

Representation to the Comprehensive Spending Review

September 2020

Solutions – tailored, specific support to improve pathways for all prison leavers:

1. *A specific accommodation strategy* addressing the housing needs of Tier 3 prison leavers specifically, who are disproportionately likely to find themselves with no sustainable housing options, post-release. This is vital given that the majority of prisoner leavers will not be entitled to Approved Premises or BASS (bail accommodation support services) accommodation and will not qualify for priority need housing through local authorities. To ensure future independent tenancy for all prisoner leavers, such a strategy must include:
 - Increasing the availability of supported housing for people leaving prison with particular vulnerabilities
 - Implementing a triage system to assess the level of independent living skills and associated housing needs
 - Access to deposits for private rented accommodation for those who are able to live independently, plus access to supported accommodation for those who are unable to live independently or require additional support
 - Prison leavers to be classed as a priority need for housing by local authorities
 - Funding and support to enable prison leavers to move on from temporary accommodation into suitable, long-term tenancies, with ongoing support provided to sustain these placements
 - Agreements between the National Probation Service (NPS) and landlords to reassure on NPS responsibilities
2. *The creation of a separate funding stream* (allocated by the Ministry of Justice) *providing flexible, specialist support* for all prison leavers, addressing wider vulnerabilities (and specific needs) and not specifically limited to housing support
 - Funding could be based upon a staged approach which recognises the different level of needs of those leaving prison, and would include the availability of more floating support to those who need it
 - Specific support schemes for vulnerable cohorts such as women, young people and those with mental health concerns
 - On a short-term basis, the Ministry of Justice funding available during the pandemic should be extended until longer term solutions are put in place

These solutions are based on the experiences of NACRO's practitioners and staff. Please see below for further information on NACRO as an organisation. For further information regarding the contents of this submission, please contact:

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Our representation:

We are seeking a commitment from Government ensuring that adequate provision is made for the accommodation of all prison leavers, combined with specialised support tackling wider, ex-offender vulnerabilities.

Housing is critical to the future prospects of recently released prisoners, with safe and secure accommodation producing the following benefits:

- *Lowering re-offending rates* - two thirds of people released from prison reoffend within a year¹, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation recently confirmed that the proportion of service users recalled or resentenced to custody within 12 months of release was almost double for those without settled accommodation in a sample of cases they looked at²; the evidence definitively concludes, therefore, that the provision of stable housing will reduce re-offending rates
- *Reducing homelessness* – almost 1,000 people are released prison homeless every month, and it is estimated that over 30% of rough sleepers have been in prison³; this illustrates that the provision of stable housing will lead to a reduction in homelessness
- *Reducing demand on local public services* – tackling recidivism through the safe housing of recently released offenders will also assist in reducing demand on local public services (by reducing costs associated with policy areas including homelessness and substance abuse)

Having nowhere to live holds people back from accessing support, getting a job, or moving on in their lives, with increased re-offending rates leading to an increasing burden on the State. For prisoners released homeless, the risk of committing another crime is significantly higher. Providing stable accommodation must therefore be a fundamental component to any strategy seeking to tackle rising re-offending rates.

Housing remains just one component of ensuring that prisoners are supported in their rehabilitation efforts. That's why we welcome the Government's White Paper which commits to strengthening education provision in prisons, and agree that improving prisoners' functional, vocational and life-skills is important to support rehabilitation and reduce reoffending on release.⁴

However, much of the value of this is lost when people are then released from prison with nowhere

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/aug/12/two-thirds-of-homeless-ex-prisoners-reoffend-within-a-year>

² <https://www.justiceinspectores.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/07/FINAL-Accommodation-Thematic-inspection-report-v1.0.pdf>

³

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781567/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_2018_release.pdf

⁴

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918187/a-smarter-approach-to-sentencing.pdf para 237

to live. In order to improve outcomes from this investment in public services, the Government needs to ensure that release from prison is not a cliff edge which provides little opportunity for people to rebuild their lives.

We know that the best way to tackle homelessness is to stop it happening in the first place. Leaving prison is a predictable and preventable route into homelessness, but for many of the most vulnerable in our society it is part of the cycle from the streets to a cell and back to the streets. The continued use of very short prison sentences for repeated minor offending exacerbates the problem.

The additional funding introduced during COVID-19 to help people leaving prison at risk of homelessness was a welcome step but this is now coming to an end and no longer available for people being released from prison. But even during COVID-19, far too many people have been released from prison with nowhere to stay.⁵

We believe that Government has a duty to ensure that everything possible is done to help people find and keep a home, with the support needed. In a recent public opinion survey commissioned by Nacro, 84% of people said that they think it is important for those being released from prison to have somewhere to live in order to make a fresh start. We know that this is the right thing to do, but it is also cost effective, and positively impacts on the whole of society.

To tackle the barriers people leaving prison face in securing housing, it is critical that Government drives a cross-departmental approach, with adequate resource, to ensure that everyone leaving prison has somewhere to stay.

We therefore call on Government to commit to ensuring that everyone leaving prison has somewhere to live and for adequate provision for this to be included in the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review. For people leaving prison, being released homeless is simply setting them up to fail. We believe that it is time to ensure that all prison leavers have a place to live, coupled with specialist support, upon release.

About Nacro

We are a national social justice charity with more than 50 years' experience of changing lives, building stronger communities and reducing crime. We house, we educate, we support, we advise, and we speak out for and with disadvantaged young people and adults. We are passionate about changing lives. We never give up.

Nacro is a strategic partner to Sodexo in the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) programme, and we are a service delivery partner within the supply chain of four Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) In addition, we support people who are supervised by CRCs or the National Probation Service (NPS) through other programmes in London, Durham Tees Valley, Northumbria, Staffordshire and West Midlands, and Cheshire and Greater Manchester. For instance, we run an enhanced through-the-gate service for people with mental health concerns leaving HMP Belmarsh, HMP Thameside and HMP Isis, funded by The Oxleas National Health Service Trust.

⁵ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/07/31/nearly-1000-prisoners-raise-covid-risk-released-pandemic-without/>