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**To:** Kent Community Safety Partnership (KCSP) – 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017

**Classification:** For Information

**Subject:** Housing and Homelessness Paper

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**Summary** This paper summarises the scale and scope of the strategic and systemic housing and homelessness issues facing Criminal Justice System (CJS) service users in Kent.

The challenge of addressing these issues cannot be met by CJS services alone, it is vital to have local engagement, leadership and commitment from a wide range of stakeholders, including Local Housing Authorities, housing providers and all other agencies with a responsibility for reducing re-offending.

Data, views, concerns, ideas and suggestions have been sought from Kent CJS and housing agencies. This paper outlines potential solutions, both nationally and locally, and proposes suggestions for a multi-agency action plan to tackle the difficulties faced by our Kent CJS service users in trying to secure and maintain appropriate and safe accommodation.

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## **1.0 Background / Introduction**

- 1.1 Securing and maintaining appropriate accommodation has long been one of the most significant challenges to many individuals with criminal convictions and to those professionals, both statutory and non-statutory, working with them.
- 1.2 A number of multi-agency groups have sought to explore and address the issues with many examples of good practice across Kent and Medway. National measures have also been implemented in order to try and address the issues, e.g. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Nevertheless, accommodation remains a key challenge to successfully reducing re-offending and therefore the Kent and Medway Reducing Re-offending Board requested a paper to identify the scale and scope of the strategic and systemic housing and homelessness issues that impact upon CJS service users in Kent. This was approached through multi-agency qualitative and quantitative data analysis to identify and explore the issues. The paper includes key themes and potential solutions for consideration.
- 1.3 The objective of this paper is to propose realistic and achievable actions for multi-agency support and implementation to assist those who have committed offences, and the professionals working with them, to secure and maintain appropriate accommodation.

## 2.0 Scale

- 2.1 **National:** Headline figures claim homelessness in the UK went up by 16% in 2016, with 57,740 households accepted as homeless in England, 28,226 in Scotland and 7,128 in Wales. Rough sleeping increased from 3,569 in 2015 to 4,134 in 2016.

15% of the prison population were homeless before entering custody.

5,423 people left prison without accommodation who needed supported accommodation in 2015.

- 2.2 **Kent:** 3,259 people were recorded as homeless in Kent in December 2016, of which 5.7% (186) were sleeping rough.

Ashford, Dover, Maidstone & Medway all have higher homelessness than the national average.

Medway have the highest number of homeless people, Canterbury have the highest number of recorded rough sleepers and Dartford is ranked by Shelter as most problematic in the county.

- 2.3 **Kent County Council:** Received 1,092 applications for housing assistance during July-September 2016. 29% (320) were accepted as homeless and in priority need, 38% (415) were found not to be homeless, 21% (229) were not in priority need, 6% (66) were found to be intentionally homeless.

- 2.4 **National Probation Service, Kent LDU:** 24.8% (315) service users in the community were in unsettled accommodation, of which 6.4% (81) were of No Fixed Abode.

Of these 41% had accommodation as an identified need, in 29% of cases accommodation was linked with risk of serious harm and in 36.5% of cases accommodation was linked with offending behaviour.

- 2.5 **Kent Surrey Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company (Kent):** 19.7% (891) service users in the community were in unsettled accommodation, of which 8.2% (368) were of No Fixed Abode.

## 3.0 Scope

- 3.1 The full Housing and Homelessness paper explores the scope of strategic and systemic housing and homelessness issues for Kent CJS service users covering the following:

- **Housing and Land Markets:** Not enough Local Housing Authorities planning for the homes they need, house building being too slow, a construction industry too reliant on a few big players.

- **National Characteristics of Homelessness:** The main causes of homelessness in the UK are the end of an assured short hold tenancy, parents or friends no longer able or willing to provide accommodation or relationship breakdown.
- **Local Housing Authorities:** CJS service users deemed too high risk, low priority, no local connection or intentionally homeless. Reduced or removed housing stock, reliance on Housing Associations and a shortage of accommodation for all. London Borough placements, conflicting priority groups and the 'last minute' nature of CJS need.
- **The Benefit System:** The benefits cap, issues for <35s and Universal Credit.
- **Private Renting:** Cost, availability, willingness of landlords, accessibility.
- **Supported Housing:** Funding, sustainability, long waiting lists, some service users too high risk.
- **Resources:** Funding, access and inconsistency.
- **Through the Gate:** Funding model, access and outcomes.
- **Approved Premises:** Role, myths and bed shortages.
- **Service User Issues:** Motivation, honesty, skill and experience to manage a tenancy and chaotic lifestyles. Specific issues for young people and for the ageing offender population, impact on family and friends, cuckooing and expectations of Probation Services.

## 4.0 Solutions

4.1 The full Housing and Homelessness paper outlines potential solutions to the strategic and systemic barriers identified, including:

- **The Homelessness Reduction Act:** Local Housing Authorities must provide or secure the provision of a homelessness service and the service must be designed to meet the needs of persons in the district including the needs of persons released from prison or youth detention.
- **The White Paper, 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market':** We need to plan for the right homes in the right places, build homes faster, diversify the housing market and help people now.
- **The Benefit System:** Actual rents and eligible service charges for supported and sheltered housing should be funded via Universal Credit or Pension Credit.
- **Converted Shipping Container Accommodation:** Seek creative and achievable cost effective alternatives to affordable sustainable housing.

- **Social Impact Bonds:** For example, the East Kent Entrenched Rough Sleeper Social Impact Bond, a jointly commissioned entrenched rough sleeper programme which aims to improve outcomes for entrenched rough sleepers who have spent a lengthy spell in the homelessness system through Housing First principles.
- **Housing First Principles:** People have a right to a home, flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed, housing and support are separated, individuals have choice and control, based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations and an active engagement and harm reduction approach is used.
- **Holistic Approach:** Robust and collaborative multi-agency assessment, planning, intervention and support taking into account the circumstances and views of the individual.
- **Joint Strategic Needs Assessments:** Local Housing Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups have equal and joint duties to prepare JSNAs through Health and Wellbeing Boards. The Local Authority Housing Lead should be represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure the housing needs of the community are identified.
- **Making Every Adult Matter:** Utilising a partnership of voluntary and statutory agencies to design an effective, coordinated and flexible response for people with multiple and complex needs.
- **Communication and Training:** The creation of a joint accommodation strategy, developed in partnership with the MoJ, DCLG and the DWP and the local development and implementation of a multi-agency Kent accommodation communication and training strategy.
- **Prison Interventions:** Highlighting the importance of timely release plans, assessment for suitability and prompt referrals to resettlement services. A 'departure lounge' model providing opportunity for families and agencies to meet service users immediately after release.
- **Prison Estates:** The suggestion for prison land in London to remain in public ownership and to be redeveloped into genuinely affordable homes.
- **Tenancy Sustainment Programme:** Tenancy sustainment programmes to be reviewed for suitability, re-rolled and promoted both in custody and in the community.
- **Subsidised Tenancies:** A co-commissioned agreement with an accommodation provider who would provide tenancy and additional wraparound support for specific CJS service user groups, e.g. Integrated Offender Management (IOM).
- **Local Authority Housing Policy Review:** Stop excluding CJS service users on the basis of intentional homelessness due to convictions, consider accepting high or

medium risk individuals with a robust Risk Management Plan. Develop strong strategic and operational links between CJS agencies and Local Authorities.

- **Supported Housing:** Full and timely communication regarding changes to the funding for supported housing and how this is likely to impact providers, clients and partners. Recommendations of leading charities to be incorporated into national changes.
- **Psychologically Informed and Planned Environments:** Housing providers to consider the PIPE approach to supporting people out of homelessness, in particular those who have experienced complex trauma or are diagnosed with a personality disorder.
- **Utilise/expand existing services:** E.g. BASS and NACRO.
- **Service User Collaboration:** Services benefit from the insights of experts by experience. A collaborative approach with CJS service users should be considered throughout the formation and delivery of the multi-agency housing and homelessness action plan.

## 5.0 Recommendations

5.1 The following are proposed multi-agency actions for consideration and exploration:

1. Explore funding possibilities for accommodation access for CJS service users:
  - a. CRC to fund bed spaces and sell through the Rate Card
  - b. NPS to fund bed spaces through staffing underspend
  - c. Co-commissioning arrangement between two or more RRB agencies
  - d. Develop a CJS private rental sector access scheme
  - e. Develop a CJS service user rent deposit scheme
  - f. Purchase and management of converted shipping container accommodation
2. Monitor recommendations for a cross-departmental government accommodation strategy and communicate/implement as necessary
3. Ensure compliance with existing agency accommodation strategies and communicate/implement as necessary
4. Consider a review and refresh of the Kent Offender Accommodation Strategy and communicate/implement as necessary
5. Each Kent Local Authority to develop and implement a multi-agency housing strategy
6. Consider adopting the Making Every Adult Matter Approach where not already in place

7. Consider adopting the Housing First Approach where not already in place
8. Develop and implement a multi-agency housing and homelessness communication strategy to improve knowledge and understanding of agencies role and remit in relation to accommodation and associated matters
9. Develop and deliver multi-agency housing and homelessness training to frontline staff
10. Develop and maintain a multi-agency housing and homelessness repository of information, resources, referral forms, processes, pathways, training packs and best practice
11. Review existing Tenancy Sustainment and Good Neighbour Programmes for suitability, re-roll and promote
12. Kent Prisons to explore the 'departure lounge' model highlighted as good practice at HMP Durham and, if possible, roll out in establishments.
13. Explore attendance of the Local Authority Housing Leads at Health and Wellbeing Boards (if not already in place)
14. Explore options for a multi-agency scheme to identify empty Local Authority properties, or others available through purchase or let, set up a programme of ETE development to be delivered in the properties developing skills in property maintenance with the longer term plan to let to CJS users
15. Ensure that developments in DCLG Supported Housing strategy are shared with all RRB members in a timely fashion
16. To consider collaboration with service users in the consideration and delivery of the proposed multi-agency housing and homelessness actions

**For Further Information:**

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