



## Interim report

**March 2013**

### **Reducing reoffending in the North East: improving joint working between prisons and local authorities**

**The aim of this report is to prompt discussion and debate amongst the prisons and local authorities in the region about priorities for future joint work and the potential for a regional approach to reducing reoffending.**

**We will publish full findings and further recommendations in June.**

### **Executive summary**

This project has been initiated by the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Directorate of Public Sector Prisons. The aim is to identify opportunities for joint work between prisons and local authorities in the North East to reduce reoffending and the associated harm to communities.

The project has been conducted at a time when public sector organisations are facing considerable financial challenges and organisational change. At the same time, criminal justice, health and welfare reforms are challenging traditional roles, introducing competition into services for offenders and increasing the range of commissioners and providers, bringing the risk of fragmentation.

This interim report presents the key findings of a base line information gathering exercise conducted across the North East and makes recommendations in relation to three priority areas.

### **Key findings**

- **At a strategic level, joint working is seen as valuable but there is little consistency in the links between prisons and local authorities in the region. There is some support for reinstating a regional reducing reoffending forum to improve information sharing, consistency of approach and to progress specific issues where a regional approach would be beneficial.**



- **At an operational level there are some examples of strong working relationships between staff in prisons and in community-based services. However, some prison officers are unclear why or how they should work with local authorities.**
- **Integrated Offender Management (IOM) models have demonstrated the value of a holistic approach and of joint-working between police, probation, prisons and local authorities. They have also demonstrated the benefits of co-locating staff from different agencies. In response to government consultation, ANEC and the two local Probation Trusts have expressed concern that proposed changes to offender management could lead to the fragmentation of the integrated approaches that have developed locally.**
- **The dedicated IOM prison officer role is highly valued by IOM partners. The key to this role is timely information sharing and enabling access to offenders in custody.**
- **Planning for the release of short sentence prisoners can be fragmented, with a lack of communication between different prison departments, which results in duplicated work. These offenders often have multiple needs which necessitate early planning for release with a coordinated approach between community-based and prison-based services.**
- **As more agencies become involved in the delivery of offender management and ‘through the gate’ resettlement services, a key challenge will be to ensure services are strategically coordinated.**
- **There is potential to increase the provision of peer mentoring services across the region to support resettlement, but it will be important to ensure these services are coordinated and targeted.**
- **Accommodation is widely felt to be the most important and most challenging resettlement pathway. There is an active Regional Homelessness Group taking forward a number of projects which could improve access to accommodation for some offenders. However, there are some tensions around the way homeless applications for prisoners are dealt with by local authorities and with how emergency accommodation is accessed. There is scope to strengthen working links between prisons and local authorities in relation to accommodation.**
- **Work carried out in prisons under the children and families pathway is not underpinned by a coherent, outcome-focused strategy. This work could be strengthened, and resources targeted more effectively, if prisons and children’s services**



departments took a shared 'whole family' approach to this pathway.

- The finance, benefits and debt pathway is one of the least developed. Recent welfare reform is likely to have a negative impact on offenders but there is currently no approach to advising and preparing prisoners for this.
- There are some good examples of links between prisons and local employers which could provide alternative pathways into employment for offenders. However, stakeholders told us many offenders lack the skills and means to access the on-line services which will be increasingly important for finding work and accessing benefits.
- There is evidence of regular liaison between healthcare staff in prisons and community-based services. However, within prisons there can be a lack of communication between healthcare staff and the Offender Management Unit. The healthcare pathway is weak for offenders with learning disabilities and those with 'lower level' mental health problems. Gaps have also been identified in relation to referrals for social care assessments for offenders in custody and on release.
- The pathways for offenders requiring drug treatment are generally good, although there is still scope to improve information sharing both into and out of prisons. Pathways for those requiring alcohol treatment and those in recovery are less well established. The moves towards a recovery agenda in prisons, and to integrated drug and alcohol treatment services in prisons and the community, are positive.
- There are examples of good practice in the region in relation to holistic, women-specific services for female offenders. However, women in some parts of the region currently have limited access to these services.
- There is a shortage of supported women-only accommodation suitable for female offenders with complex needs and this limits the ability of support agencies to work effectively with complex women offenders.
- It is timely for prisons to consider how they can progress reducing reoffending work with local authorities, to gain a more consistent approach, through their developing Mobilisation, Transition and Transformation (MTT) arrangements.



## Terms of reference

The brief for the project was **to gather baseline information on those initiatives currently in place to reduce reoffending, and make recommendations about how prisons and councils can best work together to mutual benefit.**

It was proposed that “this would take the form of action research as emerging themes will be identified and disseminated during the base-lining process in order to inform practice on an ongoing basis.”

In gathering this baseline information we considered each of the ‘resettlement pathways’ recognised by NOMS:

1. Accommodation
2. Finance, benefits and debt
3. Mental and physical health
4. Drugs and alcohol
5. Attitudes, thinking and behaviour
6. Employment, training and education
7. Families and children
8. Women who have been abused, raped or who have experienced domestic violence
9. Women who have been involved in prostitution

We sought to answer the following questions:

1. What initiatives, interventions and services are currently in place to support offenders in custody and in the community to reduce reoffending?
2. What are the gaps in services and in joint-working between local authorities and prisons?
3. What more could prisons and local authorities do to deliver joint interventions aimed at reducing reoffending?
4. What good practice exists within the region and beyond which could inform and improve local service delivery?

A brief outline of the approach taken and details of those who provided information for the base-lining exercise are provided in Annex A.

This report presents key findings and proposes three priority areas for action and is intended to initiate discussion. We will publish the full findings and further recommendations in June.



## Recommendations

Joint working between prisons and local authorities is complicated by the fact that prisons do not simply serve the immediate geographical area in which they are located, and because increasingly, services for offenders are delivered through contractual arrangements with an increasing number of partner agencies.

To work together effectively, prisons and local authorities require a good understanding of each others business, consistency in approach, shared priorities and outcomes, effective communication links at both strategic and operational level and the sharing of information in a timely manner. Currently, these elements are not consistently in place throughout the region.

**We recommend re-establishing a regional strategic reducing reoffending forum** with a remit to create greater consistency and improve the sharing of information between prison, local authorities and their reducing reoffending partners. The forum should also consider where regional approaches, including joint commissioning, could be more efficient, cost effective and ultimately improve outcomes.

We have identified three areas for joint working which we believe should be considered priorities. These are issues which were raised consistently by stakeholders during the base-lining exercise and which are relevant across the region, not just in some areas. We believe that by working jointly in these areas, prisons and local authorities can use resources more effectively, mitigate risks and improve service provision. The three priority areas are:

- A joined-up 'through the gate' approach to working with short-sentence 'revolving door' offenders
- Accommodation for women offenders
- A strategic, integrated approach to the children and families pathway

### **A joined-up 'through the gate' approach to working with short sentence 'revolving door' offenders**

Locally developed, integrated approaches are considered the most effective way to manage offenders with complex needs who frequently reoffend. During short spells in custody, the focus should be on early planning for release using a 'whole prison' approach led by Offender Management Units who ensure different departments work together and work is not duplicated. Community-based services should be integral to the release planning work which goes on inside the prison. The IOM prison officer model is an example



of good practice which prisons should seek to build on and mainstream, for example, by enabling more Offender Supervisors to develop expertise in working with short sentence offenders. Co-locating staff from different departments within prisons could also help to improve communication and release planning.

In recent months, the Government has announced a number of proposed changes within the criminal justice system which will affect short sentence offenders who repeatedly return to custody. Some of the proposals have been positively received, such as the extension of community supervision to short sentence offenders. However, a number of challenges and risks have been identified by local agencies, including ANEC and the two local Probation Trusts. We recommend this is considered a priority area so that positive working practices and relationships are maintained and steps are taken to ensure there is a 'whole system approach' as we await further details of the plans for contracted offender management and 'through the gate' services.

For example, the proposal to increase peer mentoring schemes for offenders could greatly aid resettlement, assisting offenders into community-based services in the days following their release. This will require coordination and targeting to avoid duplication and ensure services support those who most need them. Prisons should give early consideration to the processes they will need to put in place to enable peer mentors to access offenders in custody.

Local authorities and partners in the region are at the early stages of a number of promising initiatives which are seeking to bring about system change in the way services for people with multiple, complex needs are commissioned and delivered. The work focuses on the small group of chronically excluded people with a history of mental ill health, homelessness, drug and alcohol problems and repeated contact with the criminal justice system. The aim is to move from costly and ineffective crisis interventions by individual agencies to a coordinated, cross-sector approach to commissioning and providing services. A number of pilots are underway and reporting progress to the Regional Homelessness Group. The criminal justice sector is an important partner and should formally engage with this work as it develops.



## Recommendations

- **NOMS and local authorities should work together via a regional forum (proposed above) to respond to the risks, issues and opportunities presented by the planned reforms of offender management and ‘through the gate’ services.**
- **NOMS and north east prisons should maintain and build on the role of the IOM prison officer which is highly regarded by IOM partners. Consideration should be given to mainstreaming aspects of this role within the role of Offender Supervisors.**
- **Prisons should seek opportunities to co-locate some Offender Supervisors with DART (Drug and Alcohol Recovery Teams), health and housing workers within the prison to foster a ‘whole prison’ approach to release planning for short sentence offenders and to strengthen expertise and links with community-based services.**
- **Prisons and local authorities should consider the use of telephone and video facilities (which are already in place in some establishments) to facilitate joint release planning. This is a less resource intensive option than holding face to face meetings in prison establishments.**
- **NOMS and north east prisons should support the North East Offender Health Commissioning Unit and drug and alcohol commissioners to jointly develop a strategic regional approach to peer mentoring work with offenders. This should help to avoid duplication of services and ensure support is targeted in a timely manner at those who can most benefit from it. Prisons should ensure they have clear processes for peer mentors visiting offenders in custody.**
- **The Regional Homelessness Group should formally engage with NOMS around the developing pilots for adults with multiple complex needs, to ensure the criminal justice sector is an active partner in this work as it progresses.**

## Accommodation for women offenders

Concerns have been consistently raised about a lack of suitable, safe accommodation that can be accessed by women offenders in the region, including women with complex needs, women with children and couples.



Only four of the twelve local authority areas in the North East have any women-only supported accommodation and some of these providers will not accommodate offenders. Support agencies working with women offenders have reported women using sex work to secure a roof over their head and women being sexually exploited when housed in unsuitable accommodation.

There are some excellent examples of holistic services for women offenders in the region, but we have heard a consistent message that a shortage of appropriate accommodation is increasing the risk of reoffending for this group and making the job of support agencies more difficult.

We have begun a piece of work with the Regional Homelessness Group and partner agencies to map existing provision for women offenders, identify the scale of unmet need and explore solutions. We will publish the findings in June.

## Recommendations

- **Commissioners should use the evidence around the accommodation needs of female offenders to inform decisions about future service provision.**
- **The Regional Homelessness Group should continue to monitor housing need, provision and outcomes for this group of service users.**

## A strategic, integrated approach to the children and families pathway

Imprisonment can have a detrimental impact on a family's finances and children's wellbeing, but strong family relationships can aid an offender's resettlement and reduce the risk of reoffending.

Alongside family visits, there are a number of models and providers of parenting programmes and family support work in north east prisons. Currently these initiatives are supported by short-term funding sources and are not underpinned by a coherent strategy with clearly defined outcomes.

'Think family' describes a culture of working where a holistic and integrated approach is taken to service planning and provision to meet the needs of the whole family and reduce the risk of poor outcomes. By adopting a 'think family' approach to this pathway, prisons and local authorities could make more effective use of existing resources, improve support to families at all





stages of the criminal justice process and strengthen the role that families play in a prisoner's sentence, recovery from addiction and desistance from offending.

We have established a task and finish group to develop a 'common offer' between prisons and local authorities to support the 'Troubled Families' Programme. This is a first step to improving communication and information sharing and to strengthening working links between prisons and children's services departments.

## Recommendations

- **NOMS, prisons and local authorities should work together to develop a shared, strategic approach to the children and families pathway with clear outcomes.**
- **NOMS and north east prisons should carry out a short review of the parenting programmes and family support work currently being delivered in north east prisons considering how they are resourced, who they have and have not reached, the impact they have had and what works best for different prisoners. This information should be used to inform future programmes and services for prisoners and their families.**
- **Prisons should consider alternative ways of enabling prisoners to access parenting support. For example greater consideration could be given to the use of ROTL (release on temporary licence) to enable some prisoners to access services for parents within the local community.**
- **Local authorities should include evidence about the impact of imprisonment on children and families in their local needs assessments and strategies.**
- **Commissioners of drug and alcohol services should consider the evidence around the role of the family in an offender's recovery and how a 'think family' approach supports their commissioning outcomes.**
- **Prisons and local authorities should pilot the Troubled Families 'common offer' as a first step to strengthening working relationships. NOMS should continue to facilitate a task and finish group to monitor the pilot.**



## Resource implications

Prisons and local authorities in the region are operating in a challenging financial environment. For this reason we have consciously sought to avoid making recommendations with large or unrealistic resource implications.

Where a recommendation does carry resource implications, such as addressing the shortage in suitable accommodation for women offenders, we are carrying out further work to clarify the scale of unmet need and the most effective response, so there is a clear evidence base to support any future decisions about realigning budgets.

Many of our recommendations involve different ways of working and in some cases we expect this will free up staffing resources by eliminating duplicated work. More integrated working also lends itself to efficiencies made through joint commissioning of services and is essential for the type of system change that is being proposed for people with multiple complex needs.

## Next steps

The completion date for this project is July 2013. The next steps are:

### April/May

- ANEC Assistant Chief Executives group (30 April)
- Regional Prison Governors meeting (9 May)
- We welcome feedback on this report and its recommendations from the Regional Prison Governors group and ANEC Assistant Chief Executives' group. We suggest a joint meeting with the respective Chairs in May to progress this.
- We will continue work to implement the Troubled Families 'common offer'.

### June

- We will publish the full findings of the base-lining exercise and further recommendations.
- We will publish evidence on the accommodation needs of women offenders.
- Report to ANEC Chief Executives' group (28 June)

### July

- Report to ANEC Leaders and Elected Mayors Group (12 July)



## Annex A

The baseline information gathering exercise has relied heavily on qualitative data supplied by a number of stakeholders. The majority of this data were gathered through face to face and telephone interviews with staff in north east prisons, local authorities and partner agencies. These interviews were structured around the resettlement pathways detailed on page 4. We carried out visits to each of the prisons and also gathered data by attending local and regional multi-agency meetings and by considering relevant strategies and action plans. We made written notes of all discussions and interviews.

We conducted a literature review and internet searches to provide the national and local policy context and to identify research findings and good practice. Unpublished Prison Service performance and population data has also informed the base-lining exercise.

Evidence and information for this report was contributed by:

Cleveland Police (Middlesbrough IOM Tasking Team)  
CRI, Middlesbrough and Stockton  
Cyrenians (Addiction Services, GAP and WoW projects)  
Darlington DAAT Commissioner  
Darlington DIP provider (NECA)  
Darlington IOM team  
Darlington Military Covenant Network  
Darlington Reducing Reoffending Strategic Group  
Durham County Council (Adult Social Care, Community Safety, Children's Services)  
Durham DAAT Commissioners  
Durham IOM team  
Durham Police and Crime Commissioner  
Durham RAD (Recovery Academy staff and service users)  
Durham Tees Valley Probation Trust  
Five Lamps  
Gateshead Council (Children's Services)  
Gateshead Citizens Advice Bureau  
Gateshead IOM team  
Gateshead Reducing Reoffending Strategic Group  
Hartlepool Council (Housing Options)  
Hartlepool Reducing Reoffending Strategic Group  
HMYOI Deerbolt (Head of Offender Management, Head of Reducing Reoffending, Drug Treatment Manager)  
HMP Durham (Governor, Head of Reducing Reoffending, Head of Offender Management, DART, offender supervisors, IOM prison officers)  
HMP Frankland (Head of Reducing Reoffending, Head of Offender Management)



HMP Holme House (Head of Reducing Reoffending, Head of Offender Management, Resettlement Officer, Offender Supervisors, IOM Prison Officers, Reducing Reoffending Strategic Meeting)  
HMP Kirklevington Grange (Head of Reducing Reoffending and Resettlement)  
HMP/YOI Low Newton (Head of Resettlement, Head of Interventions)  
HMP Northumberland (Head of Offender Management/Public Protection, Reducing Reoffending Strategic Meeting, IOM Prison Officer, Gateway Recovery Wing)  
Institute for Local Governance  
Jobcentre Plus  
Middlesbrough Employment Network  
Middlesbrough IOM team  
Middlesbrough Reducing Reoffending Strategic Group  
NEPACS  
Newcastle City Council (Children's Services, Community Safety, Homelessness Services, Community Mental Health Services, Scrutiny, Welfare Rights Service)  
Newcastle DAAT Commissioner  
Newcastle Futures  
Newcastle IOM team  
Newcastle Reducing Reoffending Strategic Group  
NOMS (Heads of Learning and Skills, Lead Psychologist, Contract Manager Housing and Advice Services)  
NOMS CICT (Information Policy and Assurance Team)  
NOMS Co-financing Organisation (Operational Performance Manager and Programme Integrity Manager)  
North East Offender Health Commissioning Unit and Big Diversion Project  
Northumbria Police  
Northumbria Probation Trust  
Northumbria University Centre for Offenders and Offending  
North Tyneside Council (Community Safety)  
North Tyneside IOM team  
North Tyneside Reducing Reoffending Strategic Group  
Northumberland Council (Community Safety, Housing Options and Homelessness Service)  
Northumberland DAAT Commissioner  
Northumberland IOM team  
Phoenix Futures  
Reaches Project  
Redcar and Cleveland Council (Children's Services, Community Safety)  
Redcar and Cleveland IOM team  
Regional Homelessness Group  
Safer Middlesbrough Partnership  
Shelter  
South Tyneside Council (Community Mental Health Services, Community Safety)  
South Tyneside DIP Provider (Turning Point)  
Stockton Council (Housing Options)



Stockton DAAT Commissioner  
Stockton IOM team  
Stockton Reducing Reoffending Strategy Group  
Stonham (Avondene, Hartlepool)  
Sunderland City Council (Community Safety, Housing Options and Gateway, Scrutiny)  
Sunderland DAAT Commissioner  
Sunderland DIP provider (DISC)  
Sunderland MICC Community Chaplaincy  
Sunderland Reducing Reoffending Strategic Group  
Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (Mental Health Service Manager Offender Care)  
Troubled Families Regional Group  
Troubled Families Tees Valley Group