where people had been allocated accommodation in areas they felt created risks to them (e.g. to their personal safety, or of exposure to influences that might increase their risk of reoffending) and had been unable to move to a new area. Several participants stated that there were few alternatives for those who refused offers of accommodation because of concerns about such risks.

4.28. There were also some concerns (as at other stages) about the processes for identifying housing issues. A few community-based housing staff suggested that an assessment done in the community may be “less robust” than one done in prison, due to constraints on housing staff time. Some participants felt that there were few mechanisms through which to identify and review on-going housing issues following release.

4.29. There were also seen to be gaps in services to help sustain accommodation. Housing staff stated that their additional support could range from a concierge in a block of flats to intensive one to one work. This was intended to reflect differing levels of need, but staff suggested that pressure on capacity sometimes meant that tenants had to have a very high level of need to receive the most intensive support. It was also noted that one to one work may be time-limited or linked to a temporary tenancy.

4.30. Variation in availability of reintegration and other specialist services in the community (pgh 4.14) was seen to lead to further gaps in support. Differences were reported in eligibility and practice (e.g. whether staff would provide transportation, advocacy and / or other support, and in the length of time for which services could be provided after release). Several individuals and staff stated that there was limited out-of-hours support available. In the case of TSOs, it was noted at the time of writing that the SPS was appointing three Regional Throughcare Managers to ensure consistency in their work.

4.31. Reintegration staff stated that practical barriers on, and following release could include housing appointments being made for inappropriate times (e.g. too early in the day for someone to reach after being released, or too late to allow practical help to be delivered), or at times that conflicted with other appointments (e.g. with a G.P.). A few cases were noted where people who had travelled considerable distances had been unable to secure emergency accommodation because it was full, and had slept rough.

4.32. Many participants felt that, where individuals were released on Fridays and before public holidays, this made it more difficult to access services (e.g. housing, health, drugs, benefits etc.), as these services may be closed, or operating at a reduced level at such times. It was noted that the Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Act 2015 will give the SPS a discretionary power to vary the release date of those serving more than 15 days by one or two days if “it would be better for the prisoner’s re-integration”.

Cross-cutting gaps and barriers

4.33. A number of cross-cutting gaps and barriers were also identified. These related to:

- Lack of an overall strategic approach.

- Limited monitoring.
- Lack of an overall structure and joined-up approach.
- Resource limitations (including accommodation, funding and staffing).
- Gaps in knowledge and awareness of housing issues and services.
- Attitudes and behaviour.
- The impact of other (non-housing) policy and practice on housing issues.

Lack of an overall strategic and proactive approach

4.34. Many participants of all types raised concerns that there was no consistent overall strategic approach to housing-related services across Scotland for people who serve short sentences.

4.35. Several local authority housing staff (and few other specialist staff) raised concerns that a Housing Options approach was not always taken in prison.

4.36. Some housing, prison and reintegration staff stated that there was not always a proactive approach to tackling housing issues either by prison or housing staff. Examples where there was a need for onward referral, and this was not followed up. Some individuals stated that, even where they had asked for input from a service, they had needed to “pester” staff to get it. There were examples of long waiting times, delays, and failure to complete promised actions (while noting a high general level of demand for these services in the community).

4.37. Some participants of all types felt that, in many cases, specific housing issues facing particular groups (e.g. women, disabled people, people from ethnic minority communities and others) were neither recognised nor addressed. Annexe 5 gives examples of these from the discussions (particularly with specialist staff working with these groups).

Limited monitoring

4.38. Gaps were noted in the statistical information available about housing issues and services for people who serve short sentences, and the use of this (A4:2-29). These included:

- Lack of a systematic approach to monitoring housing issues and housing-related service provision in prison.
- Limited collection of housing-related information in the community about individuals who serve short sentences.
- Limited data on housing outcomes for this group.
- Non-identification of this group within a range of published housing statistics (pgs A4:14-29).
- Limited data that can be aggregated (as most of the data collected is qualitative).
- Limited analysis and use of existing data.

4.39. These issues were seen by housing and prison staff to make it difficult to quantify the scale of housing issues for people serving short sentences, and to use this as the basis for specific service planning. This is consistent with findings set out in Annexe 4.

Lack of an overall structure and joined-up approach

4.40. Some staff expressed concern that there was no clear structure for tackling housing

and reoffending. It was noted that there was no national body with overall responsibility for this, and not all areas had multi-agency groups to promote local joint working. CJAs and CPPs each stated that they had limited involvement in addressing the specific issue of housing and reoffending.

4.41. A number of prison and housing staff stated that links between prisons and Housing Options Hubs were not well-formed, but it was noted that, at the time of the research, the SPS Policy Manager had begun a programme of visits to the Hubs to promote joint working.

4.42. Many participants of all types had concerns about a lack of information-sharing. Several housing staff mentioned difficulties in getting particular information, such as:

- Systematic and early notification of people admitted to custody from their area.
- Confirmation from the SPS of whether or not someone was in prison (e.g. before starting abandonment procedures).
- Referral information.
- Release dates.

4.43. Some prison and reintegration staff said it could be difficult to find out about the work some housing staff had done with an individual (and vice versa for some housing staff).

4.44. It was noted that, even where joint protocols were in place, these were generally a number of years old, and had not been reviewed regularly. Some staff (from a range of services) suggested that concerns about the Data Protection Act appeared to constrain information-sharing, even where protocols were in place.

4.45. It was suggested that all of these factors could lead to:

- Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities.
- Tensions between services.
- Some non-housing staff dealing with work where they lacked relevant expertise.
- A lack of onward referral to other appropriate services.
- Duplication and / or gaps in support.
- Competing demands on individuals (e.g. numerous applications to Registered Social Landlords [RSLs]; re-telling their "story" to different services; overlapping appointments etc.).

4.46. A few concerns were also raised about the information provided by some prisons and housing staff to individuals who served short sentences. Examples included:

- An overall lack of information, out of date information or poor advice.
- A reliance on noticeboards and written information rather than face to face contact.
- Lack of feedback about actions taken on an individual's behalf.

Resource limitations

4.47. Virtually all staff (of all types) perceived barriers due to resource limitations, including in the availability of accommodation (pgh 4.19), funding and staffing. There was a common view that there was an overall climate of funding constraint which affected all services (public and third sector) and had led to a reduction in some provision.

4.48. Some housing staff stated that it was difficult, with severe pressure on their capacity, to continue to put resources into prison, noting the difficulty of prioritising between the needs of different client groups. An example was given where an in-prison service had been funded for three years, then was not funded for the subsequent year. At the time of the research, month to month funding was being provided. One local authority stated that they had insufficient resources for an in-prison service.

4.49. One third sector organisation stated that funding constraints limited the nature and extent of their work to sustain tenancies. Others expressed concerns about the implications of short-term funding on the sustainability of their services.

4.50. Staff of all types stated that staffing constraints were affecting many services. Some prison and housing staff described overall staff shortages, and one example was given of a housing team within a local authority operating at 50% of its previous staffing level.

4.51. Prison staff had concerns about gaps in services due to non-replacement of staff, while staff of all types stated that staff turnover led to a loss of expertise and continuity. Further, an example was given where the loss of administrative support to an in-prison housing service had reduced the amount of staff time available for case work. Housing and reintegration staff mentioned a high level of demand for their services, high workloads and a need, at times, to focus only on the most urgent cases.

Gaps in knowledge and awareness of housing issues and services

4.52. Many participants stated that gaps in knowledge and awareness of issues among staff could be a barrier to effective service provision. Staff of all types said they were not always aware of the services available outside their own areas of expertise. Prison staff noted that non-prison services did not always understand the complexity of issues facing people who served short sentences. Staff of all types stated that non-housing services did not always understand housing issues, nor the actions that could be taken.

4.53. There was a common view that individuals facing housing issues (while in custody or the community) may not be aware of issues such as: the need to take early action to address these issues; their rights and responsibilities; and the services available.

4.54. It was suggested that all of these gaps could mean that housing issues were not identified, and / or that individuals did not get the right service to address their needs.

Attitudes and behaviour

4.55. Many participants expressed concerns that barriers could be created as a result of the attitudes or behaviour of staff, individuals or people in the wider community.

4.56. In relation to staff, a common concern among individuals (and reintegration and other specialist staff who attended appointments with them) was about what they felt were judgemental attitudes from some housing staff. Examples were given where they felt housing staff had shown a lack of empathy or willingness to listen, a lack of courtesy and respect, or had made unfounded assumptions about individuals (e.g. that past behaviour would be repeated, or that someone else would take responsibility for providing support).

4.57. A few housing and other staff suggested that housing staff were sometimes afraid of

being criticised (e.g. by the press) for seeming to “favour” people leaving custody. A few felt there was a lack of **local** political will to tackle housing problems for this group.

4.58. In relation to individuals, participants of all types gave examples of what they considered to be inappropriate assumptions, attitudes and behaviour on the part of those who served short sentences. A number of prison staff (and individuals) stated that people may “switch off” from the outside world while in custody, assume they would lose their housing automatically, or that someone else would take any necessary action. Some individuals and reintegration staff suggested that people leaving prison may distrust housing staff because of previous experiences they felt had been negative.

4.59. Some housing staff suggested that individuals often had “unrealistic” expectations of housing, and / or negative views of particular kinds of accommodation (e.g. hostels). Reintegration and other specialist staff and individuals gave examples of people who had become frustrated and angry when dealing with housing staff, some of whom had been arrested in housing offices or hostels as a result of their behaviour.

4.60. Some prison and reintegration staff, as well as individuals, said that people leaving custody faced many pressures on the day of liberation (e.g. health, addictions and family problems) and so might not have a clear focus on housing.

4.61. In relation to the wider community, a few staff and individuals gave examples of assumptions, attitudes and behaviour by potential neighbours which may present barriers to reintegration for people released from prison. These included people: stigmatising individuals leaving prison; not wanting them to live in their area; or being worried about a “risk” to their family or property from such a situation.

The impact of other (non-housing) policy and practice

4.62. There was a common view among participants of all types that wider policy and practice issues could contribute to housing problems, and make it difficult to address them. The key areas were welfare and sentencing policy.

4.63. Concerns about welfare benefits included:

- Housing Benefit rules (payment only up to 13 weeks following imprisonment and for the housing element of Universal Credit, 26 weeks).
- Sanctions.
- Unrealistic work-seeking requirements for employment-related benefit claimants.
- Delays in benefit payments following liberation.
- The implications of the introduction of Universal Credit.

4.64. Whilst it was acknowledged that some of these issues would affect other people claiming benefits, as well as those leaving prison, they were seen to compound other barriers to securing and sustaining stable accommodation for those released from custody.

4.65. Many comments were made about Universal Credit. Although staff were unclear about its specific implications at the time of writing, there was a widely shared fear (among housing and other staff) that this would lead to increased arrears, debt, loss of accommodation and reoffending among those released from custody, due to:

- A longer wait for payment, and a period on release without money.
- A single payment directly to claimants, with a risk that they: may not realise their responsibility to pay rent; may not prioritise rent (e.g. if they have addictions, or children); or may use the payment as a way to coerce and control family members.
- Monthly payments, which could be difficult to manage with limited budgeting skills.

4.66. Some aspects of sentencing practice were also identified as potentially adding to housing problems. These included:

- Sentences of slightly more than six months which meant that an individual would serve more than 13 weeks in prison, leading to the loss of Housing Benefit and potentially accommodation (although it was noted that arrangements would be different with Universal Credit).
- Disparity in sentencing for similar offences, leading to different housing outcomes (although it was suggested that this would be addressed by the new Scottish Sentencing Council⁹).
- Limited use of alternatives to custody (although it was noted that Community Payback Orders and Fiscal Work Orders were being used more widely).

4.67. In addition to welfare and sentencing, other problems highlighted included:

- Lack of transparency and “grey” areas in the Scottish Welfare Fund, as well as difficulties and delays in applying for, and in securing SWF grants (although it was noted that, at the time of writing, amendments had been made to the SWF).
- Inability to make prior arrangements for GP care from custody.
- Exclusion from access to bank accounts and insurance (although, as noted at paragraph 3.36, this was being addressed by the SPS and BBA).

Suggested developments to address the gaps and barriers

4.68. Many suggestions were made about actions that could be taken to improve the housing-related services and address these gaps and barriers. There was a high level of agreement among all types of participants about the areas in which developments were needed. These are summarised below and detailed in Annexe 6.

4.69. Staff of all types, and individuals who served short sentences, suggested a need for a coherent overall approach to tackling housing and reoffending in Scotland. A common suggestion was for all of those serving short sentences to have access to the same level and quality of services and support, at all stages, whatever their prison or home area.

4.70. Some housing staff suggested the adoption of a Housing Options approach in all prisons (as well as in the community). Others, while not necessarily using this term, suggested a similar type of approach.

4.71. Effective support was seen to involve early, co-ordinated action between prison, housing, reintegration and other specialist staff, tailored to individual needs and taking account of the service recipient’s views. It was seen to require not only providing accommodation, but input to address all of the housing issues identified in Chapter 2. A

⁹ <https://www.scottishsentencingcouncil.org.uk/>

combination of: preventive work; individual planning; timely input; and referral to other support when needed (e.g. health, money advice etc.) was seen to be required, with services being flexible, and delivered by staff with knowledge, expertise and non-judgemental attitudes.

4.72. Many participants suggested a need for an appropriate national and local structure to support multi-agency working. A further common suggestion was a need for better joined-up working, information-sharing and communication. Participants of all types suggested that there should be a housing officer or adviser in every prison providing the same level of support to people from all areas and at all stages (although it was also noted that it may not be possible to deliver this level of service).

4.73. Participants of all types stated that services were under-resourced in terms of funding, staffing and accommodation, and that this should be addressed. Staff suggested a need for improved monitoring, or better use of the statistics available.

4.74. Many suggestions were also made about increasing knowledge of the nature and impact of housing issues faced by people who serve short sentences (among staff, individuals and the wider community). It was also seen to be important to tackle any attitudes, behaviour, or unfounded assumptions (by any of those delivering or receiving housing-related services) that could be a barrier to effective service provision or use.

4.75. Many detailed suggestions were made about particular aspects of policy and practice that could be developed further. These related particularly to housing services and the SPS, but also included suggestions for welfare and other policy areas (detailed, along with further information about all of these suggestions, in Annexe 6).

Overview

4.76. This chapter has described gaps in, and barriers to provision and receipt of housing-related services at each of the three key stages (on imprisonment; during a sentence and approaching release; and on, and following release), and some affecting all stages.

4.77. Gaps and barriers were found relating to: variations between and within services in their availability, accessibility and practice; problems with processes for identifying housing issues; lack of a strategic, joined-up approach; limited monitoring of housing issues and services; resource constraints; gaps in knowledge and understanding; and problems resulting from some attitudes and behaviour. Aspects of welfare and sentencing policy and practice were also found to have a negative impact on addressing housing issues.

4.78. Suggestions related to developing, promoting and implementing: a coherent overall approach; a structure for joint working and information-sharing; adequate resources; access to the same level and quality of services for all people serving short sentences; improved monitoring; increased knowledge and awareness of housing issues and options; and work to tackle inappropriate attitudes or behaviour by service providers or recipients.

4.79. All of the material in this chapter has been used, along with other research findings described in Chapter 1, to inform the next steps suggested in the final chapter. These have been kept at a strategic level. The more detailed suggestions set out in Annexe 6 can be used to inform more specific developments.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

5.1. This chapter presents a summary of the overall findings of this study, and the authors' suggestions for the next steps as suggested by the findings. These have been based on the findings presented in Chapters 2-4 and Annexes 2-6 of this report.

Overall findings

5.2. Overall, the findings of this research are consistent with, and supplement those from previous studies (detailed in Chapter 1 and Annexe 2, and in Shelter [2015]). The research found that people who serve short sentences in Scotland can face a range of housing issues at different stages.

5.3. On imprisonment, these can relate to arrangements to: keep or surrender existing accommodation; secure the property; retrieve possessions; and ensure accommodation arrangements for any dependents are made (pgh 2.3). During a sentence and approaching release, these can relate to: addressing any changing housing circumstances; developing independent living skills; making financial arrangements; and identifying accommodation for release (pgh 2.17). On, and following release, these can relate to: obtaining and moving into accommodation; responding to changing housing circumstances; managing accommodation; and accessing other support (pgh 2.32).

5.4. People who serve short sentences may need services to support them at each of these stages to address these issues. The research found that housing problems could have a negative impact on: health and well-being; learning and employment and desistance (pghs 2.46-2.60). Where support was provided, there were views that this could contribute not only to positive housing outcomes, but also to other positive outcomes (pghs 3.59-3.86).

5.5. The research (Chapter 3) described a range of housing-related services for people who serve short sentences. Prison staff, housing staff, throughcare and other specialist staff were found to: offer assistance to identify housing issues and explore options; carry out work with individuals to address housing issues; share information; and work with staff of other services to provide co-ordinated support.

5.6. The research also highlighted a number of current gaps in, and barriers to housing-related service provision and receipt (Chapter 4). These included gaps in the availability and consistency of services at each stage, and a number of cross-cutting barriers affecting all stages. The recommendations below focus on addressing these gaps and barriers and reflect the suggestions made (pghs 4.68-4.75 and detailed in Annexe 6).

Potential next steps suggested by the findings

5.7. Because the research findings found differences in the availability and level of support, and the nature of practice (pgh 4.2), which participants suggested could be addressed by a more coherent overall approach to tackling housing and reoffending (pgh 4.69), we suggest that national direction and a clear commitment from the Scottish Government, the SPS and local community justice partners (which includes housing and homelessness services) will be needed.

1: The Scottish Government, the SPS, social housing providers and community justice partners should give consideration to how best to ensure consistent services are provided in prison to give advice and support with housing issues to those who serve short sentences. Any resulting plans for action should be in keeping with other Government justice strategies.

5.8. To overcome this variation in the availability of housing staff and coverage of reintegration services (pgh 4.30), some participants recommended a more widespread adoption of the Housing Options approach to housing work in prison and in the community (pghs 4.70-71) to ensure consistency of implementation, and a review of SPS housing policy and practice (pghs A6:22-25) to address quality issues. Many participants put forward the need for adequate funding, staffing and accommodation (pgh 4.73) to meet the level of demand (pghs 4.47-4.51) at an appropriate level of quality.

2: The SPS and social housing providers should give consideration to setting out a consistent standard for providing services in all prisons to give advice and support with housing issues to those who serve short sentences, and on release into the community including adoption of a Housing Options approach.

5.9. Participants were concerned by the current lack of a national body or local structure for tackling housing and reoffending issues (pgh 4.40).

3: Consideration should be given to Community Justice Scotland having national leadership of housing and reoffending overseeing the development of improved local support through monitoring of the new national strategy for community justice and the national performance framework with local partners.

5.10. A common suggestion, by many participants of all types, was a need for better information-sharing and communication (pghs 4.42 and 4.72).

4: The Scottish Government, the SPS and social housing providers should give consideration to facilitating information-sharing on housing problems (including for example arrears) between their services, at national and local levels. The aim of this would be more joined-up service delivery and a lack of duplication.

5.11. Suggestions were made (pgh 4.73) to address reported gaps in statistical information (pgh 4.38) which were seen to obscure the scale of housing issues, gaps in provision, and potential improvements.

5: The Scottish Government, the SPS and social housing providers should give consideration to how outcomes for those who serve short sentences can be recorded, making best use of existing data sources. The aim of this would be to record the scale and nature of any issues and identify any improvements.

5.12. The research found evidence of gaps in awareness of housing issues among staff and those serving short sentences (pgh 4.52), and concerns about judgemental attitudes and behaviour (pgh 4.56), so many suggestions were made about developing understanding and awareness of the nature and impact of housing issues and the support needed (pgh 4.74).

6: The SPS should give consideration to ensuring that relevant staff receive basic Housing Options and advice training to ensure that clear information on housing is given to individuals who serve short sentences.

5.13. Because the research found that other policy areas (particularly welfare and sentencing) could impact on housing issues (pgs 4.62-4.67) and consequently on risks of reoffending, it is thought likely that relevant policy makers and practitioners might be unaware of their possible contribution to reducing reoffending.

7: The Scottish Government and the SPS should give consideration to providing information to policy makers and professionals in other areas (for example, sentencing, health, social security) about how they could contribute to achieving positive outcomes for people who serve short sentences through consideration of housing issues.

ANNEXE 1 METHODS

1. Reid-Howie Associates (RHA) was commissioned by the Scottish Government in late 2014 to carry out research into the housing experiences of people who serve short-term sentences in Scotland (i.e. sentences of four years or less). The research was overseen by a Research Advisory Group (RAG). The fieldwork was undertaken between February and June 2015.

Aims and research questions

2. The aim of the study was to provide evidence and understanding to inform the development of policy and practice for preventing homelessness, securing stable accommodation and improving the housing outcomes for those who serve short sentences in Scotland, within the overall goal of reducing reoffending. The focus of the work was upon the importance of, and barriers to securing stable accommodation on liberation.

3. The research set out to address the following research questions:

1. What is the extent and nature of issues and barriers that people who serve short sentences in Scotland perceive they have surrounding finding and keeping a home at trigger points before, during and after imprisonment? (Addressed in Chapters 2 and 4.)
2. What is the extent and nature of issues and barriers that people who serve short sentences in Scotland have surrounding finding and keeping a home at trigger points before, during and after imprisonment, as perceived by the SPS, criminal justice social workers, housing officers and others that may have insights into the difficulties they face? (Addressed in Chapters 2 and 4.)
3. What types of services (including but not exclusively supported housing for women) that focus on improving housing outcomes for people who serve short sentences in Scotland are delivered by local authorities as landlords and registered social landlords and the third sector? (Addressed in Chapter 3.)
4. What (if any) early indications are there of improved outcomes (related to housing, health, employment and potentially reoffending) that these services contribute to and how? (Addressed in Chapter 3.)
5. What impact do difficulties with housing have on other known difficulties faced by people who serve short sentences including getting and keeping employment and dealing with health issues including substance abuse? (Addressed in Chapter 2.)
6. What are the practice recommendations for preventing homelessness and securing stable accommodation that will enable the Scottish Prison Service and housing organisations to improve the housing outcomes for people who serve short sentences in Scotland? (Addressed in Chapter 5.)

The main methods

4. The scope and scale of the research, and the range of information sought in order to address these six research questions, required the use of a combination of methods. There were five key strands:

- a) A Scotland-wide service and practice mapping exercise, by survey.
- b) Interviews with 45 people serving, and 29 who had served short sentences.
- c) Interviews with 146 key professionals.
- d) A review of relevant literature and evidence.

e) Reporting and recommendations.

5. Details of each strand are provided below.

Mapping exercise and survey

6. The first stage involved a service and practice "mapping" exercise, to identify the services in Scotland involved in tackling housing issues faced by people who serve short sentences, and the pattern and nature of their provision. This was done by circulating a self-completion "SurveyMonkey" pro-forma to relevant organisations in Scotland. This was designed with input from the RAG, and sought information relating to:

- The nature of the service provider.
- The availability and type of service being delivered (in prison and / or in the community).
- Monitoring and evaluation of the service.
- Overall views of the provision available to address housing issues.
- Identifying other service providers.

7. For the purposes of this study, housing-related services were taken to include any services which may enable (either directly or indirectly) service users to obtain or sustain housing.

8. Organisations for inclusion were identified on the basis of the contractor's knowledge, input from the RAG and internet searching. Recipients included:

- All local authorities (housing and homelessness; and criminal justice social work services).
- Housing associations.
- Relevant partnerships / projects and third sector services.

9. All recipients were asked to identify any other services they were aware of carrying out housing-related work with those in custody, or those who had recently been released. Any additional service providers identified in this process were then asked to complete a form.

10. A slightly different self-completion form was designed and circulated (by email and by post) to all prisons in Scotland with people serving short sentences.

11. Follow-up was carried out by e-mail and telephone, to ensure that as high a coverage as possible was achieved. Responses were received as follows:

Table 1. Numbers of respondents

Type	Num.
Housing associations	32
Local authority housing / homelessness services	28
Other third sector services	26
Prisons	14
Local authority criminal justice social work services	10
Third sector housing services	10
Total	120

12. All of the prisons with people serving short sentences completed a pro-forma, as did almost all (28 of 32) of the local authority housing / homelessness services. Most of the key third sector services involved also submitted a pro-forma response. These contained a large amount of useful information, although not all respondents answered all of the questions.

13. This strand of the research helped: provide background information for the qualitative research; determine where, and how, relevant services were being provided; and identify where there may be innovative practice. More specifically, it contributed to addressing:

- Question 3 (the types of services being delivered).
- Question 4 (evidence of outcomes from service provision).
- Question 6 (the identification of practice recommendations).

14. Details of the findings from the mapping study are presented in Annexe 3, alongside relevant findings from other strands of the research.

Interviews with people who served short sentences

15. The second strand of the work involved group discussions and face to face interviews with people who served short sentences (in custody and the community). These explored their views of the issues they faced in finding and keeping accommodation, and the housing-related services they received at various stages.

16. The views of people in custody were explored through eight groups (involving 45 individuals in total), each lasting 45 minutes to an hour. Virtually all of those who participated in these groups had served previous sentences. The groups were held in six different establishments, and included:

- Three groups of adult men (in HMPs Barlinnie; Edinburgh; and Low Moss).
- Two groups, both containing adult women and young women (in HMPYOI Cornton Vale).
- One mixed group of adult men and women in a largely rural area (in HMPYOI Grampian).
- One group of adult men with mental health problems (in HMP Barlinnie).
- One group of young men (in HMYOI Polmont).

17. Discussions were also held with people in the community who had served short sentences (29 individuals). These involved a combination of groups and individual interviews. Six community organisations working with people who had been in custody (Action for Children; Catalyst; Sacro; Positive Prisons; 218 and Tomorrow's Women Glasgow) helped make the arrangements.

18. All of the discussions explored participants' views of:

- Housing issues they had experienced at different stages (prior to imprisonment; on imprisonment; during a sentence and approaching release; and on, and following release).
- The impact of housing issues at each stage.
- The means of identification of the issues at each stage.
- The nature of services provided at each stage and any reported improvements to their housing outcomes.

- Overall views of housing-related services, suggested developments and improvements.

19. This strand of the research contributed to addressing:

- Question 1 (perceptions of housing issues and barriers).
- Question 3 (the types of services being delivered).
- Question 4 (evidence of outcomes from service provision).
- Question 5 (the impact of housing problems on other difficulties).
- Question 6 (the identification of practice recommendations).

Interviews with key service providers

20. The third strand of the study involved interviews (or small group discussions) with key housing-related service providers working with those who serve short sentences in Scotland. These were generally face to face (with 144 people), although two were undertaken by telephone (making a total of 146).

21. The interview sample was agreed with the RAG, and involved participants from:

- Prisons (all 14 establishments holding people serving short sentences) and the SPS Headquarters.
- Housing Options Hubs (5).
- Relevant third sector organisations and partnerships (19).
- Housing associations and related organisations (7).
- Criminal justice social work services (3).
- CPPs (2).
- CJAs (4).

22. The interviews covered broadly the same areas as those with people who served short sentences, with the questions amended, where required, to suit the particular specialisms / expertise of participants. These explored their views of:

- Housing issues experienced by those who serve short sentences, at different stages.
- The impact of housing issues on this group at each stage.
- The means of identification of housing issues at each stage.
- The services provided at each stage, and any gaps.
- Overall issues (for example monitoring; issues for specific groups; links between housing problems and other issues; joint working; good practice examples; constraints for service providers; and suggested improvements).

23. When exploring the impact of housing issues (with individuals who served short sentences and service providers) participants' views were sought about the impact of such issues on other factors (e.g. health, employment etc.), while recognising that any "improvement" could not be measured quantitatively, nor relative to a baseline.

24. This strand of the research contributed to addressing:

- Question 2 (professionals' perceptions of housing issues and barriers for those who serve short sentences).
- Question 3 (the types of services being delivered).

- Question 4 (evidence of outcomes from service provision).
- Question 5 (the impact of housing problems on other difficulties).
- Question 6 (the identification of practice recommendations).

Review of relevant literature and statistics

25. The research involved a brief review of key literature and evidence relating to housing and reoffending (including a brief overview of relevant legislative and contextual information). The overall aim of this strand of the research was to set the work in context, and to support the rationale for this by helping demonstrate (wherever possible) the nature and scale of the issues. This material is presented in full in Annexe 2.

26. The review also explored the availability of relevant statistical data in Scotland (e.g. on issues such as: the number of people who have served sentences presenting as homeless; the proportion of people in prison experiencing housing issues; SPS information etc.). An analysis of the gaps in, and issues with the data was undertaken. This material is included in Annexe 4.

27. The SPS was also asked to provide a “snapshot” of the home locations of those in custody, broken down by home local authority area. This is presented in Annexe 3, to demonstrate the spread of potential service users from different local authority areas in prisons across Scotland, and to illustrate the complexity of the spread of liberations to different areas.

28. This strand of the research helped contribute to the overall understanding of the housing issues and barriers for those serving short sentences. The material contributed to addressing all of the research questions.

Analysis, reporting and presentation of the data

29. The analysis of the survey information was carried out using an Access database (in the case of the prison data) and SurveyMonkey and Excel (in the case of the other data). The information was then summarised to give an indication of provision by area, establishment and type.

30. The information from the interviews and group discussions was stored in an Access database and analysed qualitatively. Key themes, sub-themes and detailed comments were identified by question and type of respondent, and summarised for each of the issues explored.

31. In presenting the qualitative findings, reference is made in the report to “individuals” to describe those serving, or who had served short sentences and “staff” to describe those working with them. This was seen to be the best means of describing and distinguishing between the two types of participants, in terms of the readability of the report and the need to avoid “labelling” those who served short sentences. The term “participants” is used to describe both individuals and staff. It is recognised that not all not all of the “staff” work directly with individuals.

32. Some distinctions are also made, where relevant, between different types of services (and staff). These have been grouped together in the presentation of the findings by the nature of their role, to best reflect their involvement in tackling housing issues. The groupings used are as follows:

- Housing services / staff - this includes local authority housing services; housing associations; and third sector housing services.
- Prison services / staff - this includes all SPS and private prison-based provision, but excludes TSOs (who are included with reintegration staff).
- Reintegration services / staff – this includes local authority social work services; relevant third sector-led organisations and partnerships; PSPs; and TSOs.
- Other specialist organisations / staff – this includes relevant third sector services which are not specific housing or reintegration services; CJAs and CPPs; and any other public or third sector services providing housing-related support.

33. It is recognised that the categories are not always mutually exclusive. Their purpose, however, is only to allow a description of how services work and interact, and to distinguish between the views of different staff groups.

34. As far as possible, in presenting the findings, examples have been given of the types of participants raising particular issues. It should be borne in mind, however, that many of these points were made by participants of a range of types (reflecting the number of discussions and range of staff and individuals involved). It would be impossible to detail all of those who made each point and retain readability.

35. Where particular types of participant have been mentioned, this should not be taken to imply that these were the only participants who made these points.

36. The findings have been summarised in the main report, which was kept brief, while reflecting the range and depth of material and ensuring that all points were based on clear evidence from the information gathered. More detailed findings are provided in Annexes 2-6.

37. All of the issues raised in the main report are supported by the data. The qualitative material in the report is presented using qualitative terms (for example many, several etc.). The broad overall themes (and the main sub-themes) give an indication of the issues raised most commonly.

ANNEXE 2 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

1. The purpose of this Annexe is to set the research in its wider context. The material supplements the summary provided in Chapter 1 of the main report.
2. The Annexe will cover three main areas:
 - a. Desistance, housing issues, policy and practice and their links.
 - b. Legislative and policy developments and provisions affecting support address housing issues for people who serve short sentences in Scotland.
 - c. Forthcoming developments in community justice in Scotland.
3. It should be noted at the outset that two detailed literature reviews of relevance to this work have been published in recent months. One (Shelter, 2015a) covers housing and desistance issues, while the other covers a broad range of topics pertinent to desistance more generally (Sapouna et al, 2015). The content of these will not be reproduced in detail here, although reference will be made to them at relevant points..

a. Desistance, housing issues, policy and practice and their links

4. The first part of this section will consider a number of aspects of desistance, housing policy and practice, and the links between them. It will cover:
 - Desistance theory.
 - The impact of personal characteristics on housing issues.
 - The impact of deprivation on housing issues.
 - The impact of serving a prison sentence on housing issues.
 - Issues in finding and keeping accommodation on liberation.
 - Issues relating to temporary accommodation and its location.
 - The overall demand for accommodation.
 - The potential costs of homelessness and reoffending.
 - The provision of housing-related services.

Desistance theory

5. In the last 10 years, there has been a significant shift in understanding about the process through which individuals cease offending and the factors which might impact on this. The process is generally referred to as “desistance” from offending (McNeill et al, 2012).
6. Research suggests that the desistance process is complex and highly individual (Sapouna et al, 2015; McNeill et al, 2012). There is now a recognition that, for most people who have committed offences, desistance is a process, rather than an event, and that it can take a number of years, and, in some cases, will require a significant amount of support (Sapouna et al, 2015; Ministry of Justice, 2013).
7. It has been found that the point of ceasing to offend (referred to as “primary desistance”) is significant, but, for maximum and sustained impact, there also needs to be a more deep-seated change in the individual's perception of themselves as a “non-offender” (referred to as “secondary desistance”) (McNeill et al, 2012). It is acknowledged that many of those who commit offences progress to this point largely through maturation, but for others it is a complex process.

8. The bullet points below (adapted from McNeil et al, 2012) identify some of the key characteristics associated with supporting an individual to desist from offending:

- It is likely to be an extended process involving lapses and relapses.
- The process and support are likely to be specific to each individual.
- There is a need not just to develop motivation, but also to create hope that an individual's life circumstances will improve.
- The process should be based not only on risks and needs, but also on strengths and assets.
- It must be empowering for the individual, and planned on the basis of co-production.
- It needs to encompass relationships not only with workers, but also, for example, family members and others who can exert a positive influence.

9. Research in Scotland on desistance strongly supports the importance of community links, and community support structures (and the role of stable accommodation) in helping promote desistance (summarised in Sapouna et al, 2015)¹⁰. Research in England (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002) made a clear link between stable accommodation and reducing the risk of reoffending (estimating that it could reduce the risk by around 20%). Similarly, research for the England and Wales Rough Sleepers Initiative (Rough Sleepers Unit, 2002) drew conclusions about the central role of stable accommodation in re-establishing community links.

10. The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) has recognised the need to access and sustain suitable housing, and this is one of its nine key "Offender Outcomes" (Scottish Executive, 2006). The Offender Outcomes remain relevant today, and have been carried forward by the SPS into the Organisational Review (SPS, 2013) which is expected to guide the work of the service for the next five to ten years.

The impact of personal characteristics on housing issues

11. People who are, or who have been in custody, can experience housing issues and barriers that vary with personal characteristics such as gender and age. For example, research has found that women may face different issues to men in relation to their most appropriate post-release housing options. These can include the need to find accommodation large enough for them and their children, or the need to find safe accommodation to reduce the risk of domestic abuse (Scottish Government, 2012; Scottish Executive, 1998; Reid Howie Associates, 2001).

12. There are also variations by age (Reid Howie Associates, 2001; Reid Howie Associates, 2009; Bottoms et al, 2004). Many young people who serve sentences expect to return to their families on release, with limited understanding of the relationship difficulties this might present, and may find themselves having to live independently with little preparation. Many lack the skills to do this, having never held a tenancy of their own.

13. There are also increasing numbers of older people being released from prison. Some of this group are sex offenders, who face specific housing and other restrictions as a result of their conviction. Many older people who have served a prison sentence will have the

¹⁰ This Annexe will not cover findings about "what works" in relation to support to desist from offending. The work by Sapouna et al, 2015 provides a comprehensive summary of these issues.

same types of housing and support needs as other older members of the population (e.g. in relation to accessibility, proximity to forms of support etc.), while at the same time facing the same issues as others who have been in custody (e.g. social isolation, institutionalisation etc.) (Justice Committee, 2013).

14. The UK Parliament's Justice Committee received evidence from a number of prisons in England and Wales which highlighted the difficulties staff faced in finding accessible supported accommodation for older people leaving custody, with the result that some were released with no accommodation in place.

15. Research has also shown that members of "vulnerable" groups are over-represented among the prison population. Loucks (2006), for example, estimated that 20-30% of the prison population had some form of learning difficulties (compared to around 2% in the wider population). The Prison Reform Trust (2012) noted that rates of mental health problems among men and women in custody (including depression, anxiety, and personality disorders) were significantly higher than in the wider population.

16. Those with long term reliance on alcohol and / or drugs can face particular issues and barriers regardless of their offending histories. It can be more difficult for services to support them following release, as a result of the range and complexity of their needs (Reid Howie Associates, 2001; 2004; 2013 unpublished; Loucks, 2007).

17. Although not a "vulnerable group" per se, research by Reid Howie Associates (2004), supported by Loucks (2007), suggested that issues for those remanded in custody may be compounded by the fact that they were not generally eligible for induction or pre-release work. In virtually all cases, the research found that they were unlikely to have had their housing needs assessed or addressed at any stage.

The impact of deprivation on housing issues

18. In considering the linked issues of deprivation, housing and desistance, it is important to bear in mind that people who serve prison sentences are by no means a homogenous group (Carnie et al, 2013).

19. Statistical analysis by Houchin (2005) on people in custody (using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) showed clearly that there was a high correlation between the level of deprivation in an area and the imprisonment rate. Of particular relevance to this research, Houchin reported a clear correlation between housing problems (including living in poor quality housing) before being admitted to prison and rates of imprisonment (see also Audit Scotland, 2012; Reid Howie Associates, 2004).

20. Shelter (2015a) noted that many of those coming into custody already faced significant arrears, and may be the subject of court action relating either to these arrears, or to other matters such as anti-social behaviour or breaches of tenancy agreements.

21. Loucks (2007) found that a majority of those in her study of 37 people who had been in custody had significant and long-standing rent or mortgage arrears, often exacerbated by their period of imprisonment. Around one in eight of those interviewed had lost accommodation as a result of rent or mortgage arrears.

22. Bottoms et al (2004) suggested that people who committed offences were likely to have a "volatile" recent housing history. They had often experienced periods in temporary accommodation, hostels or homelessness, and, as a result, were likely to lack community

links and connections (as noted above, one of the key elements in promoting or supporting desistance).

The impact of serving a prison sentence on housing issues

23. Research suggests that housing issues can arise as a consequence of serving a relatively short sentence, even where no issues have existed before entering custody¹¹. Carlisle (1996) found that some individuals with no previous history of arrears or relationship difficulties had experienced these as a direct result of serving a short sentence. In some cases, a direct consequence was that they lost their previous accommodation. Weaver and Armstrong (2012) also found that the loss of accommodation could result from a relationship breakdown, or from the loss of previously effective support structures.

24. The loss of accommodation, in turn, may make it more likely that individuals will offend in the future (Carlisle, 1996; Reid Howie Associates, 2004; Loucks 2007). Both Reid Howie Associates (2004) and Loucks (2007) in small-scale qualitative research spoke with individuals who had chosen to offend in order to return to custody, primarily as a way of addressing their lack of suitable accommodation.

25. Research suggests that those held in custody may face significant practical difficulties in tackling housing issues. Men and women held in closed conditions have been found to face difficulties in relation to: making contact with landlords; negotiating the transfer or surrender of tenancies; identifying and making application to housing providers on liberation; paying arrears or other debts; managing bank accounts; and, as will be set out in more detail later, arranging for the retrieval and storage of possessions (for example HMI Prisons and Probation 2001; Reid Howie Associates, 2001; 2004; 2013; 2015; and Loucks, 2007).

26. These difficulties have been found to arise, in part, as those in custody have limited access to telephones, and no access to the internet (although this is currently being considered by the SPS). These factors may be little-understood by some service providers (Reid Howie Associates, 2014 unpublished) and may lead to unreasonable expectations about how individuals in custody can engage with services.

Issues in finding and keeping accommodation on liberation

27. There is strong evidence that some of those who serve short sentences find it difficult to obtain housing on release (Loucks, 2007; Reid Howie Associates, 2015). Research by Reid Howie Associates for the Rough Sleepers Initiative in Scotland (2004) suggested a range of reasons for this, including: an overall shortage of bedsit and one-bedroomed accommodation; and a shortage of supported accommodation.

28. Those leaving custody may have their choice of accommodation, or choice of location restricted by the nature of previous convictions. This could include not only sexual offences and offences involving children, but also, for example, drugs offences, Housing Benefit and other frauds, and arson (McDonagh, 2011; Reid Howie Associates, 2004; Loucks, 2007).

¹¹ It was noted that, at the time of writing, the Scottish Government intended to consult on proposals to strengthen the presumption against short periods of imprisonment.

29. Research for the Rough Sleepers Initiative (Reid Howie Associates, 2004) highlighted that the refusal by local authorities to provide accommodation to individuals without a connection to that area could limit the ability of those leaving custody to move to another area (which may lessen both the risk to their personal safety, and of reoffending).

30. The Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) (Scottish Government and CoSLA, 2009) described a range of factors which may increase the risk of homelessness, many of which (including a lack of coping skills, a history of institutional living and previous homelessness, prior abuse, poor education, mental and physical health problems and a history of offending) have been found to be particularly prevalent among those who serve short sentences (Carnie et al, 2013).

31. A number of pieces of research (for example Carlisle, 1996, Reid Howie Associates, 2001; HMI Prisons / HMI Probation, 2001; Reid Howie Associates, 2002a) have shown that many of those who leave prison lack the skills to live independently on liberation. It has been found that they may have difficulty with: budgeting; money management; and even household basics, such as cooking and operating basic household equipment (Reid Howie Associates, 2001; Loucks; Reid Howie Associates, 2009). Many have literacy and numeracy difficulties (Reid Howie Associates, 2002b; Social Exclusion Unit 2002).

32. A number of these studies recommended that prisons could do more to prepare individuals for living independently (e.g. HMI Prisons / HMI Probation, 2001; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; and Reid Howie Associates, 2009).

33. Qualitative research in Scotland (Reid Howie Associates, 2004; Loucks, 2007) found that many people interviewed reported losing some or all of their possessions on being imprisoned, necessitating “starting again from scratch” on liberation. Most indicated that that they had had to apply to the (then) Social Fund for assistance to replace possessions on a like for like basis only a few months after losing these (Reid Howie Associates, 2004). Reid Howie Associates (2004) referred to this as the “triple punishment - loss of liberty, loss of tenancy and loss of possessions”.

34. With limited exceptions (e.g. local community projects, and local authorities or other landlords on a case by case basis), there is still no obvious means by which those sentenced to custody, and without access to friends and family, can retrieve and store possessions (Shelter, 2015a).

Issues relating to temporary accommodation and its location

35. Although there is little statistical evidence available, qualitative research for the Rough Sleepers Initiative in Scotland (Reid Howie Associates, 2004) found a clear perception among both housing staff and those who had served short sentences that the temporary accommodation provided by local authorities tended to be in the “worst” areas. This was characterised as putting the individuals at risk of: becoming a victim of crime; being exposed to unwelcome peer pressure to commit crime; and being exposed to drug dealers.

36. Carlisle (1996) noted that those leaving prison expressed significant concerns about being placed in a hostel environment, and noted an increased risk of exposure to drugs, alcohol or peer pressure. It was also suggested that, following previous liberations, some had found it difficult to cope when given housing in areas where they had previously offended, or where they were known to drug dealers. Most who had spent time in temporary or emergency accommodation also indicated that they had, at times, found it

difficult to cope, partly as a result of peer pressure to offend, but also due to the availability of drugs and alcohol.

37. Research on women who commit offences (Reid Howie Associates, 2001; Scottish Executive, 1998; Scottish Government, 2012) has found that women leaving custody and returning to their previous home areas can be targeted by drug dealers, with the intention of forcing them to commit further offences.

38. The Howard League (2013), focusing on the experiences of men and women in temporary accommodation, found that some residents viewed this as more restrictive than prison. They cited cases where residents found it difficult not to breach their residence conditions, or who found the restrictions (for example on family visits) unduly punitive. Their research suggested that this increased the risk of reoffending.

The overall demand for accommodation

39. Statistics from various sources (Scottish Government, 2014c; Scottish Household Survey, 2014; and the Scottish Government's "Housing Statistics for Scotland" portal¹²) showed that, although there were, in total, nearly 600,000 social rented properties in Scotland, demand for these was very high overall, with more than 177,000 households on waiting lists. At the end of March 2013, there were only 10,519 vacancies. In the year 2013-14, only 28,842 tenancies were vacated, and became available for re-let. Of those re-let, 37% were let to homeless households (Scottish Government, 2014c).

40. The Commission on Housing and Wellbeing (2015) argued that Scotland's housing was in crisis, with significant shortages of social rented housing. The Commission also highlighted that the overall lack of housing, coupled to changes in homelessness legislation, had led to a considerable increase in the use of temporary accommodation for those accepted as unintentionally homeless.

41. It was also noted that homeless people now spend significantly longer in temporary accommodation than would have been the case in the past. Each of these issues in turn was noted as placing significant pressure on the supply of temporary accommodation.

The potential costs of homelessness and reoffending

42. There can be significant costs involved with homelessness. The Prevention of Homelessness Guidance (Scottish Government and CoSLA, 2009) cited the average costs to the public purse of a "typical" example of homelessness as being £15,000. These costs were derived from the services delivered to people in the form of advice, accommodation and support as well as costs associated with tenancy failure, the management of vacant properties and uncollected rent arrears. In deriving an example of a more complex case (with costs in the region of £83,000), costs associated with health and criminal justice services were also included.

43. The Scottish Government estimated that the total economic and social costs of reoffending were around £3 billion a year (reported in Audit Scotland, 2012). The report also cited Scottish Government research which estimated the total cost of reoffending by a single cohort of people who commit offences with three or more previous convictions over a ten year period as being £5.4 billion. (The report also suggested that this was likely to be

¹² <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS>

an under-estimate, as it did not include all of the costs incurred by bodies outside the criminal justice system.)

44. These findings highlight the importance of reducing homelessness and reoffending respectively (although they clearly do not imply a causal link between them).

The provision of housing-related services

45. There is relatively little research evidence about the existence and effectiveness of housing advice and support services for those who serve short sentences. Reid Howie Associates (2004) examined a range of services funded by the (then) Rough Sleepers Initiative in six prisons in Scotland, and found them to be generally effective in helping address the types of housing issues faced by those serving short sentences and set out earlier in this Annexe.

46. Overall, however, the projects were found to be constrained by a range of operational issues within the SPS and housing services (e.g. the provision of escorts, working spaces, referral processes, difficulties in obtaining appointments and information sharing).

47. The key difficulty described by Reid Howie Associates in 2004 was the significant variation in the availability of services both in, and following custody. It was noted that housing officers then working in prison would only work with their local residents. It was also found that homelessness services would often not provide a single point of contact for SPS staff or other housing staff, nor would they provide appointments or even named officers for those liberated to report to. There were also a range of operational issues relating to approaches to providing temporary accommodation which have since been addressed by the ending of the in priority need stipulation (see below).

48. Two of the main recommendations of the 2004 report were the creation of a single national approach, and to put in place a process which required any housing officer providing support to people in custody to work on behalf of residents of any local authority.

49. Later unpublished research by Reid Howie Associates (2013) suggested that the intervention of services providing support with housing issues could have a positive impact on the post-release housing circumstances of those vulnerable due to mental health problems or learning disability (for example, in terms of securing supported accommodation, as well as other forms of support relevant to their health needs). The research also suggested that the early provision of support had a positive impact on individuals' levels of stress and anxiety while in custody.

Overview

50. This section has illustrated that desistance is a complex process, specific to each individual. There is also a complex interaction between housing issues and desistance. It is clear that many factors can impact on the likelihood that an individual will choose, at any time, to desist from offending. Some of these factors are internal to the individual, while some are external.

51. It is clear from research that an individual's housing circumstances can play a part in desistance. However, the nature of these links is not clear, and there are gaps in the existing literature in relation to the issues individuals face on entry to, and on release from custody, and the impact these issues can have on factors linked to desistance. In addition, only partial information is available at present on the organisations which provide support

to individuals serving, or having served short sentences, and on the nature of the support provided. The current research was designed to address these gaps.

b. Legislative and policy developments and provisions

52. Key aspects of legislative and policy developments and provisions affecting support to address housing issues for people who serve short sentences are summarised below. It is important to recognise, however, that this focuses on the main issues relevant to this research (reintegration and homelessness), rather than comprising a comprehensive review of all criminal justice and housing provisions.

Reintegration developments

53. The Scottish Government, the SPS and its partners are committed to reducing reoffending, and have put in place a range of actions intended to contribute to this. An important element of this has been the development of reintegration, which involves the provision of a range of services to people from when they are first remanded or imprisoned, through their time in custody, and following their release.

54. From the early 1990s, the SPS recognised that it had a role in helping to prepare people in custody for liberation, and in supporting people not to reoffend. Since then, the SPS has introduced many types of support which are now common practice in working with those who serve short sentences.

55. Central to this was the implementation of the “Core Screen”. This is a standard set of questions, designed to identify issues which an individual may face entering custody, as well as the main challenges they may face on release. A section is devoted to housing issues. It is used across the SPS estate although additional housing information was also found to be gathered from individuals held at HMP Perth as part of the Core Screen process (Scottish Government, 2014d). At the time of writing, the core screen was being revised and updated, with a significantly more detailed focus on identifying housing issues.

56. The SPS also developed standard induction processes, not only to provide people with basic information about the operation of the establishment on imprisonment, but also to identify any issues they may face. Where issues are found, a standard referral process has been developed to ensure that these are addressed. Referrals are made using the SPS prisoner records system (known as PR2). This provides space for services to record any work done in relation to a referral, and, where necessary, allows for onward referral to another service. Generally, this information is visible to prison officers and service providers working within the prison (e.g. reintegration, housing, and addictions staff) likely to work with the individual.

57. Individuals in a few prisons may have an additional assessment at an early stage in their sentence, either as part of a prison-wide initiative (for example the “Grampian Asset Profile” assessment, or the “Asset Inquiry Report” at HMP Low Moss) or as part of a throughcare project (for example Passport at HMYOI Polmont, or the PSP at Low Moss, both described in more detail later in this section) (Reid Howie Associates, 2014 unpublished; 2015).

58. In some prisons (e.g. HMPYOI Grampian; HMP Greenock; HMP Perth), multi-agency arrangements have been created to discuss individuals’ cases and develop a coordinated response (Reid Howie Associates, 2015; University of Edinburgh Business School, 2014;

Scottish Government 2014d). These arrangements may involve the SPS, housing, JobCentre Plus, NHS and other staff.

59. In all prisons, individuals are called to attend an appointment with a member of prison staff around six weeks before release, although they are not compelled to attend. As part of this appointment, staff carry out an interview focusing on issues, including housing, which may impact on the likelihood that an individual would be able to make the transition between custody and community (Reid Howie Associates, 2015).

60. From the mid-1990s, the SPS began to develop partnerships with third sector organisations to provide services in its (then) new “Throughcare Centres” (now generally known as “Link Centres”). In the early stages, the services available were limited, focusing primarily on support with employability, addictions and mental health. In the early 2000s, the Scottish Executive, through the Rough Sleepers Initiative, provided funding for a number of pilot projects to provide specific support with housing issues. These were generally evaluated positively (Reid Howie Associates, 2004).

61. Two of the projects (Glasgow City Council’s homelessness casework team at HMP Barlinnie and Shelter’s casework support in HMP Aberdeen [now replaced by HMPYOI Grampian]) have been continued, albeit through different funding streams.

62. The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 created a statutory obligation for local authorities to provide (among other things) voluntary post-liberation support to those released from custody. Since 1989, this work has been directly funded by the Scottish Executive, and then the Scottish Government. In principle, voluntary throughcare is available to anyone leaving prison in Scotland who is not otherwise subject to statutory supervision. In practice, the nature and availability of this support varies widely across Scotland, as does the level of take-up by those leaving custody (Audit Scotland, 2012).

63. Since the mid-2000s, there has been an increasing focus on third-sector led reintegration projects. The first of these projects were very small scale, dealing generally with people returning to one local authority area from one prison. The Passport project originally worked only with young men returning from HMYOI Polmont to Edinburgh (Jardine and Whyte, 2009) although this has been progressively extended to cover Lanarkshire, Forth Valley and Glasgow. The BAFC Moving On project originally worked only with young men returning to Renfrewshire (Hutton et al, 2011)¹³.

64. The “Breaking the Cycle” initiative funded by The Robertson Trust from 2009 extended the scope of projects of this type to include work with additional groups (e.g. adult males), covering larger areas and, in some cases, Scotland as a whole (Reid Howie Associates, 2015). In most cases, housing was a key element of the support provided, whether through direct interventions, or through referral.

65. One project (ADJUST, which operated initially in HMP Aberdeen and then in HMPYOI Grampian) had a specific focus on housing (Reid Howie Associates, 2015). As part of its implementation, a range of improvements were made to the way housing issues were dealt with. A key development was enabling individuals in custody to have earlier

¹³ The BAFC Moving On project is currently operating as a Public Social Partnership (PSP) covering four local authority areas.

engagement with Aberdeen City Council homelessness case workers. As a result, most participants left prison to accommodation appropriate to their needs.

66. ADJUST also used multi-agency case conferencing as a way of ensuring that packages of support were in place prior to liberation (including, for example, assisting an individual to settle into their new accommodation, and arranging for furniture and basic foodstuffs to be available).

67. With the implementation of the first phase of the Reducing Reoffending Programme in 2009, the Scottish Government set in place a wide range of measures designed to reduce reoffending across Scotland (Scottish Government, 2012b). Some of these have been structural (e.g. relating to the overall redesign of the community justice system), while others have been focused on specific initiatives to work with people who have committed offences.

68. The Scottish Government has also provided short and long-term funding to a variety of projects through the Reducing Reoffending Programme Phase 2 (RRP2), and specifically via the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund (RRCF). A total of six Public Social Partnerships (PSPs) have been developed between third and public sector organisations, which receive grant funding from the RRCF to deliver one-to-one support services to those who have committed offences both in custody and the community, and help them address the practical and personal problems that contribute to their offending.

69. The New Routes PSP provides mentoring support to young men with a history of prolific offending (aged 18-25) being released from prisons in Scotland (wherever other similar support services are not already available to them), before and after they are released from custody. The Shine PSP provides mentoring support to women preparing for release from prison, as well as women in the community. Both of these PSPs can work with individuals returning from custody to any local authority in Scotland. The BAFC Moving On PSP provides a specialised service to young men under 21, returning from HMYOI Polmont to four local authority areas.

70. These services support individuals on short custodial sentences, who are not eligible for statutory throughcare support.

71. Of the three remaining PSPs, two are specialist services working with young people from specific geographic areas (Includem in Glasgow City area, and Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire), and one (led by Tayside Council on Alcohol) is continuing a support service in the Tayside region for men and women who have committed offences.

72. Current RRCF funding for these PSPs has been agreed to March 2017. Future funding arrangements are under consideration at present, with future developments being co-ordinated with the planned reform of community justice structures (see pgs A2:119-127) (Scottish Government, 2015d).

73. In a separate development, another PSP was established at HMP Low Moss, to examine a variety of reintegration support services to anyone serving a short term sentence there, before returning to any area across Scotland. As with the RRCF PSPs, the current Low Moss PSP funding runs to April 2017.

74. A further element of the approach taken by the Scottish Government to reducing reoffending has been to redesign the way women are dealt with in the community and criminal justice systems (Scottish Government, 2012a). This has led to changes in the way

the SPS holds women in the custody, and to the development of a range of community-based support structures (including the Shine PSP -see pgh A2:69). These are available to women leaving custody and those sentenced to a community disposal (as well as women diverted from prosecution) as part of an overall “Women Who Offend” project (Scottish Government, 2015d).

75. In June 2015, the Scottish Government announced a new approach to working with women who commit offences, with the creation of an 80 place national prison, and five community custodial units, each with up to 20 places. It was also announced that there would be more use of community-based alternatives to custody and, overall, increased levels of support with underlying issues such as alcohol, drugs, mental health and domestic abuse trauma (Scottish Government, 2015i).

76. As part of the Reducing Reoffending Programme, a Community Reintegration Project (CRP) was established covering men in HMP Perth returning to Dundee, and women in three prisons returning to Dundee or Lanarkshire. The pilot was designed to increase the take-up of reintegration support services, by introducing improved screening, referral and information-sharing processes.

77. The CRP pilot was independently evaluated (Scottish Government, 2014d). It was found that, although limited by lower than expected numbers of participants, improvements of the type piloted (including identifying and addressing housing issues) had the potential to lead to improvements in take-up and effectiveness of reintegration.

78. In 2009, the SPS established two Community Integration Units (CIUs) for women returning from HMPYOI Cornton Vale to addresses in the North East of Scotland and Highlands and Islands. The units (at HMP Aberdeen and HMP Inverness) allowed women nearing the end of their sentences to prepare for reintegration by, for example, working or volunteering in the community and attending appointments (including housing and benefits) prior to liberation. SPS staff were empowered to accompany women to appointments, and to work in the community, for example, to develop placement opportunities or address any problems which might arise.

79. The CIU initiative was viewed as positive, and was continued at HMP Inverness and extended to HMP Greenock and HMPYOI Grampian. In the latter two prisons, men are also eligible to enter the CIU.

80. In 2013, the SPS established a pilot reintegration project at HMP Greenock to test further the value of allowing prison staff (known as “Throughcare Support Officers”) to work with individuals both in custody and in the community. This built on work which had started with the CIUs, and continued with both ADJUST and the Low Moss PSP. The project was positively evaluated in 2014 (University of Edinburgh Business School, 2014).

81. From January 2015, the SPS began to roll out 41 TSO posts across the estate. TSOs will work directly with individuals on a voluntary basis both in custody and following liberation to help them prepare for, and make a successful transition back to the community.

82. The work of the TSOs will involve the development of an asset-based, individualised plan. They will encourage and stimulate motivation to change through helping support sustained engagement with key services. TSOs will also act as an advocate on the individual’s behalf with these services. TSOs will work collaboratively with individuals, families, other prison staff and partner agencies.

Homelessness, housing support and prevention

83. Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended in 2001 and 2003¹⁴) sets out the powers of, and duties on local authorities to deal with applications on the grounds that people are homeless, or threatened with homelessness. Since the end of 2012, all unintentionally homeless people have been entitled to settled accommodation, where they can satisfy two tests:

- Is the individual homeless, or threatened with homelessness within two months?
- Is the individual unintentionally homeless?

84. Additionally, the local authority has the power to identify whether the individual has a local connection to the area in which the application is being made.

85. If no local connection, on investigation, is found to exist, the local authority can refer the applicant to another local authority, which then has a duty firstly, to accept the decision of the referring local authority, and secondly, to provide assistance as defined in the legislation.

86. The legislation sets out a clear definition of “homeless”, which, in practice, encompasses most of those who leave custody after serving a short sentence. There is also clear guidance for the test of intentionality. There is no specific evidence of engaging in criminal conduct being regarded as a reason for ruling that an applicant is intentionally homeless, although this has happened in England (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2013).

87. Local authorities are required to provide temporary accommodation where they have reason to believe that someone is homeless or threatened with homelessness. This requirement also covers the period during which the local authority carries out investigations into a claim.

88. The Housing Support Duty to Homeless Households for local authorities came into force on 1st June 2013. It was established in Section 32B of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 inserted into the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. It states that there is a duty on local authorities to conduct a housing support assessment for applicants who are unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness and, where the local authority has ‘reason to believe’ that the applicant(s) need the housing support services prescribed in the Housing Support Services (Homelessness) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. If an assessment of a need for support is made, local authorities must ensure that housing support services are provided (although it has been suggested that, in practice, most local authorities already did this previously [Shelter, 2014]).

89. Housing agencies have an obligation to prevent homelessness by making appropriate interventions at an early stage. The Housing Scotland Act 2001, Section 2, gave local authorities a duty to ensure that advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness should be available to “any person in the authority’s area”.

90. Since 2009, this has generally been achieved through a Housing Options approach. This is described by the Scottish Government (2011) as:

¹⁴ By the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001; and the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003

“A process which starts with housing advice when someone approaches a local authority with a housing problem. This means looking at an individual’s options and choices in the widest sense. This approach features early intervention and explores all possible tenure options, including council housing, RSLs and the private rented sector. The advice can also cover personal circumstances which may not necessarily be housing related, such as debt advice, mediation and mental health issues.”

91. It also involves local authority homelessness services working together with other services (for example employability, mental health, money advice etc.) to assist an individual from an early stage, to try to prevent housing crises.

92. While, in principle, this could accommodate a wide variety of housing and non-housing options, in practice, in a thematic review the Scottish Housing Regulator found that most options considered related to social or private lets, as well as to debt advice (Scottish Housing Regulator, 2014).

93. Since 2010, all 32 of Scotland’s local authorities have worked together in 5 regional Housing Options “Hubs”. The aim of these Hubs has been to promote the sharing of knowledge and good practice between local authorities, as well as the identification of shared approaches to common problems. The Hubs were positively evaluated in 2012 (Scottish Government, 2012b).

94. In a number of areas (for example Aberdeenshire, Lothian and Borders, Moray, North Lanarkshire and Tayside), protocols have been created which set out agreed processes for managing the liberation of individuals from custody. In most cases, these protocols cover housing, as well as social work, addictions and, in some cases, employability services.

95. A Short Term Prison Protocol was established by HMP Perth and Perth and Kinross Council in 2010 (although Angus and Dundee City Councils were also involved)¹⁵ to provide an agreed process to support individuals nearing liberation. This process also involved Shelter, Jobcentre Plus, the NHS and Perth College, as well as social work and housing. The scope of the protocol has been progressively widened to cover more local authority areas.

Tenancy issues relating to custody

96. Where someone in custody has no entitlement to Housing Benefit (see pgs A2:105-106) and has no other means by which to meet their accommodation costs, landlords generally require the tenancy to be given up, in order to prevent the accrual of arrears, and to ensure the best use of available housing stock (Shelter, 2015a). This is generally a straightforward process, although there can be a wide range of knock-on impacts for the men and women involved, and for their families.

97. Landlords can invoke a notice period before accepting the termination of a tenancy (generally four weeks) in order to ensure that there is not a loss of rent. However, where a tenant is not in receipt of Housing Benefit for the notice period, the impact of enforcing a notice period would be to create arrears (as the tenant would have no way of paying the rent). Research for the Cabinet Office (Rough Sleepers Unit, 2002), however, highlighted

¹⁵ The development of the protocol pre-dates, and is separate to the Community Reintegration Project summarised earlier in this section.

that the failure to give notice, or to be able to pay rent during a notice period was a significant contributory factor in the level of arrears faced by those leaving custody.

98. Individuals may have a right to transfer a tenancy, or sub-let to another person, but this depends on the nature of the tenancy (Shelter, 2013a) and is subject to eligibility conditions. Landlords' willingness to agree to the transfer of a tenancy to another family member, or to allow an individual to sub-let was found by Shelter to vary (Shelter, 2013b). Shelter noted that private landlords would be unlikely to accept either arrangement.

99. Where a landlord has reason to believe that a tenant has left their home (or abandoned it) without telling them, the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gave them the power to institute abandonment procedures to end the tenancy. These procedures specify the range of steps which a landlord is required to take before they can take back possession of a property.

100. One aspect of this is that a landlord must take reasonable steps to identify the whereabouts of their tenant. If a landlord identifies that the tenant is in custody and intends to return to the accommodation, the abandonment proceedings would be stopped. Even if a landlord follows the correct procedures in relation to abandonment, and a property is taken back, a tenant may have grounds of appeal (Shelter, 2013c).

101. Landlords must have specific grounds for eviction. These can include arrears, long-term absence from the property or specific forms of behaviour (including offending) which breach the terms of a tenancy. In order to secure an eviction, landlords have to comply with set procedures, which vary depending on the nature of the tenancy agreement.

102. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced a set of "pre-action requirements" which social landlords have to follow before serving a notice on a tenant. These include working with the tenant to give them clear information about the agreement, exploring eligibility for housing benefit, identifying sources of advice and assistance and, potentially, agreeing a payment plan to meet the arrears. Shelter (2012) reported that payment plans have been used successfully (including by people in custody) as a way of preventing their eviction.

Benefits issues relating to custody

103. Any individual remanded in custody, or convicted of an offence and sentenced to custody, is required to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), their local authority and the Inland Revenue, about their change in circumstances. The SPS also informs the DWP on a weekly basis of the names, dates of births and last known addresses of all of those imprisoned (either on remand or following a sentence) in order that relevant benefits can be stopped. The names are also available to individual local authorities through their remote access terminals. The reason for this is that eligibility for a range of benefits may change as a result of imprisonment (Citizen's Advice, 2015).

104. Most relevant to this research are various income or disability benefits (which generally, but not always, cease on imprisonment and will not be covered in detail) and Housing Benefit.

105. Currently, those on remand are entitled to claim Housing Benefit for up to 52 weeks (although, in practice, people in Scotland are generally remanded for a shorter period). Those sentenced to custody are only entitled to **any** Housing Benefit if there is a

reasonable expectation that they could resume a tenancy within 13 weeks, and that they intend to do so (Shelter, 2013d).

106. The effect of this is that anyone with a sentence requiring them to serve *more* than 13 weeks (even by one day) would not be eligible for any Housing Benefit. In practical terms, this means anyone sentenced to 26 weeks or less. However, when a person has previously been remanded in custody and has claimed Housing Benefit, that period is deducted from the 13 weeks' entitlement.

107. When first introduced in its current form by the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, all of those sentenced to custody had an entitlement to 52 weeks' Housing Benefit, but this was reduced for those sentenced to custody to 13 weeks in the mid-1990s as a cost-saving measure ((Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Paradoxically, that report suggested that the imposition of this limit had resulted in a net cost to the Exchequer arising from: the cost of housing advice and temporary accommodation; the loss of rent; and the impact of being in unstable accommodation upon the likelihood of someone leaving prison being able to gain employment.

108. Universal Credit was launched in 2013 to replace six former means-tested benefits and tax credits, including Housing Benefit. It is currently being rolled out across the UK.

109. Universal Credit takes the form of a single monthly payment, made directly to an individual's bank account. The introduction of Universal Credit also means that, where a claimant receives assistance with accommodation costs, these are generally included in the single monthly payment. It is the responsibility of the claimant to pay their rent using this money (whereas Housing Benefit for social housing was paid directly to landlords). In some cases, it may be possible for the claimant to arrange for the payment to be made to the landlord.

110. Individuals in custody can claim Universal Credit, provided: they were entitled to the benefit before entering custody; they received an award for accommodation costs; and their sentence does not exceed six months (Universal Credit Regulations 2013, Regs 19 [2] and [3]). If the claim is accepted, only the accommodation cost element of Universal Credit will be paid.

111. In practical terms, this extends the period for which accommodation costs can be met from 13 weeks to 26 weeks for those serving short sentences (assuming they meet the eligibility criteria). Were an individual is not eligible for Universal Credit, they can apply for Housing Benefit under the existing rules.

Payments and grant funding on liberation

112. At the point of liberation, those who serve short sentences are provided with a discharge grant, designed to cover immediate living costs before any benefits are received (but not immediate accommodation costs). In 2015, the grant for people aged 25 and over was £72.64. For those aged under 25, it was £58.03 (Prisoner Funder Directory, 2015).

113. Those leaving custody can also be provided with a travel warrant, although, increasingly, reintegration services (described earlier) are collecting individuals on release and transporting them to appointments, temporary accommodation etc.

114. Individuals liberated from a period of at least three months' custody are eligible to apply to the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) (Scottish Government, 2015c). The Welfare

Funds (Scotland) Act 2015 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to provide welfare funds, although this does not come into force until April 2016.

115. The SWF is funded by the Scottish Government, and operated by individual local authorities. The intention in establishing the Fund was that grants should be used in ways to complement other forms of support, and promote a joined-up approach to empowering individuals to live independently and manage their own lives, reducing the risk of institutional care (Scottish Government, 2015b).

116. The SWF provides funding for two main purposes: crisis grants; and community care grants. “Ex-offenders” are eligible for either form of support. Those leaving custody may apply for a community care grant in advance for clothing or furniture to set up a home following liberation. They may also apply for a Crisis Grant if they fall in to crisis following release.

117. Applications can be made to the SWF up to eight weeks before liberation, in order to ensure that, where possible, decisions can be made and communicated to an applicant before release. The Scottish Government’s Guidance (Scottish Government, 2015b) makes it clear that, for people who serve prison sentences, not having a settled address at the time of application should not be a reason to reject an application.

118. The Guidance also makes it clear that local authorities must consider the circumstances of people in prison in devising application processes (e.g. in relation to requirements for on-line or telephone applications). There is also an expectation that people in custody will receive support from prison officers, support workers and peers in making an application.

c. Forthcoming developments in community justice in Scotland

119. Since 2007, community justice services have been delivered through eight “Community Justice Authorities” (CJAs), established under the Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Act 2005. The CJAs have two main purposes: distributing and overseeing funding for criminal justice social work; and working with partners (including the SPS) to prepare joint plans to tackle reoffending.

120. However, as part of its plans to reform community justice, the Scottish Government intends to disestablish CJAs, and put in place new arrangements.

121. In May 2015, the Community Justice (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament, setting out a fresh definition of community justice, and outlining proposals for a new structure. The definition of “community justice” (at sub-section 1) includes:

- a) Giving effect to community disposals and post-release control requirements.
- b) Managing and supporting offenders in the community with a view to reducing reoffending by them.
- c) Arranging general services in ways which facilitate offenders in the community accessing and using them.
- d) Preparing offenders for release from imprisonment or detention in a penal institution.

122. The Bill also sets out a definition of “supporting” (at sub-section [1][b]) as being:

- a) Advising and guiding,

- b) Providing opportunities to participate in activities designed to reduce reoffending,
- c) Helping—
 - (i) to access opportunities to participate in activities designed to reduce reoffending,
 - (ii) to access and make use of general services.

123. The Bill sets out a requirement for a National Strategy for Community Justice, and for the development of a National Performance Framework. This will establish both nationally determined outcomes and national indicators to support the implementation of the Strategy.

124. The Bill also sets out proposals for a new body “Community Justice Scotland”, which will be responsible for:

- Promoting the national strategy.
- Overseeing the performance of community justice in relation to nationally determined outcomes and national indicators.
- Promoting and supporting improvement in the quality and range of provision.
- Making best use of facilities people and resources.
- Promoting public awareness of the benefits of both community disposals, and measures to reduce reoffending.

125. The Bill defines “community justice partners” at a local level to include local authorities, health boards, Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Skills Development Scotland, relevant joint boards, the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service and the Scottish Ministers (in practice, the SPS [Scottish Government, 2015f]). It is intended that the community justice partners for each area should create a “Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan”, linked to the nationally-determined outcomes.

126. At a local level, there is a presumption that all relevant partners, including the SPS and the third sector, will work together in relation to the actions set out in the Improvement Plans. Underscoring this, the Bill also proposes a “Duty to Cooperate”.

127. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill, there will be a period of transition from the eight current CJAs to the establishment of the new arrangements. It is intended that these will be in place by April 2017, and fully operational from 2018.

Further references

128. This Annexe has provided a summary of the key contextual issues for the research. The detailed references for this summary, and the references to other documents mentioned in the report, are set out in Annexe 7.

ANNEXE 3 THE PATTERN AND NATURE OF HOUSING-RELATED SERVICES

1. This Annexe presents the detailed findings relating to the pattern and nature of housing-related services for those who serve short sentences in Scotland. The findings in this Annexe supplement the material in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the main report.
2. The Annexe will cover the following areas:
 - The allocation of individuals to prisons.
 - Services in prison: the pattern of services; the identification of housing issues; and the nature of services delivered (i.e. the work they undertake).
 - Services in the community: the pattern of services in the community; the identification of housing issues; and the nature of services delivered.
3. The findings in this Annexe are drawn from the following strands of the research:
 - Self-completion surveys of: local authority housing and social work services; housing associations; prisons; third sector-led reintegration services or partnerships; and other specialist services.
 - Discussions with staff from each of these types of organisation.
 - Data prepared specifically for this research by the SPS.
4. The material describes the services, as reported in surveys which took place in March and April 2015, and discussions between February and June 2015. It is important to bear in mind that service provision in prison and in the community can change rapidly.

The allocation of individuals to prisons in Scotland

5. This section will provide a brief overview of the allocation of individuals to prisons in Scotland and the impact of this on the delivery of housing-related services
6. There are 15 prisons in Scotland. All except HMP Shotts currently routinely hold individuals serving short sentences. In general terms, SPS practice is that each prison serves a group of Sheriff Courts (each of which serves specific local authorities), so individuals should generally be held in a prison close to their home.
7. In practice, the research found the distribution to be more complex. Table 2 (below) uses individuals' home addresses to illustrate the total population of each prison serving short sentences and the number of local authorities whose residents were among these (on 3rd April 2015).

Table 2. Number of local authorities with residents in each prison, and number of individuals serving short sentences (on 3rd April 2015)

Prison	No. of LAs	No. held	Prison	No. of LAs	No. held
HMP Addiewell	19	365	HMP YOI Grampian	9	169
HMP Barlinnie	29	732	HMP Greenock	13	113
HMP Castle Huntly	10	15	HMP Inverness	9	64
HMPYOI Cornton Vale	22	105	HMP Kilmarnock	20	225
HMP Dumfries	8	49	HMP Low Moss	25	323
HMP Edinburgh	24	343	HMP Perth	20	343
HMP Glenochil	21	152	HMYOI Polmont	29	234

8. Eight prisons held people from 20 or more local authority areas. Even the smallest prisons in the survey (HMPs Dumfries and Inverness) held people from eight and nine local authority areas respectively.

9. The situation is further complicated for two groups: adult women, and young men and women. Adult women are held at HMPYOIs Cornton Vale and Grampian and HMPs Edinburgh, Greenock and Inverness. Young women are generally held at HMPYOI Cornton Vale. Young men (under 21) are held only at HMYOI Polmont (although it is intended that HMPYOI Grampian will also hold young men from late 2015).

10. Table 3 (below) uses the same data as in Table 1 to illustrate the number of residents from each of Scotland's local authorities serving short sentences, and the number of prisons in which these residents were held.

Table 3. Home locations of those in custody by local authority area (on 3rd April 2015)

Home location (local authority)	Individuals in custody		Home location (local authority)	Individuals in custody	
	No. Held	Prisons		No. Held	Prisons
Aberdeen City	173	9	Inverclyde	56	8
Aberdeenshire	67	7	Midlothian	29	5
Angus	44	7	Moray	25	8
Argyll & Bute	31	5	North Ayrshire	163	8
Clackmannanshire	32	8	North Lanarkshire	208	11
Dumfries & Galloway	43	8	Orkney Islands	4	2
Dundee City	178	11	Perth & Kinross	89	10
East Ayrshire	81	11	Renfrewshire	117	11
East Dunbartonshire	25	8	Scottish Borders	19	3
East Lothian	32	7	Shetland Islands	4	2
East Renfrewshire	21	6	South Ayrshire	75	12
Edinburgh City	194	9	South Lanarkshire	201	12
Eilean Siar	3	2	Stirling	36	10
Falkirk	60	10	West Dunbartonshire	72	8
Fife	203	9	West Lothian	74	10
Glasgow City	541	14	Outside Scotland	71	12
Highland	82	13	No Fixed Abode	196	12

11. These data have a number of implications for the provision of housing-related services to people who serve short sentences, including that:

- Each prison can hold individuals from a wide range of local authority areas, making the task of co-ordinating housing-related services complex. Some prisons may have to liaise with more than 20 local authorities, and a considerable array of third sector services (described later in this Annexe).
- Some prisons may be remote from a local authority, making the task of tracking and providing services to local residents very complex.
- Complexity is not necessarily linked to population size. Some small authorities were found to have local residents in seven or more prisons. For example, the 36

individuals from the Stirling Council area serving short sentences were held in 10 prisons.

- The issues for rural and island local authorities are further complicated by the finding that their local residents may be held in national or other prisons in the central belt, as well as in local prisons.
- Some local authorities had very small numbers of residents held in each prison. Both Stirling and Perth and Kinross, for example, had fewer than five residents in each of nine prisons. Given that each individual may be at a different point in their sentence (and hence may require input at a different time), this could increase the cost of providing a service to these residents.

Services in prison

12. This section will summarise the research findings in relation to services provided in prison¹⁶ and will provide data on: the pattern of services in prison; the identification of housing needs in prison; and the nature of services in prison.

The pattern of services in prison

13. The research found that there were four main types of services involved in addressing housing issues in prison:

- Housing services.
- Prison services (both SPS and private prison staff).
- Reintegration services.
- Other specialist services.

14. The data in this sub-section will describe the research findings relating to the pattern of support by each of type of service in turn.

Housing services

15. The surveys found a number of housing services providing support to address housing issues in prisons. The availability of these housing services varied widely across the 14 prisons in the research. Details are provided below.

16. Different means of providing housing services included:

- Housing service providers based in a prison, with the service provided by: a local authority directly; a third party contracted by one or more local authorities; or staff employed by a third sector organisation or partnership.
- Housing service providers visiting to a regular programme, provided by a local authority or third sector organisation.
- Housing service providers visiting by request.

5.14. These housing services could work with people on imprisonment, during a sentence and approaching release.

¹⁶ For ease of reading, this section combines provision at two stages (“on imprisonment” and “during a sentence and approaching release”). These have been discussed separately in Chapter 3 of the report.

17. Table 4 below, drawn from the surveys of local authorities and prisons, provides a summary of the housing services available in each prison.

Table 4. Housing services by prison

Prison	Based in prison			Visiting prison	
	LA	Contract	Third sector	LA	Third sector
HMP Addiewell		*			
HMP Barlinnie	*				
HMP Castle Huntly					
HMPYOI Cornton Vale			*		
HMP Dumfries			*		
HMP Edinburgh		*		*	
HMP Glenochil				*	
HMPYOI Grampian				*	*
HMP Greenock				*	
HMP Inverness			*		
HMP Kilmarnock		*			
HMP Low Moss				*	
HMP Perth				*	*
HMYOI Polmont				*	

18. Overall, seven prisons were found to have a housing service based in the prison. Of these:

- One was provided directly by a local authority (HMP Barlinnie).
- Three were provided by staff employed by a third party contracted by one or more local authorities, as follows:
 - In HMP Edinburgh, Edinburgh City Council had contracted with FourSquare Housing, which employed a worker based in the prison. Prior to 2015 (when funding was withdrawn for their part of the service), the agreement also included East Lothian and Midlothian Councils.
 - In HMP Kilmarnock, three councils (East, South and North Ayrshire) had contracted with Aspire2Gether to provide a worker based in the prison.
 - In HMP Addiewell, three councils (North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian) were represented by a jointly-funded worker line managed by West Lothian Council.
- Three were provided by staff employed by a third sector organisation or partnership, as follows:
 - Sacro, providing a service in HMPYOI Cornton Vale to all individuals, with funding from Fife and Forth Valley CJA, HMP Cornton Vale and Sacro.
 - Dumfries CAB, providing a service to all individuals in HMP Dumfries.

- Sacro, Shelter and Inverness CAB under the banner of a project called “SPAN” (the Scottish Prisoners’ Advice Network) providing services to any individual, to supplement the services provided by local authorities in HMPs Perth, Grampian and Inverness.

19. Seven prisons were found to have housing services visiting to a regular programme (of varying frequency)¹⁷. Of these:

- All had staff visiting from at least one local authority (HMPs Edinburgh; Glenochil; Greenock; Low Moss; Perth; HMPYOI Grampian; and HMYOI Polmont).
- Two had staff visiting from Shelter (HMP Perth and HMPYOI Grampian).

20. At the time of writing one prison (HMP Castle Huntly) did not have a housing service, except on request by an individual or staff member.

21. During the research, further discussions were underway between:

- The SPS, the Robertson Trust and Shelter to provide a worker to be based in HMYOI Polmont.
- The SPS and Shelter to provide support at HMP Castle Huntly by invitation from an individual or prison staff member; and to provide a worker on a regular basis at HMP Low Moss.

22. The data in Table 5 (below) combines findings from the two surveys to show the local authorities described as being based in, or regularly visiting each prison, or where they had contracted out their involvement to a third party. In a small number of cases, local authorities indicated that they had reached informal agreements to allow workers from a service based in a prison to carry out work with residents of their area. These arrangements are also included in the table below.

¹⁷ HMP Edinburgh had a housing service based in the prison and a visiting local authority service.

Table 5. Local authorities based in, visiting regularly, or otherwise represented by prison

	Addiewell	Barlinnie	Castle Huntly	Cornton Vale	Dumfries	Edinburgh	Glenochill	Grampian	Greenock	Inverness	Kilmarnock	Low Moss	Perth	Polmont
Ab (city)								*						
Ab (shire)								*						
Angus													*	
Argyll & Bute									*			*		
Eilean Siar														
Clacks														
D&G														
Dundee														
E. Ayrshire									*		*			
E. Dunb												*		
E. Lothian														
E. Renfrew														
Edinburgh						*								
Falkirk												*		*
Fife				*		*	*						*	
Glasgow		*		*					*			*		
Highland										*				
Inverclyde									*			*		
Midlothian														
Moray										*				
N. Ayrshire		*							*		*			
N. Lanark	*													
Orkney														
Perth and K													*	
Renfrew		*							*			*		
Sc Borders														
Shetland														
South Ayr	*	*							*		*			
South Lan	*													
Stirling														
West Dunb		*							*			*		
West Loth	*													

23. More generally, local authority, housing association and third sector housing staff stated in the discussions that their service could visit local residents in any prison on the

request of an individual or member of staff. Some noted that the decision to attend would depend on other factors (e.g. location of the prison, the extent of other priorities and the nature of the case). Information from the discussions suggested that, in practice, such visits were relatively rare and would not always be recorded on the PR2 system, making it impossible to identify their frequency. (These visits were not shown in Tables 4 and 5.)

24. Discussions with staff of all types suggested that there were differences in access to housing services. For example, it was found that most local authority staff would generally only carry out detailed work with individuals from their own area, with individuals from other areas being provided with basic information, and, where necessary, being referred on to their own local authority. Further, given the finding (pgh A3:7) that all of Scotland's prisons hold people from wide areas and most young people and women are held in national prisons (pgh A3:9), it was noted that, in practice, not all local authorities could send housing staff to visit individuals in all prisons.

25. In some cases, a decision about whether or not to accept a specific referral which did not precisely meet a service's criteria depended on the approach of the individual member of staff concerned. In discussions with housing staff, it was clear that there were no rigid "rules", and that some used their discretion on a case by case basis. One housing staff member, who was nominally required to work with individuals from one local authority area, provided examples of providing support to individuals from other areas (where, for example, a crisis was evident, or urgent action was required).

26. At HMP Low Moss, a number of local authorities had reached a joint agreement to enable staff from any local authority to provide an initial service (and deal with any immediate issues on imprisonment) to individuals from any other local authority. They would then make an onward referral to the individual's home local authority.

27. Overall, therefore, while all prisons were found to have some form of housing service available, the data indicated large variations in the number of individuals able to access this in each prison.

28. In principle (taking no account of capacity constraints) the proportion of individuals in each establishment found to be able to routinely access housing services ranged from close to 100% in establishments such as HMPs Addiewell, Cornton Vale, Dumfries and Inverness, to less than 2% at HMYOI Polmont, where, at the time of the survey, only one local authority carried out regular visits. In the two prisons where Shelter routinely supplemented local authority provision (HMP Perth and HMPYOI Grampian), the percentage who could, in principle, access regular housing services was also close to 100%.

29. It is worth bearing in mind that these percentages take no account of capacity constraints. One housing staff member noted that, if all of those eligible to receive the service were to ask for it, they would be unable to cope.

[Prison services](#)

30. The survey and discussions found that, in all establishments, prison staff had a role in identifying and / or helping to tackle housing issues, both on imprisonment, and during a

sentence and approaching release. Prison staff who may be involved would be those working in¹⁸:

- Reception, where individuals are processed on imprisonment.
- First night centres (e.g. HMP Barlinnie and HMYOI Polmont), where individuals are located for one or more days on imprisonment, to allow them to settle into prison, and where they are provided with basic information about the regime, visits etc.
- Link Centres, where staff provide: a Core Screen and induction on imprisonment; courses during sentence; and information and support approaching release.
- Family Centres, where staff work to address practical, emotional and other issues relating to the contact between an individual and his or her family: on imprisonment; during a sentence; and approaching release.
- Prison chaplaincy centres, where a team of chaplains can provide spiritual and pastoral support for individuals: on imprisonment; during a sentence; and approaching release.
- Residential areas, where staff have regular contact with individuals, and where most routine issues arising during a period in custody are dealt with: on imprisonment; during a sentence; and approaching release.
- Community Integration Units (CIUs) in HMPs Greenock and Inverness and HMPYOI Grampian (pghs A2:79-79) where staff could be involved with individuals approaching release.

31. It was clear from discussions with prison staff that, in principle, any member of prison staff could identify or support an individual to address basic housing issues. Additional staff mentioned who may, from time to time, identify housing issues were:

- Officers supervising visits.
- Officers working in prison industries, or supervising work parties.
- Operational officers (e.g. managing individuals' movement within a prison).
- First line managers, unit managers and senior managers.

32. Overall, prison staff with these roles were found to exist in all prisons, although the actual nature of their contact with individuals serving short sentences may vary.

33. Throughcare Support Officers (pghs A2:79-82) were also found to be involved in addressing housing issues, particularly as people approach release, and on, and following their release. For the purposes of presenting the findings in this report, TSOs have been grouped with reintegration staff (below), to reflect their main role.

34. The survey and discussions also found that a range of civilian staff working inside prisons may also identify housing issues. These have also been included with reintegration or other specialist staff (depending on their role).

35. At a national level, the SPS appointed a housing specialist in 2014 (who started work in January 2015) with a remit to develop national policy and practice, and provide advice and assistance to staff in all prisons.

¹⁸ All functions are in all prisons unless otherwise stated.

Reintegration services

36. The research also found a range of reintegration services involved in identifying housing issues, or helping tackle housing issues for people while in prison. These services, by their nature, were most likely to be involved with people approaching release, and on, and following release.

37. Overall, some form of reintegration service was found to be available to individuals serving short sentences in all establishments except HMP Castle Huntly (an open prison), although there was found to be variation in availability of third sector services. Details are provided below.

38. As noted earlier, TSOs deployed by the SPS provided reintegration services to people who served short sentences in all prisons in this study except HMP Castle Huntly.

39. Two national reintegration services provided mentoring support to some individuals in custody:

- New Routes PSP¹⁹ (for males under 25 from any area in 13 prisons).
- Shine PSP (for women from any area in any of the five prisons holding women).

40. Two further PSPs worked with individuals, each in one prison:

- The BAFC Moving On PSP (for males under 21 in HMYOI Polmont, returning to four of the 32 local authority areas).
- The Low Moss PSP (for anyone serving a short sentence in HMP Low Moss, regardless of their home location).

41. Although each Local Authority Criminal Justice Social Work service was found to provide voluntary throughcare to anyone who requested this, social work staff indicated that it would be unusual for them to work with an individual while still in custody.

42. The survey and discussions found a small number of other reintegration services which may be involved in identifying or helping people address housing issues. Those mentioned (in eight prisons), were:

- Adjust, working in HMPYOI Grampian with adult men returning to the City of Aberdeen (although this service ended during the fieldwork period).
- Barnardo's Youth Work service, working under contract to the SPS in HMPYOI Cornton Vale and HMYOI Polmont.
- Catalyst, a project working in HMP Kilmarnock with adult males returning to East and North Ayrshire.
- Community Bridges, a project working with men in HMP Addiewell returning to North and South Lanarkshire.
- Passport, a project working in HMYOI Polmont with young men returning to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Forth Valley, and Lanarkshire; and working in HMP Edinburgh with adult men returning to Edinburgh.
- Positive Prisons, working with adult men in HMPs Edinburgh and Barlinnie returning to any local authority.

¹⁹ The basis of PSPs was explained in Annex 2.

- Up-2-Us, a project working with women in HMPYOI Cornton Vale and HMPs Edinburgh and Greenock returning to a number of local authority areas in West and Central Scotland.

43. There was, however, found to be considerable variation in the availability of third sector reintegration services within different prisons. While Shine and New Routes are “national” in coverage, their eligibility criteria (women and “prolific male offenders under 25”) would restrict access to these services. The other PSPs, BAFC Moving On and Low Moss, in each case, work only with individuals from one establishment.

44. Overall, the survey and discussions found more third sector organisations working in HMPYOI Cornton Vale and HMYOI Polmont than other prisons. With the national PSP provision, all of those serving short sentences in these establishments would, in principle, have direct access to third sector reintegration services. Of the other prisons, this would only be the case in HMP Low Moss (with its own PSP).

Other specialist services

45. The survey and discussions found a number of other specialist services whose staff may meet with individuals while in custody, generally approaching release, to allow preparations to be made for further input following liberation. There was, however, found to be variation in their availability and eligibility. Details are provided below²⁰.

46. Other specialist services were found covering a range of policy areas, with each having their own eligibility criteria. Those mentioned as sometimes meeting with individuals while in custody (in some cases in conjunction with a reintegration service) were:

- Aberdeen Women’s Community Justice Centre, working with women returning from custody to Aberdeen.
- Blue Triangle, working in conjunction with some local authorities to provide accommodation with support to vulnerable people leaving prison.
- Circle through its “Families Affected by Imprisonment” project, working with those in custody and their families across Scotland.
- Cornerstone, working with adults with learning difficulties across Scotland.
- Housing First, working with men and women with addictions issues returning from any prison to local authorities in the West of Scotland.
- Sacro Supported Accommodation service, working with adults returning from any prison to either Glasgow or Moray.
- The Highland Homeless Trust and Cale House, working with clients in HMP Inverness by invitation.
- The Rock Trust, working with young men returning to Edinburgh.
- Tomorrow’s Women Glasgow, a multi-agency project working with women returning from custody to Glasgow.

²⁰ Some of these organisations would also provide supported accommodation, and may undertake specific work to identify (and begin to address) housing issues prior to liberation, as well as being involved in reintegration work. These have been included as “other specialist services” rather than “housing” or “reintegration” services, to reflect the fact that they may have a wider role, and other areas of work alongside these. As noted in Annexe 1, the categories are not always mutually exclusive. Their purpose is to allow a description of how services work and interact.

- The 218 project in Glasgow, working with pre-existing clients returning from custody to Glasgow.
- YPeople, working with Low Moss PSP clients.

47. There was no consistent pattern to the provision of support by other specialist services. As a result of the qualitative nature of much of the information about these services, it was not possible to quantify the extent of their input to people in custody. However, it was clear from the discussions that the numbers assisted in individual prisons were likely to be small. Many were found to work either in one prison, or one (or a small number) of local authority area(s). In some cases, eligibility was found to be restricted to specific groups.

48. Staff in all prisons mentioned that staff from other organisations (e.g. Jobcentre Plus; NHS) may support those approaching release with benefits or health issues, both of which may impact on housing-related outcomes following liberation.

The identification of housing issues in prison

49. The survey and discussions found processes in place in all prisons to identify housing issues, on imprisonment and during a sentence and approaching release.

The identification of housing issues on imprisonment

50. In all prisons, during the first 24 hours in custody:

- Reception staff would identify immediate needs (including housing issues), and either deal with these or make a referral.
- First night, or residential staff would identify immediate needs and either deal with these or make a referral.

51. In all prisons, staff (generally from the Link Centre) would administer a "Core Screen" within the first 72 hours. The Core Screen is a national tool, used in all establishments to identify immediate and longer term needs across a wide range of areas (including "accommodation").

52. In all prisons, everyone admitted to custody would be invited (but not compelled) to attend an induction process. All individuals in the group discussions undertaken in prisons as part of this research reported that they had attended induction, and staff indicated that levels of attendance were generally high.

53. It was found that all induction processes involved some input on housing issues. This was generally delivered by prison staff, but two examples were identified of housing staff providing input: a number of local authority housing staff would take it in turns to do this at HMP Low Moss; and Glasgow City Council staff attended induction at HMP Barlinnie. Most people in custody would also be allocated a personal officer as a first contact for all issues.

54. Some prison and housing staff gave examples of using additional methods to identify housing needs on imprisonment, such as:

- The Improving Offenders Housing Outcomes Project gathering additional housing information at the Core Screen stage in HMP Perth.

- Other enhanced assessment arrangements in three prisons (the “Grampian Asset Profile” assessment at HMPYOI Grampian; Asset Inquiry Reports and the Low Moss PSP at HMP Low Moss; and reintegration projects at HMYOI Polmont).
- Multi-agency case conferencing (described in various ways) in five prisons (HMPYOI Grampian; HMPs Perth, Greenock, Inverness and Dumfries).
- A list of admissions being given to relevant local authorities to identify any tenants in custody in three prisons (HMPs Dumfries and Perth; and HMPYOI Grampian).

55. Additional, less formal means found to be used included that:

- Anyone in custody could request support at any time, using a standard referral procedure available in all residential areas in prisons.
- Any staff may identify issues as part of their day to day contact with individuals.
- Peer supporters in HMP Low Moss²¹ may identify issues.

56. Information may be provided by sources outside the prison (e.g. an individual’s family members or friends; landlords; solicitors; community-based housing officers; social workers; or other support workers).

57. Each of the formal processes (reception, first night, Core Screen, local initiatives, multi-agency joint working and induction) were found to require staff to log any issues identified using the PR2 system and, where possible, make an onward referral.

58. Some limitations to these processes were noted in the discussions. For example, many participants suggested that the Core Screen or induction processes did not always uncover housing issues on imprisonment. At the time of writing, the SPS was working to address this by revising the Core Screen form and guidance.

[The identification of housing issues during a sentence and approaching release](#)

59. During a sentence and approaching release, all prisons were found to have similar arrangements in place for identifying housing issues.

60. Although the detailed arrangements were found to vary slightly, individuals in all prisons would be called automatically to an appointment with a member of prison staff at the Link Centre around six weeks before release (although they were not compelled to attend). Staff would then carry out a basic assessment of their situation and support requirements for release, including in relation to housing.

61. The research found that housing issues could also be identified through:

- TSOs’ or other service providers’ wider work.
- Assessments carried out by reintegration projects.
- Direct contact between an individual and a housing staff member.
- Multi-agency case management meetings (with regular meetings of relevant services found in a few prisons, as detailed in Annexe 3).

²¹ Peer supporters are generally individuals serving long sentences who provide various forms of information, reassurance and practical support to those serving short sentences.

62. It was noted, however, that, during a sentence, the identification of housing issues often relied on individuals themselves becoming aware of these issues, recognising the need for action, or asking for support from a service provider. For those approaching release, some housing staff said housing issues were often brought to their attention too late for them to take effective pre-release action.

The nature of services delivered in prison

63. The research found that the work by housing-related services in prison focused on tackling some key issues facing people who served short sentences, both immediately on imprisonment; and during a sentence and approaching release. This sub-section presents the research findings on the nature of in-prison work carried out at each stage.

64. It was found in the discussions that housing staff would not always work with people at an early stage in their sentence. It was suggested by prison and housing staff that most local authorities focused on working with people closer to release.

65. Some housing staff referred to their approach to work in prison as “homelessness prevention”, while some local authority staff mentioned using a Housing Options methodology (pgs A2:89-91). Third sector housing staff suggested that their approach was essentially similar to a Housing Options approach, focusing on the same issues and taking the same actions.

66. However, from discussions with housing staff, it was clear that there was no consistent pattern to the adoption of a Housing Options approach. It was found, for example, that housing staff from different local authorities working in the same prison may take different approaches, and that the practices of staff from individual local authorities may vary (e.g. taking a Housing Options approach with some clients, but not others).

The nature of services delivered on imprisonment

67. On imprisonment, service providers (particularly prison and housing staff) could assist with the following key issues:

- Keeping existing accommodation or giving it up by the appropriate legal process.
- Securing existing accommodation.
- Retrieving and storing personal possessions.
- Making appropriate arrangements for dependents.

Keeping existing accommodation or giving it up by the appropriate legal process

68. Overall, the research found that, while basic support relating to keeping existing accommodation or giving it up by the appropriate legal process was available in all prisons, the availability of more specialised support was variable. Details are provided below.

69. Support to inform landlords of a change of circumstances was found to be available in all prisons, generally through prison, but also housing staff. Two prisons reported using a “standard” form which individuals could use (although no specific difficulties were identified in doing this by telephone or letter).

70. Similarly, assistance with Housing Benefit or mortgage issues was found to be available in all prisons. Basic assistance (i.e. informing the relevant local authority or mortgage provider of a change of circumstances) was generally undertaken by prison

staff. Some prison staff also indicated that they could assist individuals to make a fresh Housing Benefit claim where none was previously in place, and some had contacted local authority Housing Benefit teams or CABx for additional advice (but there was no consistent pattern to this).

71. Third sector housing staff (and some local authority housing staff) reported providing more complex Housing Benefit or mortgage-related support, including identifying previous eligibility for Housing Benefit and making backdated claims. This more detailed support was available as a matter of course in those prisons with housing staff based in the establishment, but less consistently elsewhere.

72. Similarly, the discussions highlighted variations in the availability of assistance with, for example, exploring alternative ways of paying rent (e.g. by a parent or relative paying this), or transferring a tenancy. Some housing staff stated that this only appeared to be explored routinely in a small number of cases, and that this constituted a gap in early provision, as it could potentially prevent the loss of existing accommodation.

73. Support to give up a tenancy was available in all prisons, at least at a basic level. Prison staff indicated that they would contact the landlord (or enable an individual to do so) to make necessary arrangements. No systematic difficulties were identified with this. Some prison and housing staff argued, however, that, in some cases, more specialised knowledge of landlords' policies and practices was required to ensure appropriate processes were followed. As with transferring a tenancy, some argued that opportunities could be missed without input from specialist housing services.

74. Among local authorities in the survey, 14 indicated that they could provide support to surrender a tenancy. All of the third sector housing staff indicated that they would provide support with this. Positive examples were given of cases where, in return for surrendering a tenancy quickly, small amounts of arrears had been waived, or an individual was given a guarantee of similar accommodation on release.

Securing existing accommodation.

75. Overall, the research found that although some support would be available in all prisons to secure existing accommodation, there was no consistent pattern by prison, area or type of landlord. Details are provided below.

76. In principle, prison staff in all establishments indicated that they would provide support to secure existing accommodation, as did all local authority and other housing staff (through local housing officers). In practice, however, some prison staff reported a range of difficulties with this, particularly in identifying someone to carry out the practical tasks.

77. It was suggested that some landlords appeared more willing than others to do this, particularly where there was seen to be an urgent need for action (e.g. relating to the area in which the accommodation was situated, or when there was bad weather). It was also suggested that family members and friends, when approached, may be reluctant to become involved (sometimes because of a fear of being arrested). A number of legal issues were also reported by prison and housing staff, particularly relating to ensuring that anyone entering a property had a right to do so.

Retrieving and storing personal possessions

78. Overall, the research found that there appeared to be a difference between the availability of service provision to retrieve and store possessions in principle and in practice. Details are provided below.

79. All prisons suggested that, in principle, support could be provided to an individual to retrieve personal possessions, and a total of 11 local authorities in the survey, as well as all of the third sector housing services based in prisons and a small number of third sector community-based organisations indicated that they could assist with this. Many prison and housing staff, however, reported that it was often difficult to achieve this in practice.

80. The reasons noted for this were similar to those set out above in relation to securing existing accommodation, and, in addition, that:

- Some landlords would act very quickly to remove and dispose of possessions, with insufficient time for arrangements to be made.
- Some landlords, while willing to secure accommodation, would not retrieve possessions, and even where they would, they would not always store them.
- The storage options in some areas were limited or expensive.
- Some family members and friends were reluctant to remove property (for fear of being accused of theft, or, in some cases, due to a lack of storage space).

Making arrangements for dependents

81. Overall, the research found support available in all prisons to enable housing-related arrangements to be made for dependent family members, although making arrangements for pets was seen to be more difficult. Details are provided below.

82. Support to make arrangements for dependent family members was available in all prisons. It was noted that prison staff could pass information to family members directly, or enable contact between an individual and their family members for this purpose. They could also facilitate contact with social work services to make care arrangements, or could liaise on behalf of an individual with family members, local authority or other community-based services.

83. All prisons indicated that while, in principle, staff could help individuals make arrangements for the welfare of pets, it could be more difficult in practice to identify services to remove and re-home a pet, or to meet the costs of this. There could also be legal issues with gaining entry to property.

The nature of services delivered during a sentence and approaching release

84. During a sentence and approaching release, service providers (including prison, housing, reintegration and some other specialist services) could assist with the following key issues:

- Addressing changing housing circumstances.
- Developing independent living skills.
- Making financial arrangements for release.
- Identifying accommodation for release.

Addressing changing housing circumstances

85. Overall, there were basic processes in place in all prisons to address these issues, although the specific nature of actions taken varied. Details are provided below.

86. All prisons reported that they had basic processes in place to help deal with some debt, arrears or legal issues, where an individual identified these issues during their sentence. Where this was the case, this generally involved prison staff logging these on PR2 and making a referral to a housing service, or in the absence of this, another agency (e.g. the individual's own solicitor or a CAB).

87. The only issue where prison staff consistently noted taking direct action was in relation to abandonment (pghs A2:99-100). A number of prison staff provided examples of cases where they had been able to halt abandonment proceedings by contacting the individual's landlord and relaying information about his or her change of circumstances.

88. The availability of more specialist services to help address debt, arrears and legal issues varied across prisons. In the two prisons with CAB staff employed to provide the housing service (HMPs Dumfries and Inverness), it was found that much of the support was provided internally. In other prisons, staff generally provided support consistent with their own knowledge, before making an onward referral.

89. Housing staff provided a few examples of cases where they had been able to support individuals to address issues relating to arrears. Overall, eight local authorities in the survey (as well as three housing associations) indicated that they would provide support to manage rent or mortgage arrears, or to put in place repayment plans. At the time of the fieldwork, however, a number of prison and housing staff reported that they had faced practical difficulties with SPS systems in setting these up. The SPS indicated that these difficulties had been identified, and would be addressed in the second half of 2015.

Developing independent living skills

90. Overall, at the time of the research, the findings from the surveys and discussions indicated that prisons were at different stages in work to develop individuals' independent living skills and prepare them for a tenancy. Details are provided below.

91. Some prisons were found to be providing tenancy preparation courses. Staff in HMP Dumfries developed an SQA award on "Tenancy and Citizenship" which was designed to develop knowledge and skills in relation to obtaining and sustaining a tenancy, as well as a variety of inter-personal, conflict resolution and employability skills. Following a successful trial, the importance of sustaining tenancies and the level of interest expressed by other establishments, the SPS intends to roll this out nationally, once approved by management.

92. A few other examples were provided of short courses on budgeting and various aspects of independent living skills (noted by staff in HMPs Barlinnie, Low Moss, Perth and Inverness; HMPYOIs Cornton Vale and Grampian; and HMYOI Polmont).

93. Prison and reintegration staff suggested a role for the Community Integration Units and HMPs Greenock and Inverness and HMPYOI Grampian in the development of independent living skills. The overall approach of the CIUs involves giving residents responsibility for all aspects of the management of their accommodation, including: cleaning and basic maintenance; planning meals; budgeting; purchasing ingredients; and

cooking. As far as possible, the CIUs are designed to mirror a home environment. Residents work, or attend placements, outside the prison.

Making financial arrangements for release

94. Overall, the research found arrangements in place in all prisons to enable people to make those financial arrangements that were possible in advance of release. There were, at the time of the fieldwork, seen to be limited opportunities to obtain suitable forms of identification, which were being addressed by the SPS. Details are provided below.

95. All prisons reported that processes were in place to ensure that benefit claims could be started prior to liberation, with staff from Jobcentre Plus visiting on a regular basis. Referrals to them would be generated automatically, usually when an individual had around six weeks left to serve (although some individuals stated that it was sometimes later). They would then be invited, but not compelled to attend an appointment.

96. Staff in all prisons indicated that they could support individuals to make an application to the Scottish Welfare Fund (pghs A2:114-118). It was clear from discussions with staff that, at the time of the fieldwork, this was a relatively new initiative, and that processes were still evolving. However, in general terms, no issues were identified with this (although prison staff were, in some cases, not fully familiar with all aspects of making applications, leading to some areas of difficulty).

97. The research found examples of pilot work being carried out in HMPs Castle Huntly and Low Moss to enable individuals to access suitable forms of ID for return to the community. Work was also being done in HMPs Addiewell and Castle Huntly, and HMPYOI Grampian to enable access to bank or credit union accounts from prison. At the time of writing, the SPS was working with the British Bankers' Association (BBA) to improve access to bank accounts for all of those leaving custody.

Identifying accommodation for release.

98. Overall, the survey and discussions found wide variation within and between prisons in the extent of work that would be done prior to release to identify accommodation. All prisons had a basic process in place to identify housing issues and provide individuals with the basic information to present as homeless, or take up another form of accommodation. Although some more intensive support to identify accommodation was available in most prisons, the availability and nature of this varied widely. Details are provided below.

99. In all prisons, Link Centre staff reported providing information to individuals about the correct procedures to present as homeless, and some of the issues involved. All Link Centres keep basic information about local authority housing services (including addresses, opening hours and out of hours arrangements).

100. In the absence of more intensive support (outlined below), as a basic minimum, it was found that prison Link Centre staff would contact an individual's local authority to try to

arrange an appointment for the day of liberation (although survey responses and the experiences of prison staff indicated that not all local authorities would permit this²²).

101. Discussions with staff also suggested that TSOs, and the Low Moss, Shine and New Routes PSPs would have a role in helping prepare their clients for the day of liberation.

102. In terms of housing services' involvement, where an individual had access to such a service (pgh A3:15), many variations were identified in the service provided (often dependent on the policies of an individual's home local authority).

103. Variations included that²³:

- Some local authorities would carry out a detailed assessment of housing needs, (which may follow the Housing Options methodology as described in pghs A2:89-92) while others would not. In the survey, 17 local authorities indicated that they would do this.
- Although staff from other organisations working in prisons (e.g. Shelter, Sacro) reported routinely carrying out assessments of housing needs prior to liberation, the extent to which these were accepted by local authorities was found to vary. It was noted that some local authorities would take note of these, while others appeared to require individuals to start from scratch on the day of liberation.
- Some local authorities allow individuals to make applications for housing from custody before liberation. In the survey, 17 indicated they would enable this.
- Virtually all housing associations (including those which responded to the survey and those taking part in discussions) indicated that they would accept an application for accommodation from custody. However, it was also noted by some in discussion that this would be likely to have little or no chance of success. Practical difficulties caused by different application processes for individual housing associations were also noted.
- Although an individual may make a homelessness application prior to liberation, in practice, it was found in the discussions that there was little consistency in this. Even within the same local authority area, examples were found of different approaches to an application (e.g. it may be completed and signed before release; completed but not signed before release; or completed on the day of liberation).
- Eight local authorities and two housing associations indicated in the survey that they would consider pre-allocating accommodation. A representative of another indicated in discussion that they were considering doing this in the future. Some local authority housing staff, however, described practical and operational difficulties in pre-allocating accommodation, relating to the management of housing stock and minimising rent loss from empty properties.

104. A small number of specialist organisations (pgh A3:46) were involved in providing accommodation with support for people on release (in some prisons, and with individuals returning to designated areas and / or in particular groups). Where this was the case, they would generally identify the accommodation before an individual was liberated.

²² In discussions, some local authority housing staff indicated that the reason for this was that, in their experience, many individuals leaving prison would either miss their appointments, or attend late. Others indicated that their services operated on a "drop-in" basis for all clients.

²³ Where numbers are given, these relate to the findings of the survey.

105. One further issue (raised by a number of staff in discussions) was that, where a woman faced a risk of domestic abuse in the community, the local authority could, along with the SPS, Police Scotland and other services, make additional arrangements for her safety. These could include: improving the security of existing accommodation; finding accommodation in another area; and involving Women's Aid in providing support. It was noted that this was dependent on these risks being identified and recognised.

Services in the community

106. This section will summarise the research findings in relation to services in the community (on, and following release). It will provide data on: the pattern of services in the community; the identification of housing needs in the community; and the nature of services in the community.

The pattern of services in the community

107. The research found that three main types of services were involved in providing housing-related support in the community. These were:

- Housing services.
- Reintegration services.
- Other specialist services.

Housing services

108. The survey and discussions found that the main housing services involved in providing services in the community (on, and following release) included local authorities, housing associations and third sector housing services, as follows:

- Homelessness teams, and staff working with individuals in hostels, B&Bs and other temporary accommodation.
- Staff working with tenants to address support needs while in a tenancy.
- Staff employed by third sector housing organisations such as Shelter.

109. These types of housing services were found to be available in all local authority areas.

Reintegration services

110. The survey and discussions found that all of the reintegration staff who worked with people in prison could also be involved on, and following release.

111. These included: the TSOs and the Low Moss, Shine, New Routes and BAFC Moving On PSPs (pghs A3:36 to 44) as well as criminal justice social work voluntary throughcare staff in all local authority areas.

Other specialist services

112. The survey also found that all of the other specialist services who worked with people in prison also did so on, and following release. These were described earlier (pgh A3:46) and will not be reiterated here.

113. The surveys and discussions found a considerable number of additional community-based services which may, as part of their general work, provide support to individuals leaving custody. Among the areas of work covered by these projects were:

- Befriending.
- Employability, education and training.
- Family support.
- Food banks.
- Furniture provision.
- Money advice and welfare rights.

114. The survey and discussions also found projects working with specific groups (particularly women, young people and people from ethnic minority communities) whose staff may work with those leaving custody.

115. While these services cannot all be listed, examples of their involvement are provided in the section on “the nature of services in the community”.

116. In general terms, the concentration of such services was found to be closely linked to the size of the population. Thus, more services were identified in the cities than in rural areas. In discussions, both third sector reintegration and social work staff noted that, on a case by case basis, it may be difficult to find specific specialist services to address particular individual needs in some areas.

The identification of housing issues in the community

117. The survey found that the main formal processes for identifying housing issues in the community, both on, and following release were through Housing Options assessments. These were carried out by all local authorities. Housing staff stated, in discussions, that these were broadly similar across local authority areas (although varying in detail).

118. In addition to these assessments, some reintegration and other specialist staff stated that their own review processes would examine housing issues, as part of an overall review of any issues requiring input. TSOs and others also noted that their day to day contact and on-going work with individuals may highlight housing issues. Individuals themselves could also raise housing issues with any of the services working with them.

119. Additionally, any other services working with an individual in the community could report housing issues not already raised. It was noted, for example, that there may be cases in which an individual did not recognise that they were homeless, but a member of staff working with them on another issue (e.g. addictions; health etc.) may pick this up and raise it with the individual and a housing service (e.g. where someone was sleeping on a sofa).

The nature of services delivered in the community

120. The research found that the work by housing-related services in the community focused on tackling some key issues facing people who served short sentences on, and following release. Services (particularly housing, reintegration and other specialist services) could assist with the following issues:

- Obtaining accommodation.
- Moving in to accommodation.
- Responding to changing housing circumstances in the community.
- Managing and sustaining accommodation.
- Accessing other services and support.

Obtaining accommodation

121. Overall, the research found that all social housing providers could provide accommodation, if available, to people released from short sentences. In the majority of cases, individuals leaving custody were able to find accommodation on the day of liberation, although there were wide variations in the processes involved and the accommodation provided. Details are provided below.

122. Most reintegration staff (including PSPs and individual reintegration services – see pghs A3:36 – 44) and some specialist services (pghs A3:45-48) noted that they would pick people up from prison on release, and accompany them to a housing appointment. There were some differences reported in aspects of practice (e.g. whether they would provide transportation, advocacy and / or other support). At the time of the research, TSOs were becoming more involved in providing this immediate support, and it was intended that their role would develop further in the future (including supporting people who were not eligible for other reintegration services).

123. The discussions found three main processes for addressing the immediate accommodation needs of people who did not have their own accommodation on release, or who had not been pre-allocated accommodation. In all cases, the local authority housing service was central to the process. These were that:

- An individual would have a pre-arranged appointment (in some cases with a named worker), to check and sign a homelessness application that had been started while in custody. The individual would be allocated accommodation at, or following this meeting.
- An individual would report to a housing office (with or without a pre-arranged appointment) to make a homelessness application. If successful, accommodation would generally be allocated at that point. If the application was not successful, or if further enquiries were required, the individual would generally be given emergency accommodation (for example in a hostel, B&B, or even a budget hotel).
- Infrequently, where an individual was unable to reach the housing office in time (for example, if they had travelled a considerable distance), they may be asked to report directly to emergency accommodation. If the emergency accommodation was full, the individual may be provided with the addresses of other emergency accommodation. Both individuals and reintegration staff provided examples of cases (in two local authority areas) where people liberated from custody had been unable to secure emergency accommodation and had had to sleep rough.

124. Reintegration staff noted that, in some cases where an individual had been pre-allocated accommodation through a third sector provider, they would still have to complete a homelessness application on the day of release (having been unable to do so in custody). It was noted that this was a source of uncertainty and frustration for individuals and staff involved, as there was no guarantee that an application would be accepted. One example was given of an individual who, despite having being pre-allocated accommodation, had initially had their application refused, on the basis of having no local connection (although this was changed after some hours).

125. The types of accommodation provided on liberation varied from area to area (depending on availability and individual authority policies), but included:

- Hostels, B&B accommodation and (in a small number of cases) budget hotels.

- Individual or shared accommodation with additional support.
- Individual or shared accommodation with no, or limited support (including private sector rented accommodation).
- A permanent tenancy in a public sector property (more usually following a period in temporary accommodation).

126. Participants of all types in the discussions stated that there was an overall shortage of accommodation in Scotland. There was seen to be a general shortage of social housing, and some variation by factors such as geographical area, demand, and type of tenure. There was seen to be a particular shortage of accommodation appropriate for those leaving custody. Types mentioned specifically included: one-bedroomed flats in central locations; supported accommodation; emergency accommodation; private lets; and housing association accommodation.

127. Other constraints to availability of accommodation were seen to relate to:

- Difficulties for people leaving prison in affording rents or deposits, and difficulties accessing rent deposit schemes.
- The application of the Local Housing Allowance rate and the under-occupancy penalty, which it was suggested could limit individuals' options.
- Exclusion from some accommodation of people who had committed specific types of offences (e.g. drug-related offences, or arson).

128. Both staff and individuals reported difficulties which could arise as a result of the location of the temporary accommodation available. For example, in some areas, it was noted that this may be distant from other support services (particularly health services, but also Jobcentre Plus offices). Examples were given of individuals leaving HMP Dumfries who had been placed in temporary accommodation in Stranraer, while other forms of support had been arranged for them in Dumfries and individuals returning to Glasgow who had been placed in outlying areas, even though the designated health service for homeless people is in the city centre.

129. Although many staff acknowledged that local authorities faced an overall shortage of housing, some reintegration staff raised concerns about the insistence of some local authorities that individuals should be able to demonstrate a "local connection" (pgs A2:83:85) before being accepted as homeless in that area. It was suggested that this could undermine pre-release work carried out with the individual and militate against individuals seeking to make a "fresh start", away from negative peer pressures. Several participants expressed the view that there were few alternatives available to people who refused offers of accommodation because they were concerned about these risks.

130. Three specific examples of given of work being carried out to increase the range of accommodation available. These were:

- A scheme run by Shelter in Dundee, where individuals leaving custody were placed in private lets with a guarantee to the landlord that the tenant would receive support for six months.
- A local authority (Argyll and Bute) where staff maintained a list of landlords willing to take people on Home Detention Curfew (HDC).
- A scheme in Fife where the local authority had secured a number of private sector flats for homeless people (including, but not exclusively people leaving prison) on the basis of a long term rental guarantee to the landlord.

Moving in to accommodation

131. Overall, discussions with staff suggested that, particularly since the deployment of the TSOs, support with moving into accommodation should be available to all individuals requiring this. There could, however, be some problems as a result of an apparent lack of co-ordination. Details are provided below.

132. Most reintegration staff, including PSP staff and TSOs reported that they would provide support to some individuals to move into accommodation, as could staff from local authorities, housing associations and some other specialist services.

133. Other services were also noted as having a role in enabling people to move in to accommodation. For example, participants of all types noted the role of food banks in helping individuals recently released from prison. A number of local authorities and reintegration services indicated that they maintained a stock of food bank vouchers for people in this position. Some projects (e.g. GRAFT in Ayrshire, and Hillhouse and Bethany in Edinburgh) reported providing basic essentials (such as furniture, pots, pans and duvets and, in some cases, clothing) and a few described the provision of hygiene starter packs.

134. Staff and individuals stated that, despite the services available to help with moving in, the range of actions required were not always carried out in a co-ordinated way. Examples were given where:

- Administrative processes were not completed in time to allow the individual to move in on the day of release.
- Keys were unavailable.
- Emergency shuttering was still in place at the accommodation.
- Utilities were not reconnected.
- Furniture or starter packs had not been delivered.
- Individuals had no money for power meters.

Responding to changing housing circumstances

135. Overall, the research found that, where individuals were receiving reintegration support, or were routinely in touch with local authority or housing association staff, any changes to their housing circumstances were likely to be identified and addressed. Where this was not the case, this was less likely. Details are provided below.

136. Staff of all types indicated that, where possible, they would deal with any housing issues as they arose, or make a referral to another specialist service (e.g. a housing service, solicitor, CAB or money advice project). Some housing staff indicated that they would, if necessary, refer the individual for a Housing Options review, and potentially a needs assessment (pghs A2:89-92).

137. Staff of all kinds, however, noted that pressures on services could make it difficult to sustain high levels of contact, except for the highest priority cases. As a result, for many of those who had served short sentences, the onus would be on them to first identify an issue, then seek assistance.

Managing and sustaining accommodation

138. Overall, it was clear from the survey and discussions that those liberated from prison could access the same forms of tenancy support as were available to others in social housing, although the level of this could vary. Details are provided below.

139. All of the local authorities responding to the survey (28), as well as all of the housing associations and third sector organisations offering accommodation with additional support, indicated that they could provide on-going tenancy sustainment support. This generally involved regular contact with the service user to identify any new issues arising, support to engage with any other relevant service, and on-going oversight of, and support with tenancy management. The level and type would vary by need, and could range from a concierge in a block of flats to intensive one to one work.

140. Reintegration staff could also have a role in providing support relating to maintaining and sustaining accommodation. This could involve enabling people to manage their housing (e.g. through one to one personal support, advocacy and advice; practical support; and referral on to any other service they may need).

141. The length of their input would vary, depending on the service. TSOs, for example, could work with individuals in the community for up to six weeks. The Shine and New Routes PSPs would nominally provide support for up to six months (although this could be extended if seen to be required). The Low Moss PSP (and other prison-based reintegration projects) effectively provided open-ended support, which was only terminated when the worker and individual agreed it was no longer required.

142. A small number of local authority and third sector staff noted that individuals may be able to access short courses in the community (e.g. on basic household skills) to help sustain a tenancy. One local authority (Falkirk Council) had made courses usually provided to those Community Payback Orders available to those recently liberated.

143. A small number of examples were given of services providing social and personal support to combat isolation, generally to specific groups. These included: 218 and Tomorrow's Women (women); Sacro (veterans); BAFC Moving On (young men liberated from Polmont); and Catalyst (adult men liberated from Kilmarnock). This could involve, for example, drop-in provision, groupwork, and access to informal support from workers.

Accessing other services and support

144. Overall, the discussions with reintegration and housing staff suggested that services were available in most communities to provide other forms of support with a range of housing issues. There were some variations, however, by area in the availability of particular specialist services. Details are provided below.

145. Reintegration and housing staff noted that they could enable individuals to access other support with issues such as:

- Health.
- Addictions.
- Benefits and money advice.
- Employment.

146. Some services would be available to people in all local authority areas, such as:

- JobCentre Plus.
- Local authority services (in addition to housing and social work).
- Health services (e.g. GPs; mental health; drug and alcohol; learning disability).
- Learning or employment support.

- Citizens' Advice Bureaux.

147. Some additional services would vary considerably by area, such as:

- Services offering volunteering opportunities.
- Befriending projects.
- Specialist services working with particular groups (e.g. women, veterans, disabled people, ethnic minority people etc.).
- Credit unions and money advice projects.
- Furniture and food projects.
- Projects providing family support.

148. Reintegration staff and individuals stated that, even where services may nominally be available, there were often eligibility criteria limiting their availability. As noted earlier (pghs A3:43-44), geographical factors could also constrain this.

Summary

149. Overall, the research found many services which may be involved in addressing housing issues in prison and in the community. There were housing-related services addressing all of the issues found to affect people who serve short sentences in Scotland (described in Chapter 2) and these services have been summarised in this Annexe.

150. The main services involved are: prison, housing, reintegration and other specialist services. The forms of support they provide can include: advice; information; practical and emotional support; accommodation; advocacy; and referral to others. A key finding, however, is that there is no consistent housing-related service provision across Scotland for those who serve short sentences. The findings described in this Annexe demonstrate variations in the pattern of housing-related services and in their practice.

151. There was a common view among research participants that this meant that many individuals who served short sentences in Scotland did not receive the services they needed to tackle the housing issues they faced.

152. This Annexe has focused on the data about the pattern and nature of housing-related services, and gaps or variations in availability. It should be noted that a cross-cutting issue, affecting the availability of public and third sector services working in prison and in the community, was resource limitations (accommodation, funding and staffing).

153. Additionally, the main report (Chapter 4) described a number of cross-cutting constraints to the delivery or receipt of housing-related services. These included: a lack of overall strategic approach; limited monitoring; a lack of an overall structure and joined-up approach; gaps in knowledge and awareness; a negative impact of attitudes and behaviour; and policy and practice in other relevant areas (e.g. welfare and sentencing).

154. Among many suggestions made to improve housing-related services (detailed in Annexe 6), was a common view that all of those serving short sentences should have access to the same level of support, at all stages, whatever their prison or home area.

ANNEXE 4 STATISTICAL ISSUES

1. The purpose of this Annexe is to set out the findings of the research on a number of statistical issues which, taken together, make it difficult to obtain a clear picture of the scale of homelessness among people entering and leaving custody. This Annexe will cover:

- Data on people who are homeless on admission to prison.
- Data on people who lose their accommodation while in prison.
- Data on Housing Benefit claims in custody.
- Data from the Core Screen and other in-prison processes.
- Data on homelessness prevention work in prison.
- Data on people leaving prison.

Data on people who are homeless on admission to prison

2. Data prepared for this research by the SPS (pghs A3:5-11) indicated that, on 3rd April 2015, a total of 196 individuals in custody and serving short sentences (out of 3249) had their addresses recorded on admission as “no fixed abode” (NFA).

3. However, staff (in discussions) suggested that this figure was unreliable, as individuals sometimes provided the police, Procurator Fiscal or Sheriff Clerk with a false accommodation address (when they were homeless), either so that documents could be served to the address, or to try to influence Sheriffs’ sentencing. Prison staff indicated that they tried to check whether the address provided by the court was correct, but this relied on an individual’s co-operation (which may not be forthcoming). It was suggested that, as a result of these issues, the NFA figure was likely to be an underestimate.

4. The periodic Scottish Prison Survey asks those in custody (both serving short and long term sentences) about their living arrangements before admission. While this provides a valuable insight into people’s previous housing circumstances, it cannot provide a definitive overall number of people coming into prison who are already homeless, as result of the categories used.

5. In the 2103 survey (Carnie et al, 2013), the SPS used a number of “common sense” categorisations, designed to give a clearer picture to policy makers and staff in prisons of individuals’ living circumstances than might be possible just by using the term “homeless” (which, although it has a legal definition, has a less clear meaning in general use). This survey allowed respondents to choose from any or all of the categories available, making it impossible to identify the number who could be considered homeless on the basis of a legal definition. SPS informed the research team that a number of changes had been made to the 2015 survey both to amend existing, and add new categories.

Data on people who lose their accommodation while in prison

6. Using current data, it is not possible to ascertain the number of individuals who lose their tenancy or accommodation while in custody. While the 2013 Scottish Prison Survey (Carnie et al, 2013) covered this issue, the information is not reliable as an overall indicator, as it could only cover those who knew that they had lost their accommodation by the time the survey was completed. This would not include those who lost their accommodation at a later point in their sentence (for example, as a result of abandonment or eviction proceedings).

Data on housing benefit claims in custody

7. At present, the DWP Stat-Xplore system, which otherwise provides considerable detail in relation to the breakdown of Housing Benefit claims, does not identify the number of claims which ended because someone was imprisoned, or which were started in prison. In addition, the geographical basis of published data is the area in which the property is located, not the location of the claimant at the time of the claim.

Data from the Core Screen and other in-prison processes

8. The Core Screen and other prison processes to identify housing (and other needs) were described in detail in Annexe 2 (pghs A2:55-57).

9. Data is available on the overall number of referrals logged onto PR2. The data made available by the SPS to the research team showed that, in 2013-2014, 9849 housing-related referrals were made (covering those serving both short and long sentences).

10. However, it was clear that the way the data is currently organised makes an accurate assessment of the nature of referrals very difficult. This is not a fault of the system per se. Different approaches appear to have evolved within individual prisons, probably to meet local operational needs. This has, however, led to difficulties in providing a dataset which can give a consistent national picture.

11. Data in relation to referrals was found to be recorded inconsistently across different prisons. Only around half of the referrals recorded the name of the agency to which the referral was being made, while the remainder had been given a generic label of "housing agency".

12. Data on "outcomes" also appeared to be unreliable, as much of the information related not to outcomes, but, for example, to cases being "listed for assessment" and "on-going". In 14% of cases, the "outcome" was listed as "interviewed" and in 32% of cases, "advice given". Overall, 16% of cases had "missing" data.

13. SPS informed the research team that, as part of the development of the Core Screen, it was intended that changes would be made to the way referrals were recorded on PR2.

Data on homelessness prevention work in prison

14. As noted in Annexe 3 (pghs A3:50-58), some local authorities (and third sector housing staff) carried out homelessness prevention work at the point of admission to custody, or soon after. It is not possible, at present, to ascertain how many individuals received homelessness prevention support at that stage, or how many fell within the scope of Housing Options.

15. The Scottish Government's PREVENT 1 statistical return collects information from local authorities to monitor Housing Options / homelessness prevention in Scotland. However, it does not identify where, or in what circumstances Housing Options assessments are carried out. The returns only capture work done by local authorities, and, therefore, in the context of work in prison, would not reflect work done by Sacro, Shelter or others (pghs A3:13-48).

16. Data for 2014-15 (Scottish Government, 2015h) suggest that, across Scotland, 3,495 Housing Options approaches were made during that period where the reason for the approach was discharge from prison or other institutional care (about 6% of all cases).

This covered those who had served both short and long sentences. However, it was not possible to ascertain how many of these assessments were undertaken in custody, and how many following liberation.

17. Published PREVENT 1 data also indicate considerable regional variations in the recorded numbers of Housing Options assessments where prison was the last known address (and which cannot be explained by relative population size). However, in discussions, it was suggested that this may reflect the fact that different local authorities were at different stages in terms of using the system, and that, over time, a more consistent dataset would become available.

18. It was noted that the Tayside Housing Options Hub, Scottish Government and the SPS are discussing ways of using PREVENT 1 data to improve management information about those entering or leaving custody.

Data on people leaving prison

19. There was found to be little reliable evidence on the number of people who serve short sentences who are homeless on liberation. The most commonly quoted estimate was made by the Home Office in 2003/4 (Home Office, 2005), and suggested around 30%. This estimate is not strictly comparable to Scotland, as it used different definitions of “short term” and “homeless”. The Scottish Prison Survey (Carnie et al, 2013) found that about a third of those surveyed did not know where they would be living on liberation, but this was based on their expectations, not their experience on liberation.

20. The SPS gathers statistics on the number of people who leave custody and who are classified as having “no fixed abode” (referred to as “NFA”). A total of 448 liberations from short sentences (out of nearly 10,000) were NFA in 2011-2012 (Scottish Government, 2013)²⁴. This represents only 4.5% of those liberated from short sentences.

21. This cannot, however, be taken as a proxy for those who were homeless on liberation. This is as a result of the definitions used. An individual with a pre-allocated place in a hostel or other temporary accommodation would not be counted in the NFA figure, even though they had been assessed and accepted as homeless. However, an individual required to present as homeless at a housing office on the day of liberation may be recorded as NFA, even though the research found they would be virtually certain to have at least a temporary address by the end of that day.

22. At present, the main source of information on homelessness among those who have served sentences comes from local authorities’ HL1 returns. This is helpful, and indicative of the scale of the problem in general terms, although it only covers those who approach the local authority (and would not include, for example, an individual sleeping on a friend’s floor who had not asked for support).

23. There are issues in both the collection process and the analysis which mean that these published statistics are unlikely to provide a comprehensive view of homelessness as it affects those leaving custody. Three main issues were noted:

²⁴ It is worth noting that 353 NFA liberations were for individuals remanded in custody and liberated from, or following a court appearance. Although these individuals were outside the scope of this research, it should be noted that they would be likely to face many of the same problems as those liberated from a sentence, but would be unlikely to have access to any form of reintegration support.

- Individuals are not compelled to disclose the reason for becoming homeless, and may choose not to cite leaving prison. Individuals could, for their own reasons, cite other reasons, such as the breakdown of a relationship, or eviction.
- There are likely to be issues with the timing of some individuals' applications, which make it likely that other reasons (rather than leaving prison) may be cited. Housing staff (and reintegration staff) reported that some of those leaving custody did not present as homeless until days, or even weeks afterwards, even though they had not been living in stable accommodation in the intervening period.
- The Scottish Government's published statistics derived from HL1 returns do not differentiate between those leaving custody and those leaving other forms of institution (although the underlying return does so).

24. Scottish Government statisticians provided the research team with a further breakdown of HL1 returns which identified prison leavers separately. It was noted, however, that there were likely to be reliability issues with the data. For that reason, this breakdown has not been included in this report.

25. At present, there is no means of identifying the housing outcomes for those who have lost housing as a result of a custodial sentence. This group is not separately identified in relation to, for example, the outcomes of the Housing Options process (described in Annexe 2), nor homelessness applications, nor needs assessments. Nor is this group identified specifically in the HL2 or HL3 returns, which deal with those in temporary accommodation.

26. Although some participants indicated that housing associations accepted referrals for people recently liberated from custody using the Section 5 referral process²⁵ as well as by other nomination arrangements, published data does not report those leaving custody as a specific group. There is, therefore, no way of knowing the overall number of those leaving custody who were provided with accommodation by a housing association. Discussions with housing associations, however, suggested that the annual total was likely to be very small.

27. It was clear from the survey and discussions in this research that relatively little information was gathered by housing services beyond that specified in the PREVENT 1 and HL series of returns.

28. Other services indicated that they gathered and maintained information on a case by case basis about housing issues and outcomes. This data, gathered either for operational or monitoring reasons, did not appear to be generally consistent with data gathered by public bodies (for example in terms of the categories or definitions used which may not match those used on the PREVENT 1 and HL returns, or which may not, for example, differentiate between types of accommodation, or between individuals with different sentence lengths).

29. It was noted that much information was qualitative in nature, and could be incomplete (for example, in relation to whether or not identified issues were resolved). It was suggested that it was not routinely analysed, interpreted or used. For all these reasons, this material would be likely to be useful only for indicative, or review purposes.

²⁵ Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced new duties for RSLs to provide accommodation for homeless people. The duty was commenced in 2002.

Evaluations

30. The survey found two evaluations of housing-specific projects: the Community Reintegration Pilot (Scottish Government, 2014d) (pghs A2:76:77); and the SPAN partnership project (Shelter, 2015b), involving Shelter, Sacro and Inverness CAB.

31. Some reintegration organisations indicated that they were in the process of undertaking evaluations of their overall service (including the national PSPs, the Low Moss PSP and some smaller services). While some indicated that housing was a strand of the evaluation, few appeared to focus on the role of, or outcomes relating to, housing alone, or in relation to reintegration and the promotion of desistance.

32. Glasgow City Council noted that it was in the process of carrying out a comprehensive review of its homelessness operations (but this had not been published at the time of the research). Other local authorities indicated that they had internally reviewed their Housing Options approach. A few indicated that reports had been provided to committees within the authority on the performance of various housing-related services, although these were not based on external evaluations.

ANNEXE 5 HOUSING ISSUES AFFECTING SPECIFIC GROUPS

1. Chapter 2 of the main report described the housing issues faced, at various stages, by people who served short sentences. A common view was noted that, at all stages, the specific nature of housing issues people faced and / or the nature of services they required could vary for particular groups (within those who served short sentences).
2. A risk was of people being released to accommodation considered inappropriate to their needs was identified (pgh 2.27). A view was reported that one gap in support was that issues affecting particular groups were not always recognised or addressed by service providers (pgh 4.37).
3. The literature review (pghs A2:11-17) presented some research evidence relating to specific housing issues affecting people in particular groups who serve short sentences. Where available, this tended to focus particularly on women, although issues were also identified relating to: age; physical and mental health and disability; and particular types of offences.
4. The current research explored the views of specialist organisations and staff working with people from particular groups who served short sentences (identified in this Annexe as “specialist” staff). It also included discussions with a cross-section of individuals who served short sentences, with specific groups held with women, people with mental health problems, young people and people in different types of geographical area. These discussions provided much of the information summarised below (although participants of all types offered views on these issues).
5. While it was recognised that the issues set out in this Annexe could affect all people who served short sentences, they were seen to have a particular additional impact on those in the groups identified.

Gender

6. One of the most common themes, noted by many staff of all types and by people (particularly women) who had served short sentences, was that there could be variation in the housing issues people faced, and the availability of support, by gender. A number of these issues were seen to relate particularly to women.

Trauma, abuse and exploitation

7. A common issue, raised by several prison, housing, reintegration and social work staff was that many women who serve short sentences have experienced trauma, domestic and / or sexual abuse and mental health problems. It was noted that some women in these circumstances may view prison as a place of safety.
8. Several prison and reintegration staff stated that some housing situations could increase women’s vulnerability to further abuse and exploitation. It was suggested, for example, that the “easiest” housing solution may be for women released from prison to return to their previous accommodation. For those who had experienced domestic abuse, this could mean a return to the perpetrator, and examples were given in Chapter 2 where

women returned to violent partners because they felt they had no other option. Risks were also identified where a perpetrator of abuse returned to live with their partner / victim.

9. A further issue raised was that women in hostel accommodation could be vulnerable to entering abusive relationships in order to escape the hostel environment. A few reintegration staff stressed that sleeping rough, and sleeping on sofas and floors was particularly unsafe for women.

10. One social work participant stated that women who had experienced trauma, abuse and mental health problems needed a supportive or therapeutic environment, not “a poly bag in a housing office”. Some specific issues identified as affecting people with mental health problems are discussed later in this section.

Childcare and family responsibilities

11. A further issue, described by prison and reintegration staff, was that women often have a greater role than men in considering and organising childcare and other family responsibilities. It was argued that this led to more complex considerations when identifying their housing and support requirements on imprisonment.

12. For many women, there may be a specific need to make arrangements for dependents. A few prison staff stated that men in prison may be more likely to have a partner or other relative (e.g. mother or grandmother) in the community who would make arrangements for them.

13. It was also noted that, for some women, their children may be looked after by the social work service during the woman’s time in prison.

14. Some individual women and reintegration staff noted that many women in prison intended to try to regain custody of their children when they were released. It was suggested that the nature of the housing they were released to could have a major impact on this. For example, one third sector organisation noted that women released to hostel accommodation would be unable have their children to stay.

15. Some participants stressed the importance of women with children being provided with accommodation that would enable the children to live with them. If it was not possible for children to live with them immediately on release, it was considered important for the women to be housed in accommodation where their children could visit. This issue was noted in Chapter 2 (pgs A2:53-54) more generally, as affecting people who served short sentences.

Issues for partners of those imprisoned

16. Prison and reintegration staff stated that there could be different knock-on effects for men and women whose partners were imprisoned.

17. It was suggested, for example, that women were more likely to be reliant on a partner’s benefits and tenancy. It was also noted that women may be more at risk of losing their income and their home on their partner’s imprisonment.

18. One third sector organisation indicated that it could be difficult for women whose partners were in prison to exercise “door control”. This was seen to make them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by their imprisoned partner’s friends.

Availability of support

19. A few participants suggested that there was a general lack of support to address specific issues faced by women, although there were mixed views of this²⁶.

20. A few prison staff stated that the overall SPS approach had, in the past, been to take policy and practice aimed at men and “tag women on”. This, in their view, did not take account of differences in support requirements.

21. One group of women participants expressed the view that actions were taken more quickly to address issues for men in prison.

22. Conversely, a few housing and prison staff suggested that there was more support available for women than men, or that women were more likely to engage with the support available.

Age

23. Many respondents stated that there could be variations in the housing issues people faced, and the services available, by age. Issues were identified that may affect both young people and older people, albeit in different ways.

Offending history

24. For older people, some issues related to their offending history. Many prison staff expressed the view that prison became a “way of life” for some older people, particularly where they faced recurring debts and homelessness problems.

25. Several participants suggested that some older people who had served a number of short sentences had lengthy experience of homelessness (often having been homeless on a number of occasions). One third sector organisation stated that some of their older male service users had 20-30 years’ experience of homelessness. This was seen to limit their housing opportunities.

Experience of independent living

26. Chapter 2 noted that people who served short sentences could face difficulties sustaining their accommodation. Several prison and third sector staff noted that both older and younger people could have a particular lack of independent living skills. These issues were seen to impact on the ability of both age groups to sustain independent accommodation.

27. It was noted that some older men who had served many short sentences over their lives may never have had the chance to develop such skills, and may also be unwilling to attend courses to acquire them.

28. Some prison staff suggested that, for different reasons, young people may also not know how to cope with independent living, as their upbringing may not have prepared them for this. A few stated that young people may have lived most of their lives in residential accommodation (e.g. as looked after children, then in a young offenders

²⁶ (The overall approach taken by the Scottish Government to working with women who offend was set out in Annexe 2.)

institution, then an adult prison). One third sector specialist staff member, and a few young people themselves, stated that young people often had no idea how to cook, clean, budget or shop.

29. Linked to this, some prison and social work staff suggested that young people may not be aware of “acceptable” behaviour in housing in the community. It was argued that they may, for example, become involved in anti-social behaviour, and it was suggested that there may be merit, in some cases, in involving mediation services.

Identification and disclosure of housing issues

30. Some prison and third sector specialist staff suggested that both older and younger people may be less likely to disclose housing issues than other groups. One participant suggested that older men could be embarrassed by their housing situation.

31. Prison staff described some cases where young people had been admitted to custody with an initial “story” about where they would stay on release, and stuck to it throughout, even where this appeared to staff to have been based on an unrealistic view of their position.

32. A few prison and third sector specialist staff suggested that young people were less likely to consider housing issues, and that there was sometimes a presumption that they would live with their parents on release. Several young people who participated in discussions stated that they had not, and did not intend to think about these issues when they were in prison.

33. Some prison staff stated that young people often had poor relationships with their parents, and that these relationships may break down during the young person’s period in prison. This finding was borne out by the views of some young people (with examples reported in Chapter 2). One third sector specialist stated that young people who went back to their parents may be a “hidden” group who could be living in poor or unsuitable conditions.

Exploitation and risk

34. Some prison and third sector specialist staff suggested that young people could be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation in some housing circumstances (particularly hostels). It was stated that they may be vulnerable to peer pressure (e.g. to take drugs or commit offences) and to potential exploitation. Several young people expressed very negative views of hostels, including fear of these surroundings.

Health and social care issues

35. As noted above, a few prison and third sector specialist staff suggested that young people in hostel accommodation may be particularly vulnerable to a risk of alcohol and drug misuse, and may be less able to resist peer pressure than others.

36. A few prison staff stated that some older people may have additional health and social care needs which would affect the type of accommodation that would be suitable to them.

Accessibility and availability of support

37. Several prison, housing and third sector specialist staff suggested a general lack of recognition of the specific issues facing older and / or younger people who served short sentences.

38. A few prison and housing staff suggested a particular gap in services (particularly reintegration services) to older men (over 25). The SPS, however, believed that any such gap would be addressed by the provision of TSOs throughout Scotland.

39. A few housing staff reported general difficulties for them in working with young people with “chaotic” lifestyles.

Physical and mental health and disability

40. A further issue, noted frequently by staff of all types and some individuals who served short sentences, was that people who had mental health problems, physical impairments or learning difficulties may face specific housing issues relating to these issues. Most of the comments focused on issues for people with mental health problems. A few comments were also made about issues for people with physical impairments or learning difficulties.

Impact on health and mental health

41. Chapters 2 and 4 in the main report described participants’ views of the potential impact of housing problems (and housing services) on health. For people with physical impairments and mental health or substance misuse problems, there was seen to be a particular risk of a negative impact of some housing problems.

42. It was argued, for example, that people in some housing circumstances could find it difficult to access healthcare. As noted in Chapter 2 (pg 2.48) it was seen to be difficult to register with a G.P. or get medication or treatment without a settled address, and some temporary accommodation provided was a long way from a health centre. It was suggested that some housing conditions could make it difficult to eat or sleep well (e.g. hostel and B&B accommodation), and that these difficulties could make existing health problems worse.

43. There was a clear view that housing problems could exacerbate existing mental health problems, and individuals with mental health problems (and others) gave many examples of their own experiences of these (pg 2.49). Several mentioned stress, anxiety and depression in particular, but there were also examples of a negative impact on other mental health problems (including phobias and paranoia).

44. As noted in Chapter 2 (pgs 2.51-52), the link between housing problems and an increased risk of drug or alcohol misuse was also described by most individuals and staff in this research. Many participants stated that people who had substance misuse problems were at particular risk in some types of temporary accommodation, and many individuals mentioned hostels and B&B accommodation in particular.

Exploitation and risk

45. A few prison and third sector specialist staff stated that people with mental health problems could be vulnerable to exploitation in the community. One third sector participant, for example, suggested that people with mental health problems who experienced difficulties coping with their housing may be likely to “walk away” from this, so putting themselves at risk of exploitation and reoffending.

46. Another stated that, where people’s mental health deteriorated because of their housing problems, they may be more likely to use drugs, place themselves in “unsafe” situations, and / or commit further offences.

Coping with independent living

47. A few prison and third sector specialist staff stated that people with mental health problems may find independent living difficult, and may have a complex range of needs. Some housing staff and some individuals stated that people with serious mental health problems may need supported accommodation.

48. One third sector specialist stated that veterans with mental health problems may find it difficult to live in areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour. Some individuals who had experienced mental health problems gave examples of their difficulties in coping with a lot of noise or disruption from neighbours.

Availability and accessibility of support

49. Several participants suggested that there was a lack of specific additional support available for people with mental health problems (particularly where they did not have a formal diagnosis).

50. Linked to this, it was argued that there was often a lack of recognition and assessment of the types of mental health issues faced by people serving short sentences. One social work participant suggested, for example, that, if someone attended court on a day when there was not a mental health professional available, they could enter prison with no assessment of their needs having taken place.

51. One third sector specialist suggested that there was a shortage of supported accommodation for people with mental health problems.

52. A few social work and third sector specialist staff gave examples of cases where the accommodation allocated to people with physical impairments had been inappropriate or inaccessible. One suggested that someone with a physical impairment could have significant problems if they were homeless on release, noting that they would be unlikely to be accommodated in a temporary flat or hostel. A few staff stated that there could be long waiting times for adaptations to properties, and that private sector landlords were unlikely to agree to adaptations to temporary accommodation.

53. Any processes involving form-filling were seen to be potentially inaccessible to people who experienced numeracy and / or literacy issues, or learning difficulties. A few individuals who had served short sentences suggested that people with learning difficulties may not understand the formal processes for obtaining housing (including the interview questions). Reintegration staff described cases where people with learning difficulties had found themselves at risk of having no support, as they had not understood the implications of the answers they had given to questions in housing interviews.

54. A few staff stated that it could be difficult for service providers to work with people with mental health or other problems that affected their behaviour. Examples were given where people had been excluded from particular services or areas, or whose behaviour was considered by staff to have been challenging. One CJA participant argued that the stress of dealing with housing issues may make such behaviour more likely. It was suggested that it was then more difficult for the individuals involved to access services.

55. One participant from a specialist organisation suggested that the threshold to qualify for additional support to sustain a tenancy could mean that access to this may be limited for some disabled people.

General issues

56. A few staff argued that, in general, there could be a focus on someone's offending behaviour when considering their housing requirements, rather than recognising that this could mask health, mental health or disability issues.

Offence and sentence

57. A further common theme was that the housing issues people faced, and the services available, could vary by the nature of the offence they had committed, the basis of their imprisonment (i.e. whether they were on remand or sentenced) and the length of sentence served.

Identification of housing issues by people on remand, or appealing their conviction or sentence

58. A few prison staff suggested that there may be a particular risk of lack of disclosure of housing issues by people on remand. These staff expressed concern that this could lead to the loss of their Housing Benefit, and, as a result, their existing accommodation.

59. A related issue, noted by some prison staff, was that there could be a lack of awareness among some of those on remand (and some people in prison for the first time) about the importance of identifying and addressing housing issues. It was noted that, at the time of writing, the SPS had identified this as an issue and was drafting factsheets.

60. A few housing staff stated that people who appealed their sentences often did not give up their tenancies, but sometimes did not let service providers know they were in prison. It was argued that they could then build up arrears and face court action. This was described by housing staff as a complex area, as there was a risk that, even if the appeal was successful, the individual may have lost their accommodation in the meantime.

Timing issues

61. A few prison and third sector specialist staff stated that it could be difficult to identify housing issues and carry out work with people on very short sentences. A few prison staff stressed that there was a high level of need for housing work among this group, as many had no fixed accommodation.

62. A few third sector specialist staff suggested that there were also issues for those who effectively served "long-term" sentences, by having many short sentences in quick succession (which, together, added up to a long sentence). They stated that some people in these circumstances had little prospect of ever having a tenancy.

63. Several housing staff suggested that it was difficult to address housing issues where people were released directly and unexpectedly from a court appearance. In these circumstances, it was noted that individuals would be unlikely to have access to a reintegration worker, and may not have been provided with even basic information about how to secure housing.

64. A few third sector specialist staff noted that, where housing was required for a sex offender²⁷, it could take 28 days to carry out an environmental screening. This raised, for them, the question of where to accommodate them in the meantime.

Attitudes and assumptions

65. Several third sector specialist, prison and social work staff indicated that people who had committed some types of offences may face particularly negative attitudes which could make it more difficult to house them.

66. The most common issue raised, by several prison and housing staff, was that neighbours could be concerned about having someone who had committed a sexual offence living in their local area. This could make it difficult to find safe housing for them. It was suggested that, in some cases, these individuals could be driven from their homes.

67. Additionally, a few prison staff stated that people whose offences had been high profile, and had received a lot of coverage in the media, may also face problems with negative local attitudes.

Health and social care issues

68. Some specific health issues were described for people who had committed sexual offences. It was noted that someone who had been in prison for such an offence may, effectively, be a prisoner in their own home. It was suggested that this could lead to isolation and mental health problems (or, alternatively, to their breaking their conditions and being returned to prison).

69. Some prison staff noted that a number of those who had committed sexual offences were older men, which made it more likely that they would have mobility problems or social care requirements (which, as noted earlier, may also limited their housing choices on liberation).

Availability and accessibility of support

70. A number of issues were identified relating to differences in the accessibility of support (particularly accommodation) for people who had committed particular types of offence.

71. Many respondents of all types described difficulties in finding suitable accommodation for people who had committed sexual offences. Issues raised included:

- Lack of willingness of family members to house them.
- Difficulties finding appropriate short-term lets or private lets.
- Difficulties finding accommodation with the right level of supervision and support.
- Impact of restrictions on finding accommodation.

72. A few prison staff stated that it could be very difficult to achieve positive housing outcomes with this group.

²⁷ The brief for the research did not include consideration of issues relating to sex offenders and no specific questions were asked about this group. The issues mentioned here were raised by participants in response to general questions about issues affecting specific groups.

73. A few prison, housing and social work staff reported that it could also be difficult to find housing for people who had committed offences such as arson, drugs offences or domestic abuse. In the case of perpetrators of domestic abuse, housing and some third sector specialist staff stressed the need to take account of safety considerations for their partners and children. A few stated that it could be difficult to find appropriate housing for people who had to comply with particular court orders and supervision requirements.

Practical issues

74. A few prison staff stated that there could be particular difficulties in gaining access to house keys belonging to people on remand, as permission may be required from the Procurator Fiscal before keys could be released.

Geographical area

75. Several prison, housing and third sector specialist staff noted variations in housing issues and services relating to geography.

Accessibility and availability of services

76. The main comments focused on variation in the accessibility and availability of services by area. Chapter 4 and Annexe 3 described a number of geographical gaps in the availability of services. In some cases, people serving short sentences did not have access to a member of housing staff from their own area, either in the prison or visiting on a regular basis.

77. A few prison staff stated that it was very difficult for workers in national prisons to identify and provide support to individuals from all local authority areas in Scotland. As noted in Annexe 3 (pg 11), this was also a problem in prisons where people were held from a range of different local authority areas.

78. There were also found to be variations in the availability of third sector reintegration and specialist services in different areas. For example, several prison, housing and reintegration staff stated that there could be a particular lack of community services in rural and island areas.

79. Prison staff indicated that, where an individual had engaged with a local organisation prior to imprisonment, the service provider sometimes disengaged with them if they were held in a prison out of their home area.

80. A number of issues were raised, particularly by housing staff, relating to specific shortages of accommodation or low turnover in some geographical areas. Although it was recognised that there were housing shortages across Scotland, including in cities and towns, some additional geographical factors were identified that could have an impact on availability.

81. Housing staff, for example, noted that tourism could affect the availability of accommodation in some rural and island areas, with B&B accommodation, small hotels and flats being marketed primarily to visitors. It was also argued that it was vital not to “upset” the landlord or tourists in these circumstances, as this could lead to a loss of access to the accommodation, even in low season.

82. Some housing staff stated that accommodation costs were higher in some rural and island areas (and in some other specific areas in Scotland) than in other areas. It was

noted that the cost of furniture, white goods and other household essentials could also be substantially higher, which could make it difficult to find adequate funding to support an individual returning from custody to new accommodation.

Practical issues

83. Prison staff, and some individuals noted that it could take a long time to travel home to some areas following liberation (where someone had been held in a prison a long distance from home). It was suggested that this could make it difficult for them to attend appointments on the day of release (although it was noted that individuals working with TSOs would benefit from detailed planning to address these potential problems).

84. A few housing staff stated that the weather conditions in some parts of Scotland, particularly in winter, could leave people stranded and unable to reach a housing appointment in their home area on release.

85. Some prison and reintegration staff argued that there was a particular need for pre-planning and co-ordination for people from distant areas.

86. One third sector participant stated that there could be difficulties in providing confidential support services to people in rural and island areas, as it was much easier to be “anonymous” in a city than in a small village.

Ethnic group

87. A small number of participants described specific housing issues for people from ethnic minority communities.

Attitudes and assumptions

88. A few third sector staff stated that people from ethnic minority communities often experienced racism in their accommodation (e.g. in hostels, local areas etc.). One participant suggested that people from ethnic minority communities tended to avoid going to one particular hostel because of the level of racism they faced.

89. It was suggested that people from some ethnic minority communities who served short sentences could be ostracised by their families. Conversely, staff also noted that some young people may have considerable pressure placed on them not to move out of the family home (e.g. because the family members felt that they would be “safe” at home). It was suggested, however, that this could sometimes make it more likely that they would rebel, and potentially commit further offences.

90. One third sector organisation stated that people from ethnic minority communities who served short sentences may lack information about their entitlements to benefits or support. It was argued that they may not access these, or may “disappear off the radar”.

Availability of support

91. A few third sector participants noted that there was a general lack of support aimed specifically at people from ethnic minority communities who served short sentences.

92. One social work participant suggested that there could be a lack of provision of interpretation facilities by those providing support to address housing issues. They stated that this was important (e.g. for people who did not have English as a first language) in processes such as assessment, where complex issues were explored.

General issues

93. A few participants from third sector specialist organisations, as well as social work staff, suggested that there could be a lack of understanding by service providers of the nature of housing issues affecting ethnic minority people. This was seen to lead to a risk of inappropriate assumptions being made about their housing circumstances and requirements.

94. A few participants from third sector specialist organisations stated that there would be variation in housing issues and requirements among people from different ethnic minority communities. It was suggested that it was important for staff to recognise that a person from an ethnic minority community may face particular housing issues, and to be aware of the importance of identifying and addressing these in providing services.

Overall views

95. Several service providers expressed an overall view that people who served short sentences were, in themselves, a group experiencing discrimination and disadvantage (which could be compounded by the issues raised above). It was noted that some individuals experienced multiple issues in combination, which could exacerbate: the discrimination they faced; the negative impact of housing problems; and the barriers to accessing and using housing-related services.

ANNEXE 6 SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS GAPS AND BARRIERS

1. Many suggestions were made in the survey and discussions about actions that could be taken to improve housing-related services. The suggestions for next steps in Chapter 5 were derived from the types of action seen to be required (as described below).
2. The detailed suggestions in this Annexe link to these suggestions for next steps, and should be considered when identifying specific actions. They could not all be included in the main report, because of the volume of these, and constraints on space.
3. It would be impossible, given the number of suggestions, to attribute each comment to a particular type of participant. There was a high level of agreement across all types of participants about the general areas in which developments were needed. Some overall patterns have, however, been highlighted.

The overall approach

4. Staff of different types, and individuals who served short sentences, suggested a need for a coherent overall approach to tackling housing and reoffending, at a national and local level.

National strategy and direction

5. Comments by individuals who served short sentences tended to focus on a general need for fairness and equality of access to support. Some staff made more specific suggestions about the nature of the overall strategy and approach.
6. Staff of different types suggested a need for:
 - Clear strategic direction at a national level.
 - Clear policy and processes for housing services and prisons (with limited scope for local interpretation).
 - A consistent, defined “minimum” level of service, in prison and in the community, across all areas.
7. Several housing, prison, reintegration and other specialist staff stressed the need for a similar consistent and co-ordinated approach at a local level.

Housing Options and prevention

8. Some housing staff suggested the widespread adoption of a Housing Options approach to housing work in prison (as well as in the community).
9. Many other participants, while not necessarily using this terminology, made suggestions about the kind of approach that should be adopted. These included that there should be:
 - Early and proactive identification of housing issues at all stages.
 - Prevention of homelessness and housing problems at all stages.
 - Early action when problems were identified.
 - Forward planning and development of individual pathways.

- An holistic, case management approach, tailored to individual circumstances.
- Recognition of the needs of specific groups (e.g. equality groups) (Annexe 5).
- Provision of timely support.
- Joint working, information provision and sharing.
- A “can-do”, flexible approach, enabling innovation and imagination.
- User involvement and choice.
- Service providers with appropriate understanding and expertise.
- Appropriate attitudes and behaviour (e.g. listening, respect, fairness).

Structure and roles

10. Many staff (particularly, but not only housing and prison staff, as well as representatives of CJAs and CPPs) stated that there was a need for an appropriate structure and arrangements to support a consistent overall approach.

National structure

11. Some suggestions were made about the development of a national structure. These included:

- Continuation of a Ministerial group to oversee developments.
- A greater role for the Scottish Government in the direction and oversight of housing and reoffending issues and actions.
- A national strategic partnership to co-ordinate provision across Scotland.

Local structure

12. Many participants of different types made suggestions about the development of a local structure. Most of these comments were about enabling a local multi-agency approach. Specific suggestions included:

- A local multi-agency partnership with responsibility for all aspects of housing and reoffending.
- A stronger role for Community Planning Partnerships (and the partners).
- A clear structure for accountability.
- The use of multi-agency groups to discuss individual cases.

13. A few prison staff argued that it would be useful to have named contacts in each service (e.g. with a named worker for each client). A few participants with experience of co-location of relevant services (e.g. social work and housing) suggested that services should be provided in this way, wherever possible.

14. A number of housing staff suggested a need for clear roles and responsibilities for staff from different services, linked to their expertise. Suggestions about roles and responsibilities are described below.

The role of housing staff

15. Many participants of all types (including prison and housing staff, reintegration and other specialist staff and individuals who served short sentences) suggested that there was a need for a housing officer or adviser in every prison, available to people from all areas and at all stages, with everyone having access to the same level of support.

16. There were varying views about the best way to deliver and fund this (often reflecting the role of the participant making the suggestion). There was no consensus about the most appropriate way forward, but possibilities included:

- A single national agency with responsibility for provision in all prisons.
- Joint provision by relevant local authorities.
- An independent service provider (e.g. a third sector specialist organisation).
- Joint provision by local authorities and the third sector.
- Provision by expert staff employed directly by prisons.

17. Many participants argued that, whatever the approach adopted, it should be consistent across the country.

18. Several housing staff made additional suggestions about housing roles. A few commented on a need for landlords to have a greater role in reducing reoffending.

19. A few suggestions were made about the role of the Scottish Housing Regulator, including that consideration should be given to identifying:

- How the Scottish Housing Regulator could support relevant processes.
- How the Regulator could take account of the management of void properties when these were being kept for an individual leaving custody.
- The Regulator's position on homelessness and reoffending.

20. Suggestions were made about the role of local authorities (largely by non-local authority staff). These included that there should be:

- A standard code of practice and policy covering all local authority areas' responsibilities relating to housing for those who serve short sentences.
- A requirement for all relevant local authorities to work with all prisons holding their local residents.
- A statutory obligation to house people (not just to provide a roof), although not all may wish to take this up.

21. Suggestions were made, particularly by housing staff, about the role of housing associations, including that there should be:

- Direct work with service users in prison.
- More engagement with homelessness issues (with particular suggestions including incentivisation to provide more accommodation for this client group; the creation of a "for profit housing association"; or the creation of contracts covering different client groups).
- More multi-type accommodation to be built by housing associations.

The role of SPS staff and others

22. Some suggestions were made about the role of SPS staff in tackling housing issues.

23. Many prison staff made comments about the future role of TSOs. There was a common view in prisons that TSOs would have an important role in supporting housing work. Suggestions included developing TSOs' awareness of housing issues in the

community, their role in identifying these and in making appropriate referrals (noted as being addressed through training).

24. Suggestions were also made, largely by prison staff, about a need for:

- Greater involvement of residential staff and Personal Officers in identifying housing issues and making referrals.
- More peer support in prison.
- The use of peer mentors in the community, with appropriate training to enable them to provide support with housing issues.

25. A small number of suggestions were made about the roles of other services, which included:

- More third sector involvement to support housing work in prison.
- More third sector involvement to support people in tenancies, as part of overall co-ordinated support.
- Better recognition by the NHS, benefits and employability staff, and others of their potential role in supporting housing work and promoting desistance.

Resources

26. Many suggestions were made, by participants of all types (staff and individuals) about the need for adequate resources to provide housing-related services. Comments were also made about the need for effective use of resources.

General

27. A few staff (including housing, prison and other specialist staff) argued that the true costs of housing loss should be recognised, as well as the benefits of enabling people to keep their housing. One specific suggestion was that a methodology could be developed to try to assess the cost impact of housing problems among people who serve short sentences (e.g. voids; abandonment etc.).

28. The underlying concern expressed by these participants was that too little was done to allow people to retain existing accommodation, even where, it was argued, it would be more cost effective to do this.

Financial and staff resources

29. Many participants of all types suggested that there was a need for adequate financial (and staff) resources to provide housing-related services to people who serve short sentences. Many of these comments were about a need for a general increase in funding for this area of work.

30. A few specific suggestions were made about the overall approach to funding, which included:

- A strategic and / or national approach to funding (e.g. to reflect the overall strategic approach).
- Clarity of funding responsibilities.
- Simplified funding streams.
- Long-term funding, focused on housing needs.

31. A few specific suggestions were made about the need for funding for particular issues. These included:

- Funding to support partnership working.
- A higher level of liberation grant (pgh A2:112), to cover the period until the receipt of benefit payments.
- Recognition by funders that reintegration organisations may need to work with individuals for longer than six months.
- Funding to ensure adequate staffing in all relevant services.

Accommodation

32. Many participants of all types made suggestions about a general need for more accommodation.

33. The need for more supported accommodation was raised frequently (by staff of all types and individuals who served short sentences). Suggestions included:

- More supported accommodation of all kinds, including longer term.
- More “halfway house” provision for reintegration (a common suggestion by prison staff).
- Training flats which people could share, with support to gain tenancy and independent living skills.
- Supported housing to accompany diversion from prosecution.

34. Other suggestions about particular types of accommodation (often made by housing staff) included:

- More and better emergency accommodation.
- More scatter flats.
- “Dry” hostels.
- More use of private landlords (for example with funding for deposits, intensive support and rent paid direct to landlord; or leased by the council from the landlord).
- More use of permanent housing with funding for rent deposit.

35. A number of individuals who served short sentences (and some reintegration staff) made a general suggestion that there should be better and quicker re-use of empty housing.

36. One group of people who had served short sentences suggested the creation of an “agency” which could manage the accommodation vacated by those in custody to provide temporary accommodation for those recently liberated. It was also suggested (by this group and by some individuals) that a means should be found to allow furniture and white goods removed from accommodation lost by people entering custody to be re-used to support those moving into new accommodation on liberation.

Monitoring

37. Staff of different types suggested a need for improved monitoring, or improved use of the statistics available. This was seen to include the need to be able to monitor the nature and extent of housing issues people faced, and the nature and impact of services. It was

also suggested more generally that analysis could be undertaken of statistical material to help support issues raised by staff.

38. Specific suggestions about monitoring the nature and pattern of housing issues included:

- Identification of those who serve short sentences as a category of service users by all relevant services.
- Better tracking of people who serve sentences through the housing system.
- Inclusion of housing-related issues in the performance framework for the National Strategy for Offenders.

39. Specific suggestions about monitoring services included:

- Monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of standards.
- Encouraging service providers to develop information about outcomes.
- Gathering information not only about success stories, but also about the consequences when things go wrong.

40. A few staff (particularly prison and reintegration staff) suggested that there should be more recognition (including by funders) that people may experience problems (e.g. difficulties with a tenancy) as they move towards desistance. It was argued that a more positive view of progress made, even if someone returned to prison, would make it easier to include this information in monitoring and evaluation material. It was suggested that this would avoid the concern that this would be seen as a “failure”, which might affect future funding.

Joined-up working, information-sharing and communication

41. A common suggestion, by many participants of all types, was a need to develop joined-up working, information-sharing and communication.

Joined-up policy

42. A few service providers suggested that there was a need for a more “joined-up” approach to policy. This was seen to involve checking that other relevant policy areas (e.g. benefits, education, employment, health and social care etc.) did not have a negative impact on housing work.

43. Specific suggestions included:

- A shared goal relating to promoting desistance.
- Engagement of all relevant policy areas (not only housing and criminal justice) with promoting desistance.

Information-sharing and communication

44. Many suggestions were made by individuals who served short sentences and by staff about a general need for better information-sharing and communication. Some prison and housing staff suggested that there should be a standard approach to this.

45. More specific suggestions (particularly by housing and prison staff) included:

- The use of protocols, information-sharing agreements, mandates and pathways (e.g. using model formats which could be shared).
- Multi-agency case conferencing wherever possible.
- More use of video conferencing between local services and those in custody.
- Access to PR2 for relevant partners (including those in the community).
- Named contacts for information-sharing.
- Development of a directory or database of local services and contacts.

46. Suggestions were made about particular information that would be helpful to service providers, including:

- Who is in custody (to local authorities).
- Work undertaken in the community (to those working in prison, and vice versa).
- The nature of offences, where this would impact on housing (to housing staff in prison).
- Real-time information about voids and people requiring homes (within local authorities).
- Court dates (to housing staff).
- Services and support available to those entering or leaving custody (to all relevant services).
- Examples of good practice / case studies (to all relevant services).
- Housing providers willing to provide housing for people leaving custody, both generally and on HDC (to individuals and local authorities).

Developing knowledge and practice

47. Many suggestions were made about developing understanding of the nature of housing issues facing people who serve short sentences, and the impact of these. A few staff (particularly specialist organisations working with particular groups) suggested that there should be better understanding of the issues for these groups (Annexe 5).

48. It was also seen to be important to tackle any discriminatory attitudes and behaviour, or unfounded assumptions, both among individuals who serve short sentences (mentioned particularly by housing and prison staff) and among staff (mentioned particularly by individuals, reintegration and other specialist staff).

Individuals who serve short sentences

49. Participants of all types made specific suggestions about information that should be provided to individuals who serve short sentences. Suggestions included information about:

- Housing and benefits, rights and responsibilities.
- Who could provide support at each stage, and how to access this.
- Tenancy and independent living issues (e.g. budgeting; money; cooking).

50. A number of housing staff suggested that information should be provided to individuals about housing “reality”, to try to challenge some of their assumptions and behaviour. Specific suggestions included providing information about:

- Why it is important to disclose and address housing issues.
- The consequences of not taking action.

- The nature of specific forms of accommodation.
- Realistic options.

51. Some suggestions were made by participants of all types about ways in which these kinds of information could be provided to individuals. These included:

- Providing some housing information along with a summons, or at court.
- Providing visible information in prison about housing issues and support (e.g. videos in first night centres; induction information; contact sheets).
- Written individual plans covering reintegration and housing issues.
- More tenancy skills courses and training.
- A “hotline” providing support and advice.
- Open days focusing on housing-related services.
- Awareness sessions / focus groups.
- Peer support and mentoring on housing issues.

Service providers

52. Suggestions were also made about types of information staff should be given to develop their understanding. These included, for staff of all types, information about:

- The nature of desistance and the role of services in enabling people to work towards this.
- Common housing issues and their impact on people who serve short sentences.
- Issues for particular groups (e.g. equality groups).
- Who could provide support with issues of different types.
- Implications of data protection legislation.
- Good practice, positive stories and lessons from pilot work.

53. It was suggested that all housing staff should have specific information about:

- Ways of protecting tenancies (for example tenancy transfer, paying some arrears from custody, general “tricks of the trade”).
- The impact of their attitudes on their service users and the need for a non-judgemental approach, listening and understanding.
- The importance of using appropriate, non-stigmatising language.
- The implications of Universal Credit and any ways of mitigating the impact.

54. A number of prison and reintegration staff suggested that they would find it helpful to have some basic information about housing rights and responsibilities.

55. It was also suggested that Sheriffs should have information about the implications of sentencing policy for housing and desistance. It was also suggested that DWP staff should have information about the potential negative impact of sanctions on housing and desistance.

56. Some suggestions were made about ways of providing information to staff. These included:

- Training for all staff across organisations (e.g. “information bite” sessions, or through the use of the Housing Options Training Toolkit).
- Awareness sessions led by relevant specialists.

- Support for networking.
- “Roadshows” of support providers.

The wider community

57. A few suggestions were also made about a general need for better knowledge and understanding of the links between housing and desistance issues in the wider community. Several staff (including prison, reintegration and other specialist staff) stressed the importance of promoting appropriate community attitudes. It was suggested that work should be undertaken to encourage community support and inclusion.

58. A small number of specific suggestions were made, including to:

- Provide housing for those leaving custody in “good” areas, to challenge perceptions.
- Promote community conversations (as currently being undertaken by CJAs) to highlight the role of the community in reintegration.
- Undertake widespread community awareness-raising.

Specific aspects of policy and practice

59. Finally, many specific suggestions were made about particular aspects of policy and practice that could be developed.

Housing

60. A few suggestions were made about general housing policy and practice (often by housing staff). These included that there should be:

- Common housing registers in more areas.
- Single application processes and common application forms.
- Checking of housing processes for barriers to inclusion.
- An improved approach to housing debt (e.g. waiver of some debt, or for small debt not to be a barrier to securing accommodation).
- Better recognition of housing issues for specific groups.
- Pilot work and learning from practice.

61. A number of suggestions were made by participants of different types (including some housing staff working in prisons), about housing policy and practice in prison. These included:

- Early identification of housing issues and requirements (with the SPS).
- Provision of a specific housing appointment for all, on imprisonment.
- Improved follow-up of non-attendance at housing appointments (in conjunction with the SPS).
- Housing Options and homelessness assessments for all of those in custody who would benefit from this.
- More use of options to continue or secure housing, and an end to abandonment proceedings.
- Requiring landlords to check with the SPS before instituting abandonment proceedings.
- Housing related pre-release work earlier in a sentence (with the SPS).

- Provision of an address for release to all of those leaving custody.
- Development of rent deposit schemes which can be operated in custody.

62. A number of suggestions were made by participants of different types (including individuals, prison, reintegration and other specialist staff), about housing policy and practice in the community. These included:

- Review of the use of hostels and B&B accommodation (including consideration of how to enable better family contact).
- Development of a common “lettable standard”.
- Allocation, where possible, of people to homeless accommodation close to their home areas and support.
- Increased use of “Section 5” referrals by local authorities for this client group (although this would require some policy changes in relation to, for example, the management of voids).
- A more effective system to allow change of area on release (and which addresses the issues presented by the policy of some local authorities to require applicants to be able to demonstrate a local connection).
- More options for individuals to reject inappropriate housing (e.g. for personal safety reasons, or to support progress they intended to make towards desistance).
- Imposition of time limits on temporary accommodation.
- More protection from eviction or ejection from homeless accommodation.
- Sustained and ongoing support to obtain and maintain a tenancy.

63. Some suggestions were made about the development of work with third sector organisations. Several of these were made by reintegration staff, and included:

- Development of projects for retrieval and storage of basic possessions (e.g. furniture and carpet “banks”; third sector storage projects).
- Development of further work to prepare accommodation (e.g. heating switched on, basic food, bed fresh) for people being released.
- Increased use of existing furniture projects.
- Development of improved “starter packs” for those leaving custody, tailored to the type of accommodation they are entering.

The SPS

64. A general suggestion relating to SPS policy and practice was that consideration should be given to the way allocations to prisons works in practice. Several prison staff, for example, suggested that more individuals should be held in their local prison, or at least returned to their local prison in sufficient time for housing-related work to be carried out approaching release (with one participant suggesting at least 8 weeks prior to liberation).

65. A number of suggestions were made by participants of different types, but particularly by prison and housing staff about SPS policy and practice in prison. These included:

- Improved induction and Core Screen processes.
- Improved follow-up of non-attendance (with housing staff).
- Restricted internet access to allow people to complete on-line processes.
- Easier access to a bank account and other financial arrangements (e.g. payment to tackle debts and arrears; in-custody savings schemes).

- A national approach to the provision of ID (e.g. using a Citizen Card).
- Identification of housing to issues as part of all pre-release discussions.
- Citizenship and independent living courses.

66. As noted at various points in Chapter 4, the SPS was developing some of this work at the time of writing.

67. A number of suggestions were made about SPS policy and practice in the community. Many of these were made by prison staff, reintegration and other specialist staff, and included:

- More use of HDC and more notice of this, to make sure that individuals can identify appropriate accommodation.
- More use of home leave and escorted leave (from closed establishments) for attendance at appointments.
- Additional Community Integration Units across Scotland's prisons.

68. A number of participants also suggested the ending of Friday or pre-holiday holiday liberations, to help ensure better access to services. As noted at 4.28 in the main report, this is being addressed through legislation which gives the SPS the power to vary an individual's release date by up to 2 days.

Benefits

69. Several participants made suggestions about benefits policy and practice for those in custody. These included:

- An increased Housing Benefit eligibility period (although, as outlined in Annexe 2, eligibility for accommodation costs under Universal Credit will increase for those serving custodial sentences, although decreasing for those on remand).
- Prohibition on use of benefit sanctions while a claimant is in prison.
- Allowing Employment Support Allowance claims to be started in custody, to reduce or prevent payment delays on liberation (building on a pilot at HMPYOI Cornton Vale).

70. Several participants made suggestions about benefits policy and practice for those in the community. These included:

- Increased use of discretionary funding to allow those leaving custody to secure accommodation best suited to their needs without incurring an under-occupancy charge.
- A reduction of delays in benefit payments.
- Better recognition and guidance about the issues facing those recently released from prison.
- Development of work opportunities (for example "phased-in" work) and structured activities.

Other policy and practice areas

71. Some suggestions were made about policy and practice developments in a few other areas. These included:

- A national focus on keeping individuals from vulnerable groups out of prison.

- Greater use of diversion, deferral and other alternatives to custody.
- Easier processes to make arrangements to sign up with, and see a community-based GP in prison prior to release.
- Development and delivery of a training programme to help people assess and improve their financial capability.

72. Some suggestions were made about other policy and practice developments in the community. These included:

- Training for court-based staff to encourage them to alert those sentenced to custody to the importance of addressing housing issues.
- Developments to other reintegration support (e.g. out of hours support, and longer term support for individuals where required).
- Encouraging banks to consider developing specific accounts which could prioritise the payment of rent.
- Provision of detailed money advice and welfare rights advice in prison and in the community.

73. Many suggestions were made about Universal Credit. Many participants of different types suggested that, ideally, this would be discontinued. In the absence of this, however, it was suggested that action should be taken to mitigate any negative impacts.

74. Suggestions (many of which were made by housing staff) included:

- Support to identify and address problems early.
- Support to enable individuals to understand and access options more suited to their circumstances (e.g. a direct payment to their landlord).
- Decreased waiting times for payments.
- Options for weekly payments.
- Accessible information (not on-line only).
- Exemption of all local authority-sourced temporary accommodation.
- Better transparency of the system.

75. As noted previously, all of these suggestions can help to inform future developments and supplement the recommendations in Chapter 5. Appropriate services will need to consider which of the suggestions are feasible and practical in the context of their own policy and practice.

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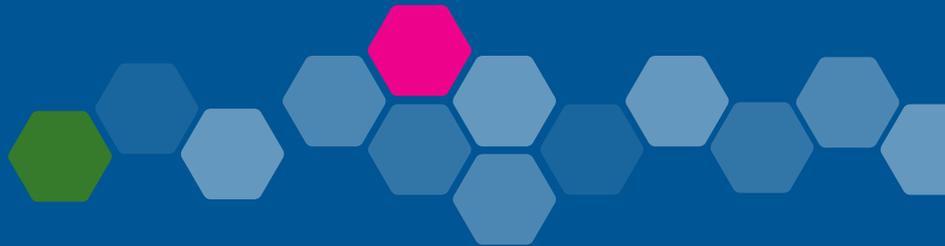
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