

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 509

High hopes: Supporting ex-prisoners in their lives after prison

Yvette Hartfree, Chris Dearden and Elspeth Pound

A report of research carried out by the Centre for Research in Social Policy on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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The Authors

Yvette Hartfree is a Senior Research Associate at the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP). Her research interests centre around social security, welfare to work and the delivery of benefit and employment services. Yvette has worked on a number of research projects for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and has particular expertise in qualitative methods and conducting research with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Chris Dearden is a Research Fellow at CRSP. Her research interests are community care policy and carers' and young carers' issues, and children's roles within families. Her work has focused on disadvantaged groups, mainly children, but also adults with physical and mental health issues. Chris has been a qualitative researcher for more than 15 years.

Elsbeth Pound is a Research Fellow at CRSP. Her interests include education and skills research and she recently led the Evaluation of the Adult Learning Grant, funded by the Learning and Skills Council and the (then) Department for Education and Skills. Elspeth has ten years experience in applied research, and has worked on a variety of both qualitative and quantitative projects for a range of Government Departments and non-government organisations.

Abbreviations

ABH	Actual Bodily Harm
CARATS	Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare Services
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
CRB	Criminal Record Bureau
CRSP	Centre for Research in Social Policy
DIP	Drugs Interventions Programme
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DTTO	Drug Treatment and Testing Order
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EBS	Employment and Benefit Surgery
ETE	Employment Training and Education
GBH	Grievous Bodily Harm
GP	General Practitioner
HB	Housing Benefit
IB	Incapacity Benefit
IS	Income Support
IT	Information Technology
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
NAO	National Audit Office

NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PASRO	Prisons Addressing Substance Related Offending
p2w	progress2work
p2w-LinkUP	progress2work-LinkUP
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admission Service
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

Summary

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) to undertake this exploratory study to gain an in-depth understanding of the attitudes and expectations of prisoners immediately prior to and following their release from prison. It also aimed to gain an understanding of their views on the impact of support services on the decisions they made and experiences following release. More specifically, the research explored:

- ex-prisoners' attitudes to, and expectations of, work, their interactions with the labour market, the barriers they experience in relation to work and how these change over time;
- ex-prisoners' interactions with, and views of, service providers, such as Jobcentre Plus, and the extent to which service provision is integrated across agencies; and
- the relationship between crime, employment and unemployment.

The Government, through Jobcentre Plus, delivers a number of initiatives targeted at prisoners and ex-prisoners to assist them with benefit claims and employment and thereby contributes to their rehabilitation and reduces re-offending. These include: Freshstart¹ appointments; Employment and Benefit Surgeries (EBSs); progress2work-LinkUP (p2w-LinkUP)²; and early entry onto New Deal programmes.

The findings of this research may help to explain Jobcentre Plus and other agencies' thinking about how the way in which they provide their services to ex-prisoners

¹ The Freshstart appointment guarantees a prisoner a new claims interview appointment at their local Jobcentre Plus office as soon as possible following release. This process aims to connect ex-prisoners more quickly with financial and employment support.

² Specialist employment support for people experiencing disadvantage in the labour market as a result of an offending background, alcohol misuse or homelessness.

could improve employment outcomes and reduce the risk of re-offending. It also provides contextual information as a necessary step prior to more evaluative research on the impact of employment support programmes on this client group.

The Summary sets out the main findings of each chapter in the report and concludes with a brief overview of the main policy implications.

Research design

The study was based in four case study areas covering England, Scotland and Wales. The research involved in-depth interviews with prisoners, in-depth interviews with staff from a number of key agencies, and focus groups with p2w-LinkUP clients who had offending backgrounds.

Forty prisoners, who were about to be released from prison, were recruited to take part in the qualitative longitudinal study with three waves of interviews: Wave 1 interviews occurring just prior to release, Wave 2 interviews at three months post-release and Wave 3 interviews at six months post-release. Fieldwork took place between August 2006 and May 2007. In total, 32 interviewees participated in a follow-up interview, either at Wave 2 or Wave 3, with 22 of these participating in all three interview waves.

Interviews with staff took place between September 2005 and January 2007. Interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically and longitudinally with the aid of Atlas.ti.

Findings

Employment (Chapter 2)

There is considerable evidence to suggest that gaining stable employment is an important step to moving away from a life of offending. Indeed, for many that were interviewed, getting a job was a priority, although sometimes interviewees were not realistic in their expectations. In addition, many had housing and substance abuse issues that needed to be addressed before employment could be considered. Aside from these concerns, entering the labour market presented its own set of problems for this group due to their having a criminal record, to the attitude of employers and also to curfew restrictions.

Sources of resettlement support to help prisoners move into employment were often found to be of variable quality and sometimes interviewees were unaware of them. The support did not always lead to improvements in employability. Nevertheless, many interviewees did receive resettlement support while in prison and their experiences show that prisons can be a key source of information for prisoners about community-based employment support. Prisoners serving short sentences sometimes found resettlement support difficult to access.

There was reluctance among some prisoners to receive help either before or after release from prison. Some were able to find work themselves, and family and friends were often an important source of help in finding work.

On release, those who had not found work went to Jobcentre Plus for support, but this was rarely considered to be a useful source of additional support. This was sometimes because they did not wish to declare their background, but also because advisers seemed to be unsure about what they could offer and how best to help them.

Where provided, community-based employment support was found to work well, as long as there were close working links with education, housing, drug agencies, and probation services. Sometimes the link between prison and community did not work well and some interviewees struggled to find the relevant sources of support after release. Where interviewees had ambitions to undertake education and training, these plans were often dropped due to problems encountered with costs and timing.

The prisoners in the study may have benefited from more help in dealing with the realities of the labour market they faced. In particular, advice on how to cope with or avoid multiple moves in and out of work during a short period of time; how to disclose criminal records to potential employers, and how to accept that they may need to take jobs that they do not wish to do. In addition, a key area of employment agencies' efforts will need to be directed towards changing employers' attitudes to employing ex-prisoners and involving employers in employment support programmes.

Ex-prisoners have complex needs and there is therefore a need for greater coordination of resettlement support and improved signposting between agencies working on employment, education, housing, drug rehabilitation, and probation.

Housing (Chapter 3)

Stable housing is a critical need for prisoners in the period immediately following their release. For some interviewees, the absence of stable housing impacted negatively on other goals – such as seeking employment or trying to live free of drugs.

Some interviewees returned to their family home after prison and had little need of support. However, those who said they had no accommodation to go to on release often relied on a fragile network of support from friends and acquaintances. They were often not clear where to seek housing advice and find more suitable living arrangements.

Although housing support worked well for some, the housing advice and support in prison was generally considered to be poor. 'Support' was often a case of prisoners being provided with a list of hostels, bed and breakfasts and private landlords or being told about, and having to find, relevant agencies themselves.

Some of these situations were beyond the means of the interviewees to sort out as they required finance, such as a deposit or rent. For the most vulnerable, the choice of accommodation or lack of availability meant they were left in situations where there was a high risk of re-offending, re-engaging in substance abuse, and ultimately, for some, returning to prison.

Overall, the evidence suggests that there is a clear need for the housing needs assessment to be used to ensure all ex-prisoners have some accommodation arranged in the period following their release and the means (e.g. rental deposit) of securing it, as well as to ensure that housing support services and drug rehabilitation services work together during this critical time.

One way of ensuring stability of housing may be to support prisoners, particularly, prisoners serving short sentences, to keep tenancies open for longer.

Substance misuse (Chapter 4)

Most prisoners had substance misuse problems. For interviewees with drug problems, becoming abstinent after release was often a priority, and seen as key to helping them become crime free and gain stability in their lives. Drug use was found to be related to many other difficulties in their lives – lack of housing, relationship breakdown, unemployment, re-offending, and poor mental and physical health.

While in prison, interviewees tended to receive low intensity support such as detoxification, and some said they viewed prison itself as a form of 'drug treatment'. The treatments offered in prisons were generally viewed as effective, although they worked less well for shorter-term prisoners, as throughcare services into the community needed to work well in these instances and this was often not found to be the case.

Arrangements were not always put in place to help prevent relapse after release and, even if they were, relapse was still a common experience. Often situations unravelled very quickly after release and some of the interviewees found it very difficult to access appropriate support in these situations. Some were caught in situations where links did not work well between support services.

Some interviewees also had alcohol misuse problems, although most of them were reluctant to recognise this. Not only was there a lack of acceptance of the problem by the individual, they struggled to find appropriate support for this problem. Further, individuals did not seem to know how and when to disclose drug/alcohol misuse problems and appeared to have been given very little support with this.

There is evidence to suggest that services need to find ways of addressing the needs of shorter-term prisoners by delivering intensive treatments within shorter sentence periods and/or by strengthening their through care services.

If ex-prisoners are to remain abstinent on leaving prison and be able to focus on seeking employment, it is clear they need advice on how to access ongoing support in the community. To support their efforts to find employment and stop re-offending, ex-prisoners will need fast-track support in the community in the event of relapse.

Finances (Chapter 5)

Finances were, not surprisingly, easier to manage for interviewees with a job to go to on leaving prison or who found work very soon after release. Those who moved into employment were mostly better off as a result. Potential gaps in finances resulting from moves into employment were sometimes managed by not 'signing off' immediately. Nearly all the interviewees received the Discharge Grant, which is designed to cover living expenses for the first week.

Those who claimed benefits after release had access to a Freshstart appointment at their local Jobcentre. This enables claims to be processed more efficiently, but there is a gap before the first benefit payment is received. Most interviewees coped with this by borrowing from friends and family (parents or grandparents). Those who did not have such sources of support suffered the most financial hardship. They also tended to be living in unsettled accommodation and/or have drug misuse issues. These kinds of problems often made it difficult to arrange interviews and sort out benefit payment. There was no evidence, however, that crime committed within the first few weeks of release was linked to financial hardship.

Many of those who remained on benefits throughout the fieldwork period found financial management a continual struggle. Managing the costs associated with housing caused the most difficulty. Interviewees commonly relied on family and friends for financial support, undertook casual work or applied for extra benefit support in order to cope.

Service providers' views (Chapter 6)

Interviews were also conducted with service providers operating in all four areas where the study was taking place. Service providers raised a number of issues that made delivering resettlement support services in prisons and in the community difficult. Some of these issues reflect and help to explain prisoners' views that support was patchy and inconsistent.

Generally, providers noted lack of interest and motivation among ex-prisoners. This was reflected in them declining offers of support, not showing up at referral appointments, or dropping out of services, and was thought to be related to wider issues such as substance misuse and housing.

There were problems associated with providing support in prisons. Physical constraints often meant that there was insufficient space to deliver services. Prisoners can come from a wide geographical area which made it difficult for service providers to provide information and link with community-based services

that were not local to the prison. Further, working in prison industries did not appear to increase prisoners' employability on release.

Once in the community, service providers thought there were often serious housing issues which impacted on the ability of agencies providing employment and drugs support to help ex-prisoners. Lack of funding for training ex-prisoners sometimes meant that ex-prisoners' efforts to move into more skilled jobs were hampered. Maintaining a steady stream of referrals was constantly hampered by having to rely on other organisations that needed to be re-educated about the services, as staff turnover in these organisations was high.

Conclusions (Chapter 7)

Re-offending amongst the study sample was common. The findings showed that re-offending, substance misuse and housing problems are closely entwined. However, employment status itself was more a reflection of circumstances in relation to substance misuse and housing, rather than criminal activity.

While in prison, many prisoners had high hopes in terms of their future plans in respect of their moving into employment, education or training, staying off drugs, staying out of prison and regaining some stability in their lives. However, these plans were often made in the absence of timely joined-up advice and support and in some cases, were unrealistic and unlikely to ever work out. As they struggled to cope with the realities of housing and substance misuse, issues that featured in their daily lives, these plans and hopes often unravelled. Those interviewees who had the support of family and friends tended to fare better. But for those without such a support network or for whom these arrangements subsequently fell apart, the situation was more bleak. They struggled to cope with housing and substance misuse issues and often resorted to crime as a means to cope.

Looking for work was made harder by having to engage with the types of casual and temporary jobs on offer. This meant having to face negative employer attitudes, declaring a criminal record and dealing with issues such as curfew restrictions on a regular basis, each time a new job was applied for. Ambitions involving any further education and training were usually abandoned due to cost and timing issues.

With support, some people in the study sample were able to make positive changes in their lives. The evidence suggests that the greatest need for support is in the period shortly following release when it becomes apparent that the hopes and plans made while in prison may not work out. To maximise success at this crucial time, it may be beneficial for external providers to make contact with prisoners prior to release in order to facilitate active ongoing support in the community. Such support could take the form of signposting to other appropriate agencies, as well as offering some form of support themselves. In particular, this would require agencies offering such support having access to information on agencies available in other parts of the country in order to help those who are imprisoned in a different area from the one where they live.

1 Introduction

1.1 The study

This is an exploratory study that centres on a key Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) client group that, until now, has not been extensively researched in terms of its interaction with benefit and employment services and the labour market. It focuses on a cohort of ex-prisoners who were tracked over a six-month period following their release from prison.

Broadly, the research aims to understand the transitions and choices ex-prisoners make on release and the role of support services on their trajectories. While this research includes the views of service providers, it does not evaluate their services. More specifically, the research explores:

- ex-prisoners' attitudes to, and expectations of, work, their interactions with the labour market, the barriers they experience in relation to work and how these change over time;
- ex-prisoners' interactions with, and views of, service providers, such as Jobcentre Plus, and the extent to which service provision is integrated across agencies; and
- the relationship between crime, employment and unemployment.

Ultimately, the purpose of this report is to explain the provision of services to ex-prisoners by Jobcentre Plus and other agencies to improve employment outcomes for ex-prisoners and help reduce re-offending. The report also provides contextual information as a necessary step prior to more evaluative research on the impact of employment support programmes on this client group.

1.2 Policy background

Overall, 58 per cent of prisoners re-offend within two years (Home Office, 2006). Ex-prisoners are a socially excluded group who face multiple disadvantages in returning to the labour market, as highlighted by the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report, *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners* (2002), prisoners:

- are more likely to have grown up in care, poverty or an otherwise disadvantaged family;
- are more likely to have truanted, been excluded from or left school before age 16;
- are poorly qualified – 52 per cent of male and 71 per cent of female adult prisoners have no qualifications;
- are unlikely to have experience of regular or high-quality employment;
- suffer from poorer mental health;
- mostly enter custody with a history of drug and alcohol misuse; and
- ex-prisoners can also be disadvantaged in the labour market through discrimination from employers (Liddle *et al.*, 2000; Metcalf *et al.*, 2001).

Furthermore, factors which are associated with reducing the risk of re-offending, such as having a home, employment and stable family relationships can be disrupted by a prison sentence:

- up to a third of prisoners lose their housing during custody;
- three-quarters do not have jobs to go to on release;
- contact with family can be lost as a result of imprisonment;
- mental and physical health problems can be made worse by imprisonment;
- prison can have a detrimental impact on confidence and life skills; and
- debts and financial liabilities can also worsen.

(SEU, 2002)

Recognising that the prison system is not working effectively, and in response to the issues raised in the SEU report, there have been a number of developments to improve the rehabilitation and prospects of offenders. Policy priorities as outlined in the 'Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan'; (Home Office, 2004), 'The Government's National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan' (National Offender Management Service, 2005), the 'Reducing Re-offending through Skills and Employment' Green paper (DfES, Home Office and DWP, 2005) and 'Next Steps' report (DfES, Home Office and DWP, 2006) focus on³:

- improving the basic skills of offenders and increasing the number of offenders completing basic skills awards, as well as improving the quality and quantity of learning and skills provision. Raising skills levels are key to improving the employment prospects of offenders;
- improving work-related training and employment support in prisons to secure better employment outcomes. Partnerships with employers are at the heart of these developments;

³ Note: these policy documents do not apply to Scotland.

- promoting the employment of offenders among employers, for example, in sectors with skills shortages;
- ensuring that all prisoners have accommodation on release through helping prisoners retain accommodation and supporting them with applications to local housing providers;
- improving access to health and social care services, including better mental health services, better access to alcohol interventions and increasing investment in drug treatment and support;
- closing the finance gap on release; and
- greater joined-up working across government and agencies and the development of partnerships to address the inter-linked problems that contribute to offending.

The Government, through Jobcentre Plus, delivers a number of initiatives targeted at prisoners and ex-offenders to assist them with benefit claims and employment and, thereby, contribute to their rehabilitation and reduce re-offending. These include:

- Freshstart appointments – a process that guarantees a prisoner a new claims interview appointment at their local Jobcentre Plus office, as soon as possible following release. This process aims to connect ex-prisoners more quickly with financial and employment support.
- Employment and Benefit Surgeries (EBS) (which are available in most prisons) assist prisoners with closing down benefit claims on entry to prison and provide job-search, employment and benefits advice pre-release.
- progress2work-LinkUP (p2w-LinkUP) (currently available in around half of Jobcentre Plus districts) provides specialist employment support to people experiencing disadvantage in the labour market as a result of an offending background, alcohol misuse or homelessness. Specialist providers help clients to find work or to develop themselves in preparation for work. It is an extension of the progress2work (p2w) initiative, which targets people recovering from illegal drug misuse.
- Ex-prisoners are also eligible for early entry onto New Deal programmes.

1.3 Research design

The research used a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods are best suited to providing an in-depth understanding of views, experiences and behaviour as required by this exploratory study. The main component of the research design was a qualitative longitudinal study of 40 prisoners about to be released from prison. To provide a wider context to the research, interviews with staff from key service providers and focus groups with ex-prisoners participating in p2w-LinkUP were

also conducted. The findings presented in this report, therefore, reflect the views, experiences and perspectives of the research participants and their understanding of their circumstances. The topic guides and schedules used for each element of the research are included in Appendices B, C and D.

The research was conducted across four case study areas, two in England and one each in Wales and Scotland. The case study areas were selected on the basis that each had a p2w-LinkUP available and a local prison, with selection made to include a mix of privately and publicly run prisons. All prisons were adult male Category C local prisons. The research focused on male prisoners because they comprise the majority of the prison population.

Being qualitative, based on a small sample, the findings are not statistically significant. While we would expect to find similar experiences among the wider population of male prisoners being released from Category C local prisons, the findings do not provide any numerical evidence as to the extent or distribution of the views and experiences outlined in this report within the wider population. The sample did not include any ethnic minority prisoners⁴, thus there may be different perspectives and difficulties experienced by prisoners from ethnic minority backgrounds which are not represented in this report.

1.3.1 Prisoner interviews

Forty prisoners, who were about to be released from prison, were recruited to take part in a qualitative longitudinal study with three waves of interviews: Wave 1 interviews occurring just before release, Wave 2 interviews at three months after release and Wave 3 interviews at six months after release. Fieldwork took place between August 2006 and May 2007.

Given that ex-prisoners can be a hard to reach group, due to accommodation difficulties and substance misuse, a key emphasis of the research design was to minimise the attrition of interviewees from the study. Further information on the strategies employed can be found in Appendix A. In total, 32 interviewees participated in a follow-up interview, either at Wave 2 or Wave 3, with 22 of these participating in all three interview waves. Appendix A provides more detailed information on the recruitment and attrition of interviewees and their background characteristics.

1.3.2 Staff interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with staff from a number of key agencies in each case study area. Key agencies included those who focus solely on providing services to ex-prisoners, as well as those who deliver services to a wider client base, but due to the issues they address, a significant proportion of their clients have an offending background. Agencies that participated in the research included: prison

⁴ This is attributed to the characteristics of the prisons selected for the research where over 90 per cent of inmates are from white ethnic backgrounds.

resettlement services, prison-based Employment and Benefit Surgeries, Jobcentre Plus, p2w-LinkUP providers, Probation Service⁵ and Criminal Justice Social Work Services, housing/homeless agencies (which included a local authority service and third sector organisations), drug/addiction services and mentoring services. Interviews were conducted with managers and/or advisers/project workers. Interviews with staff took place between September 2005 and January 2007.

1.3.3 Focus groups

In three case study areas focus groups were held with p2w-LinkUP clients who had offending backgrounds. In the event that no prisoners taking part in the longitudinal study came into contact with p2w-LinkUP on release, the focus groups were intended to provide an insight into how ex-prisoners accessed the programme, why they decided to join and in what ways, if any, they were similar to or different from the 40 interview participants. The focus group participants were recruited to take part in the discussion by p2w-LinkUP staff.

1.3.4 Data analysis

All interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview transcripts were analysed using Atlas.ti (a software package for qualitative data analysis) to sort and organise the data under key themes. The key themes included those who were pre-determined by the research objectives (e.g. employment) and those which were highlighted as key issues by interviewees (e.g. housing and substance misuse). Longitudinal analysis explored the transitions ex-prisoners made within each key theme and analysed the reasons for change (or lack of change) through comparing and contrasting the circumstances, experiences, views and backgrounds of interviewees.

Findings in this report from Wave 1 prisoner interviews are based on data from all 40 interviewees. Longitudinal analysis from the Wave 2 and Wave 3 prisoner interviews are based on data from 31 interviewees who participated in a follow-up interview. One interviewee was excluded from the longitudinal analysis because his circumstances were atypical compared to the rest of the sample. As an asylum seeker the issues and difficulties he faced on release, all related to his immigration status and possible deportation. These issues did not apply to the rest of the sample who were white British or European.

Interviews with service providers took place between September 2005 and January 2007. Thus, provision by service providers may have changed and developed during the intervening period. Similarly, prisoners' experiences of resettlement services in prison are based on pre-release interviews which took place between August and October 2006 and changes may have occurred since this time. However,

⁵ 'Probation service' is used as a generic term in this report to describe the provision of services delivered by the National Probation Service in England and Wales and by Criminal Justice Social Work Services in Scotland.

some of the issues raised in this study reflect those identified by the SEU in 2002, suggesting that changes to improve the rehabilitation of prisoners back into the community will not be achieved overnight.

1.4 Report outline

The main body of this report is based on an analysis of interviews with ex-prisoners.

To avoid repetition in the main body of the report, information about the characteristics and backgrounds of the sample of 40 prisoners is discussed in Appendix A. This includes information about their ages, ethnicity, living arrangements and relationships, their education and employment backgrounds, criminal backgrounds, experiences of substance misuse and their health. This information contributes to understanding the often chaotic nature of their lifestyles both before going into, and after leaving, prison as well as the multiple barriers the 40 prisoners faced in relation to work and changing their offending behaviour.

Chapter 2 explores ex-prisoners' circumstances on release in relation to employment and follows the transitions they made between employment and unemployment. Barriers to work and links between unemployment, employment and crime are also explored.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe ex-prisoners' experiences of housing and substance misuse on release. While not intended to be a main focus of the research, housing and substance misuse were key issues arising from discussions with ex-prisoners. Without stable housing ex-prisoners were not in a position to consider employment. Similarly, for ex-prisoners experiencing substance misuse issues employment was not their main priority.

Chapter 5 looks at how ex-prisoners managed the financial transition from prison back into the community. The analysis distinguishes between finances during the first few weeks of release and longer-term finances. How ex-prisoners managed transitions into employment and links between financial hardship and crime are also explored.

However, to provide a wider context to the interviews with prisoners, staff from a range of service providers were also interviewed. **Chapter 6** presents an overview of resettlement service provision from providers' perspectives – service providers covered in this research included: prison resettlement services, EBS, Probation Service, Jobcentre Plus, p2w-LinkUP, housing/homeless agencies, drug/addiction services and mentoring services.

Chapter 7 brings together the findings in this report to draw some overarching conclusions.

Case studies are presented at the end of Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 to illustrate in detail how key issues and events impacted on the lives of individual interviewees and to provide an insight into how a range of different factors interplayed on interviewees' trajectories. To protect the identity of interviewees their real names have been replaced with pseudonyms. The four case study areas have also not been identified in this report.

2 Employment

Summary

Provision of resettlement support in prisons was not always forthcoming, particularly for those serving shorter sentences. Where support was provided it did not necessarily improve prisoners' employability, for example, prison-based work was often felt to be of low quality.

For many prisoners, it is clear that getting a job on release was a priority. However, in addition to housing and substance misuse issues, many experienced difficulties getting or retaining jobs due to their having a criminal record, due to employer attitudes or due to curfew restrictions. Some prisoners also had aspirations in relation to education and training, although issues around affordability and the general instability of prisoners' circumstances on release made these aspirations difficult to realise.

Their experiences illustrate that:

- prison-based training in practical work-related skills was valued as providing relevant help for finding work on release;
- prisons are a key source of information for prisoners about community-based employment support;
- where provided, community-based employment support can work very well;
- additional support offered by Jobcentres is not always forthcoming or appropriate;
- there is a reluctance among some prisoners to receive help either before or after release, with some preferring to find work themselves; and
- providers (of community-based employment support and training) need to be able to respond quickly to prisoners who do want help after release.

This chapter starts by describing interviewees' experiences of resettlement support in prisons and their employment backgrounds. The transitions they made on release from prison in relation to employment and the factors which they felt had contributed to their getting and retaining work or moving closer to/further away from the labour market are explored. Barriers to work, employment support and interviewees' plans and aspirations in relation to education and training are also discussed. Individual case studies are presented at the end of this chapter to illustrate how the issues raised in this chapter interplayed and impacted on the trajectories of interviewees.

2.1 Resettlement support in prison

This section presents interviewees' experiences and views of the resettlement support they received while in prison in relation to education and training, participation in prison-based work and support with finding employment before release.

In the English and Welsh case study of prisons, attending education or work was compulsory for all convicted prisoners. Prisoners could refuse, but did not receive any money and lost privileges as a result. In the Scottish case study prison it was not compulsory for convicted prisoners to work or attend education.

2.1.1 Education and training

Participation in education and training activities (such as basic skills, vocational training and life skills) was a common activity among prisoners, however, it was more common among longer-term prisoners (sentenced for 12 months or more) compared to those serving shorter sentences. The main reason reported by shorter-term prisoners as to why they had not participated in education or training was because their sentence was too short. Either the courses they were interested in doing were thought to be longer than their actual sentence (although this was not always the case), or they felt that the prison system had been too slow in providing education opportunities. Education opportunities were not always forthcoming and some interviewees, particularly shorter-term prisoners, spoke of their frustration at getting no response to their requests for education. Some shorter-term prisoners also remarked on the apparent inequity of provision among prisoners serving different sentence lengths:

'They should have like short courses, because we're the most vulnerable people I think, doing the shorter sentences, because we're in and out, so not a lot changes in that time.'

(Justin, aged 24)

More general reasons why some interviewees did not participate in education or training included:

- it was not thought to be useful, for example, among those who said they already held basic level qualifications in maths and English;
- the mode of delivery – some did not enjoy being in a classroom situation (perhaps related to negative experiences at school);
- concern about being punished if they dropped out (for example, being given a longer sentence) – this might imply the need for ‘taster’ courses, and more clarity on prison regulations in relation to participation in education; and
- some interviewees were not ready, or able to think about education on induction (for example, prisoners who were experiencing depression or disorientation at the beginning of their sentences) – this might imply that educational needs should be revisited at different points during the sentence.

Among those who had participated, the kinds of courses they had undertaken included:

- Level 1 or 2 courses in maths, English and Information Technology (IT);
- sociology, art and pottery;
- work-related training courses such as health and safety, site safety, first aid, bricklaying, forklift licence and driving theory test; and
- life skills courses such as drugs awareness, thinking skills and money management.

Most prisoners said they had chosen their courses at induction, although some shorter-term prisoners said courses were simply allocated to them on the basis of availability and course length.

Interviewees had mixed views towards their experiences of education and training. Positive responses were that (academic) education courses were interesting and valued because they alleviated boredom, got them out of the cell, and/or ‘kept the brain ticking’. Complaints about education courses were that English and maths courses were commonly described as too basic⁶. Work-related training courses were valued for providing practical help for finding work on release. Overall, interviewees tended to value training in practical skills more highly than functional skills in maths, English and IT. This may reflect, in part, the occupations they were expecting to move into on release, which were mostly manual work. It also suggests that there may be a mismatch between government aims for offender learning, which include a focus on functional skills such as literacy, numeracy and IT skills, and prisoners’ aims and preferences.

⁶ It is not possible to verify the assertion that courses were too basic, and it does appear to contradict the poor qualification attainment levels across the sample.

2.1.2 Work in prison industries

The types of prison-based work available included: factory and assembly workshops where prisoners worked on outside contracts or made furniture or other items for the prison estate involving, for example, woodwork/joinery, metal fabrication, textiles, concrete, or IT data entry; and providing internal services for the running of the prison, such as working in the kitchens, laundry, gym, gardens, cleaning or recycling.

Not all interviewees worked during their sentence. Of those who did, it was more common among longer-term prisoners than shorter-term prisoners. As found with education, there were differences between the views and experiences of interviewees serving longer sentences and those serving shorter sentences (less than 12 months):

- interviewees serving longer sentences were more likely to say they had a certain amount of choice over what work they undertook;
- some shorter-term prisoners said that they had not been offered work; and
- some shorter-term prisoners said there had been no point in them applying for work because they believed that security checks for the better jobs (e.g. kitchens) would take too long to complete.

On the whole, interviewees were not inspired by the work they undertook. However, some did value their work because it was paid, it alleviated boredom, and in some cases it provided an opportunity to gain certificates (e.g. health and hygiene). Jobs which were most in demand – cleaning, laundry or kitchen work – although not considered to be particularly interesting, carried prestige in that they allowed a certain degree of freedom of movement and/or necessitated a level of trust from prison staff in order to carry out the work. Work such as sewing or packing were less favoured as these were considered very boring, not least because often there was little work for them to do.

2.1.3 Pre-release employment support

The experiences of interviewees varied as to whether or not they received support and guidance with finding work prior to being released.

Of those who did not receive employment support many said they did not want support either because they readily expected and were confident of finding work themselves, or because they were not intending to work on release due to health conditions. However, a few interviewees said they would have found employment advice helpful.

Of those who did receive employment support, the kinds of help and advice they received included:

- careers advice through the Probation Service;
- job searches and help with CV preparation from the Jobcentre Plus Employment and Benefit Surgery (EBS) Adviser;
- referrals to community-based employment support agencies⁷; and
- information on referral to New Deal.

2.2 Employment backgrounds and histories

This section provides a brief overview of the interviewees' employment histories.

Their employment histories could broadly be described as those who had:

- no work experience;
- very little work experience – having worked for between just three months and a year;
- regularly moved in and out of work;
- sustained long periods of work, but had also had spells out of work; and
- been in (almost) continuous employment since leaving school.

A few had more complex employment histories encompassing a range of employment patterns.

Where interviewees had never worked, or had very little work experience, the main reasons accounting for this were heroin addiction, disability, and physical or mental health conditions. Although most interviewees had more considerable work experience, a common feature of their employment histories was a lack of continuous employment. Moves out of work had occurred as a result of:

- being made redundant, being sacked, or due to casual/contract work coming to an end;
- substance misuse;
- sickness and injury; and
- leaving jobs that were either disliked or that became incompatible with changes in family circumstances, such as becoming a lone parent.

Interviewees who had been in continuous, or almost continuous, employment since leaving school and had been working up to their imprisonment, tended to be relatively young – aged between 19 and 25, and were, therefore, early on in their working lives. Their distinguishing characteristics were that none had problems with drug misuse, although alcohol was a factor in the offences of

⁷ Most of these interviewees were based in one prison – see Section 2.5.2 for further information.

some, and all had some type of qualification, which included those who had higher level qualifications. Thus, these prisoners were not typical with regard to some of the background characteristics associated with offenders such as drug misuse and lack of qualifications.

The kinds of employment interviewees had experience of was mostly unskilled manual work (such as factory work, supermarket work, labouring on building sites and farms, security work, grave digging) and skilled manual work (including the army, health and social care work, machine operatives, fork lift operatives and trades such as carpentry/joinery and landscape gardening). Most of the jobs had been formal employment. Casual work mostly centred on the building trades – labouring on building sites, plastering, painting and decorating. Work experience gained on Youth Training Schemes (YTS) and apprenticeships was also common.

2.3 Employment transitions

This section explores the transitions interviewees made after leaving prison in relation to employment. The analysis takes as its starting point interviewees' own plans, priorities and expectations regarding employment just before being released.

Interviewees were categorised into the following groups according to their post-release employment plans:

- those who did want to work on release;
- those who were interested in work, but who said they were not in a position to look for employment immediately on release due to other higher priorities, such as having to find accommodation or problems with substance misuse, which needed to be addressed first; and
- those who had no plans or expectations of working in the foreseeable future due to either a lack of interest, health problems or a combination of both.

The following sections discuss the characteristics of each of these groups in turn, before then focusing in more detail on the barriers reported by those interviewees who said they wanted to take up or return to work.

2.3.1 Prisoners who wanted to work on release

Most prisoners said they wanted to work on release and that getting a job was a priority for them.

As with those who said they were unable to work (see below), some interviewees in this group reported having housing difficulties, health conditions (including depression), or substance misuse issues that they needed to address on release. However, unlike people in other groups, they did not see these issues as impacting upon their desire or ability to work.

Those who found work

Most of those who said that they wanted to work on release did find work during the six-month follow-up period.

The speed with which interviewees found work varied from within a few days of release to six months⁸, although most who found work had done so within six weeks of release. Family and friends played a key role in assisting those interviewees who started work quickly (i.e. within two weeks of being released) into employment, meaning they found out about job opportunities directly and very often did not have to compete with other job seekers. Their experiences included:

- returning to self-employment running a small business;
- finding work with friends and acquaintances – for example, one interviewee started working for a friend who had his own scaffolding business, another ‘applied’ for a shop job where his sister’s boyfriend was the manager; and
- family members securing jobs for them with employers which they themselves worked for.

The kinds of job interviewees found were manual or skilled manual work such as: labouring on building sites, factory work, farm labouring, shop work, door-to-door sales, scaffolding, carpentry, welding and fork lift operative. Employment included both formal – ‘on the books’ and informal – ‘cash in hand’ work, although formal employment was more common.

However, finding work was only part of the picture as the length of time that interviewees stayed in the jobs they got after release varied.

Some interviewees stayed in the same employment for the whole of the follow-up period. Others left due to personal circumstances such as drug relapse⁹ or returning to prison. However, the most common pattern of employment was of repeated moves in and out of work. While this is not unexpected, what was perhaps surprising, was that moves in and out of work were often with the same employer. This reflected them working on a temporary or contractual rather than a permanent basis, for an employment agency or an employer and being laid off when the work was finished/went quiet and being taken on again when work was available. Where interviewees moved out of work due to being laid off, their main motivations for returning to work were to be earning money again and to have something to do, rather than be sitting at home all day.

⁸ One interviewee had just started work the day of the six-month follow-up interview.

⁹ For example, one interviewee gained a job with a builder who was also a heroin dealer and who paid him in heroin.

Those who didn't find work

Some prisoners who said they wanted to take up work on release did not do so. Among this group, some had actively sought work while others had started using heroin again immediately after being released either to return to prison or to move into residential rehabilitation.

There were no distinguishable differences in the characteristics and backgrounds between those who found work and those who did not. Those who did not find work included interviewees with qualifications, with over ten years' work experience and with no previous custodial sentences.

Transitions towards and away from the labour market

This section compares interviewees' circumstances after release to what they were doing prior to going to prison.

Many interviewees returned to what they had been doing before being imprisoned. This included returns to: self-employment, steady continuous employment, irregular employment, and unemployment. It also included returns to heroin use.

Those who moved closer to the labour market had all been claiming benefits before their imprisonment and had not been looking for work due to substance misuse, depression, or due to 'earning' money through drug dealing. All wanted to work on release, some of whom were successful. Factors which interviewees said contributed to them improving their circumstances included:

- coming off heroin in prison so that they were drug free before release;
- receiving counselling in prison to facilitate the cessation of anti-depressants;
- receiving housing support on release resulting in stable accommodation; plus
- a determination to change their lifestyle and move on in relation to not using drugs again or re-offending and finding work.

'Well, like I say it's my age. Now I'm 31 and it's about time I made some changes and when I make up my mind I stick to it.'

(Jamie, age 31)

In the words of one interviewee, prison '*done me more of a favour*' (Kevin, aged 48).

In contrast, those who moved further away from the labour market (and for whom imprisonment appeared to have a particularly negative impact) had all been in work before going to prison. On release they were unemployed. Examples of their circumstances included:

- remaining unemployed throughout the six-month follow-up period;
- being unemployed for six months before finding a job; and
- moving in and out of (unskilled) work.

Factors which these interviewees said contributed to their worsened circumstances were related to difficulties finding suitable jobs and long-term/permanent employment, rather than to changes in their personal circumstances.

2.3.2 Prisoners interested in work, but with other priorities to sort out first

Some interviewees said that they wanted to work in the future, but that they had other priorities they needed to address first. Some said that they hoped to take up work in the near future, while for others it was more of a longer-term aspiration (for example, after completing a one-year residential rehabilitation programme). The main issues raised as barriers to them taking up work immediately on release were housing and/or substance misuse.

For interviewees leaving prison with no arrangements in place as to where they would live on release, this was their main concern and priority. They were clear that they did not feel they could start to think about looking for work until they had somewhere to live:

'I'm just being realistic about my situation, yeah. I'd love a job, but as I say I've not even got nowhere to plug an alarm clock in and things like that, and get a decent night's sleep at the moment.'

(Gareth, age 39)

Interviewees who were unable to work on release because of substance misuse issues were all heroin addicts who had either come off heroin in prison or were on methadone. Their main concern for release was to stay off drugs and to get drugs support – either Subutex, a place in residential rehabilitation, or to get through a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO)¹⁰.

In the six-month period following their release, some interviewees moved further away from the labour market, or made no progress in addressing their issues, and in some cases returned to prison. Although this was due to a complex and very individual range of factors, there were some common circumstances involved. This included interviewees relapsing and using heroin again – either as a result of drugs support not materialising, or as a result of interviewees not taking up support as originally intended; or finding themselves sleeping rough which contributed to re-offending or alcohol misuse.

Thus, the main barriers to work for this group of interviewees, who were not able to work immediately on release, were: substance misuse and housing problems. Caring responsibilities also became a barrier to work.

¹⁰ A DTTO is a court order where offenders agree to accept treatment for drug misuse and undergo mandatory drug testing.

In contrast, a few interviewees who resolved housing issues after being released moved closer towards the labour market over the six-month follow-up period and in comparison to their circumstances before going into prison (see James' case study, Section 2.7, for example).

These findings support comments made by service providers, that prisoners can feel very optimistic about their future plans before release and perhaps are overly optimistic about what they will be able to achieve (staying off drugs, for example), or have unrealistic expectations about the kinds of help and support available to them, or the speed with which support can be put in place.

2.3.3 Prisoners who were not able to or were not interested in work

A few interviewees said they had no plans or expectations to work on release from prison or in the foreseeable future. The main reasons they gave were:

- ongoing physical health problems – for example, one interviewee was seriously ill and attended hospital regularly for treatment and another had problems with his knees (needing a knee-cap replacement) which he felt restricted his ability to work;
- a long-standing mental health condition combined with a methadone controlled heroin addiction. Due to his mental health problems this interviewee had no desire to move into employment after overcoming his addiction; and
- having no interest in working due to very limited experience of work, combined with ongoing drug misuse and repeat spells in prison from a young age.

Among those reporting health-related conditions, there was little evidence to suggest their circumstances or views towards work changed over the six-month follow-up period, with them returning to claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB) as they had before going into prison. Similarly, those with limited work experience claimed benefits on release.

Thus, the main barriers to work for this group of interviewees, who were not looking for work on release, were physical and mental health conditions and substance misuse.

2.4 Barriers to work among those looking for work

This section discusses the problems and barriers to work raised by interviewees who were in a position to look for work after release. As described earlier, some interviewees moved into employment very quickly, while others reported finding work harder than they had been expecting. Further, as already discussed, when jobs were found, in many cases they were not permanent and interviewees had (sometimes repeatedly) to find another job.

Jobcentre Plus was the main formal route through which interviewees, who were out of work, looked for job vacancies. A few said they used the Jobcentre regularly, going several times a week, while others said they only went when they had to sign on. Other job search strategies mentioned (used in addition to going to the Jobcentre), included looking in local papers, cold calling local businesses directly and relying on hearing about vacancies through friends and family. Not many signed up with employment agencies. However, the most common means by which ex-prisoners said they had found work was through friends, family and acquaintances.

When asked about the specific barriers they experienced in finding work, the main issues raised were:

- a lack of suitable jobs;
- criminal records, employer discrimination and disclosure;
- curfew restrictions;
- problems obtaining licences and certificates; and
- transport.

The following sections discuss each of these barriers mentioned in turn.

2.4.1 A lack of jobs

The main difficulty reported by interviewees was that there were no (suitable) jobs for them to apply for. This issue was raised particularly in relation to vacancies advertised through Jobcentre Plus. Interviewees reported that Jobcentres had no vacancies in the line of work they were looking for, that there were no vacancies in their local area, or that vacancies were at the minimum wage (which a few interviewees said they were not prepared to accept).

Similar issues were also reported about vacancies advertised in local papers, when directly asking around local businesses and when talking to friends. It seemed to some interviewees that local employers were not taking people on. Those looking for outdoor work – labouring on building sites, on farms, or gardening work – attributed this to it being the wrong time of year (winter) and were optimistic that job opportunities would pick up again in spring and summer:

'I was at the Jobcentre last Friday because I had a Restart up there...and they looked on the computer and there's absolutely nothing in the area...I mean, I even went door to door factory-wise and nothing going, they're laying people off more than anything.'

(Vince, age 43)

Some interviewees were willing to do any kind of job, even if it was at a low wage or doing a job that they were not particularly interested in. In their view it was *'better than nothing'* and in the future they hoped to move into something better

in terms of pay and/or skills. Others were more selective about the type of work they were prepared to do, preferring instead to wait until a more suitable job came along – which in some cases did happen. Commonly, this was a very broad preference related to wanting to work outside rather than in a factory or office:

‘[I’ll do] Anything as long as it’s outdoors, as long as I’m not stood in a factory line or something, I don’t mind, anything really.’

(Jason, age 21)

A few interviewees were not prepared to take jobs paying only the minimum wage as they felt that it was not enough for them to live on, or that they would be no better off than on benefits.

For some interviewees this did mean that they were turning down potential job opportunities, which could go some way to explaining some of the apparent ‘difficulty’ they had in securing sustainable work. It also contributed to some interviewees’ views that the Jobcentre did not care and that staff just wanted to get them into any job (see Section 2.5.1).

2.4.2 Criminal records, employer discrimination and disclosure

Several interviewees said that they had been unsuccessful in applying for jobs because of their criminal record. For a few interviewees, who had never been in prison before, they had been unable to return to their old jobs as a result of now having a criminal record. Examples of interviewees’ experiences included:

- being dismissed from the army due to having a criminal record;
- having a job interview stopped mid-way through following disclosure of a criminal record;
- being laid off work when their employer found out they had come out of prison (see Tim’s case study, Section 2.7); and
- being unsuccessful getting work at a local factory because a criminal record check by the employer, in their view, had too many charges on it.

Interviewees varied as to whether or not they disclosed their offending background to employers. Some included it on application forms or explained their circumstances at interviews when asked to. Others did not disclose this information, or only disclosed their less serious offences – such as driving offences. For some jobs such as casual labouring jobs, employers did not use application forms or hold formal interviews to ask about offending backgrounds, so this was not an issue. A perceived advantage of working for friends and family was that they knew, but did not mind, that the interviewee had a criminal record.

However, where non-disclosure was not a problem in getting a job, it is evident that it could become a problem in retaining work with an employer should the employer later find out (see Tim’s case study, Section 2.7). Interviewees who did

not disclose their criminal record were aware of this risk, but for some their priority was to get into a job and risk being sacked later.

Employer discrimination was a key barrier to work raised by the focus group participants¹¹. Participants felt that they were stigmatised as an ex-prisoner and pre-judged, whereby regardless of what their crimes were, or how long ago they had last offended, employers would not take them on. There was a perception that a number of large companies had policies of not taking on ex-prisoners. Participants were looking for just one sympathetic employer to give them a chance. Again, the building/construction industry was mentioned as a sector where employers did not mind about people having criminal records.

2.4.3 Curfew restrictions

Another issue that was mentioned as causing difficulty in getting and retaining employment was curfew restrictions. Curfews impose set hours during which offenders have to be at home, for example, between 7pm and 7am, so that their whereabouts are known and can be monitored.

Difficulties raised by interviewees were that curfews prevented them from taking jobs which started early in the morning or finished late in the evening, such as shift work, or working for employers which were not local to home and would require the interviewee to leave very early in the morning to get to work on time. Once in employment, curfews limited their ability to be flexible in the hours they could work or to work unpredictable overtime (see Tim's case study, Section 2.7, for an illustration of this):

'It's really hard, so hard if you're on a tag to get a job, it's unreal, unreal. I could have got a job the other week for [company], but it would mean starting at six o'clock, so I couldn't do that. If I wasn't on a tag I could have, so that's the only thing holding me back really, my tag.'

(Tim, age 19)

2.4.4 Problems obtaining licences and certificates

Reflecting that many interviewees were looking for skilled or unskilled manual work, not having academic qualifications was not reported as being a barrier to finding work. A more specific issue mentioned was the need to have a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, without which they were unable to get labouring jobs on building sites. However, obtaining a CSCS card was not always straightforward. Difficulties experienced by some interviewees included:

- not being able to access CSCS training in prison due to too many other people wanting to do it;

¹¹ Focus groups were conducted in three case study areas with progress2work-LinkUP (p2w-LinkUP) clients.

- being referred to a CSCS training provider in the community, but having to join a two month waiting list – this interviewee returned to prison before being able to start the training; and
- not receiving the card on completing the training due to a mix up with the paperwork.

Others also complained that they had not received certificates for qualifications that they had gained while in prison, which they had expected to be posted to them and which they felt would have helped them find better jobs.

2.4.5 Lack of transport

Some interviewees said they were restricted to looking for work within their local area due to not being able to drive (either having never taken a driving test or as a result of a driving ban) or not having a car. Public transport was not considered as a viable option for jobs vacancies which were outside their local area.

2.4.6 Supply-side barriers to work

As found in other research (Hoggart *et al.*, 2006), interviewees were more likely to identify demand-side issues as barriers to work (such as lack of vacancies, employer discrimination and transport difficulties), rather than barriers relating to their own backgrounds and characteristics (such as skills and qualifications) i.e. supply-side issues. However, supply-side issues were raised by participants in the focus groups as hindering them in finding work, including:

- lack of confidence and self-worth;
- lack of recent work experience; and
- lack of employer references.

A lack of confidence and self worth was mentioned as a barrier to work in relation to feeling unable to sell themselves to a potential employer (when their own view of themselves was in a negative light) and to respond confidently to questions in a job interview about their background and whether or not they had a criminal record:

'When you do come out you don't have the confidence to go and front people for a job. You basically look for the back door job if you want to work...and you're just paid cash in hand because no one asks you questions.'

(p2w-LinkUP client)

Where participants had been in prison for several years they had large gaps on their CVs and no recent work experience. Similarly, they did not have any recent employer references. Even where participants had undertaken education and training courses in prison and had left prison with skills and qualifications, these were felt to be worthless in the 'outside' world because they still did not have the experience of using these skills in a real working environment. Furthermore,

telling potential employers about qualifications and skills gained during their time in prison was not something participants necessarily wanted to divulge.

2.5 Employment support

This section explores the kinds of employment help and support ex-prisoners received on release, their views towards this support and whether or not they followed-up referral appointments made in prison. It is worth noting that employment support was not the most salient issue for interviewees and some could not recall their experiences of support in any detail.

2.5.1 Jobcentre Plus

As most ex-prisoners made a benefit claim on release, Jobcentre Plus was the main formal employment support provider they came into contact with. For ex-prisoners claiming inactive benefits (Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support (IS)) their contact with Jobcentre Plus was limited to their new claim appointment. None could recall being offered any specific employment support, except for one interviewee (who had taken on full-time caring responsibility for his children) who was told about 'Back to Work'¹², which provided access to a range of training courses.

Those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) went through the standard new claims procedure. Even though in most cases their adviser knew that they had just been released from prison, most interviewees said they did not receive any additional advice or support. However, a few interviewees were told about, and offered referrals to, training courses and employment programmes. There was one example of an ex-prisoner being advised not to disclose his offending background unless asked to do so.

Those who had been given advice by an adviser said they had little interest in taking up further advice or help. The main reasons they mentioned included:

- they had only been interested in sorting out their benefit claim;
- they were not in a position to look for work due to dealing with a heroin addiction; and
- they had already done the training courses offered, such as the CSCS card, or already had skills in those areas, such as IT skills.

In other cases interviewees said they had informed their adviser that they did not want any help because they had jobs lined up and were expecting to start work very soon. In these cases the interviewees started work within two weeks of being released, working in jobs they had found through friends and family. Although

¹² It is not clear what programme was being referred to here as 'Back to Work' is not the name of an employment programme.

they remained with the same employer, work was not continuous and they re-claimed benefits during periods when they were laid off.

The main kind of ongoing employment support received by ex-prisoners was a job search service. While some interviewees were later referred onto New Deal, there was a lack of awareness among some that they were entitled to immediate entry to New Deal. Those who were referred to New Deal did not report very positive experiences (see Graham's case study, Section 2.7, for example). Beyond advertising job vacancies, there were no examples where help and support had succeeded in assisting interviewees into employment.

Overall, views towards Jobcentre Plus were mixed. Some interviewees were positive about their experiences, saying that staff were helpful, pleasant and treated them with respect. Support provided by staff in posting job vacancy details and application forms to home addresses and saving details of suitable job vacancies for them was appreciated. Others said that they had found Jobcentre Plus staff patronising, felt they did not care and found them to be unhelpful. They resented having to attend the Jobcentre when, from their perspective, there were no (suitable) job vacancies for them to apply for.

That Jobcentre staff did not care was an issue raised particularly by those interviewees who had preferences as to the kind of work they wanted to do (as discussed earlier). As one interviewee, whose main aim was to go to college or get training so that he could get a trade as a plasterer, commented:

'I want to go to college and do what I want to do...[The Jobcentre] can never do nothing for you like, they've always got like a cleaning job, or a job working in a hotel cleaning rooms. I'd rather go without than do that...They ain't looking to get you into a career or nothing like that.'

(Robert, age 18)

This was also a common theme of the focus group discussions and was participants' main criticism of Jobcentre Plus. They felt that staff were focused on meeting targets and getting them into any job, regardless of their circumstances or interests and in some cases had suggested they apply for inappropriate job vacancies¹³. This was in contrast to their experience of p2w-LinkUP, where they felt advisers looked at them as individuals, were very approachable and provided personally tailored help and support.

'Here [p2w-LinkUP] you come in and you say "Well I'm looking for this, I'm looking for that"...and they'll bend over backwards to find something for you, it's a totally different side.'

(p2w-LinkUP client)

¹³ This includes one participant – an alcoholic – who had been advised to apply for a job at an off-licence and another who, while on a curfew, had been advised to apply for night-shift work.

2.5.2 Other employment support

The most common way interviewees said they heard about, and accessed, employment support agencies (other than Jobcentre Plus) was through those they came into contact with while in prison. Some prisoners had met with organisations during their sentence and said that they intended to contact them on their release – in some cases a referral appointment had been made, in others they had just taken the organisation's contact details, or remembered the organisation as one they wanted to see after they had been released. A few interviewees already had links with organisations, which they intended to see again on release.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, not everyone who said they intended to see an employment organisation on release actually did so. The main reasons given for this included:

- finding that they were not eligible to use services due to living in the wrong postcode area, or claiming an ineligible benefit;
- having had a negative response at one agency and expecting the same response at another; and
- losing interest or no longer feeling they needed employment support – for example, one ex-prisoner had arranged to see progress2work (p2w)/p2w-LinkUP on release to get a fork lift licence, but did not go because he was expecting to move straight into work on release – which he did.

Those who followed-up with employment support on their release were all from the same prison. They had met with organisations at an event held regularly at the prison where a wide range of community-based organisations came to meet with prisoners due to be released. Although this only represents a small number of interviewees, this may be a successful model worthy of further consideration for engaging prisoners with work-focused post-release support.

Aside from the Jobcentre, interviewees also heard about and accessed employment support outside of prison through probation services and drug support agencies.

The organisations interviewees were most commonly told about and/or referred to were p2w/p2w-LinkUP, Working Links¹⁴ and the Wise Group¹⁵. Again, not all were interested in taking up offers of support. The experience among those who did was mixed and included:

¹⁴ Working Links was established in 2000 to deliver the Government's Employment Zones in disadvantaged communities. It provides access to training or work experience, help with CV writing, interview skills, and financial support for transport and childcare.

¹⁵ The Wise Group is a charitable organisation which offers training, personal development and paid work experience. It is operational throughout Scotland and the North East of England.

- successful moves into employment as a result of receiving support (see Daniel's case study, Section 2.7);
- assistance with job-searches;
- referral to training to get a CSCS card; and
- a refusal to provide training to renew a licence to work on railway lines because it was too expensive to fund.

Similarly, the most common means through which the focus group participants had heard of, and been referred to, p2w-LinkUP was in prison, via probation or through Jobcentre Plus. What was interesting from their experiences was that some participants had not come across p2w-LinkUP until several years after leaving prison, suggesting that people leaving prison who could benefit from the programme are not all hearing about it, and indicating that difficulties finding employment due to being an ex-prisoner can be long-standing.

2.6 Education and training

This section explores prisoners' aspirations and plans in relation to education and training, the extent to which they followed up these plans on release and any support interviewees said they had received in moving into education or training.

2.6.1 Pre-release plans and aspirations

Some prisoners said they had aspirations or plans in relation to education or training following their release. They were mostly younger, aged between 18 and 26, although a couple were in their thirties.

The most commonly reported types of training interviewees said they wanted to undertake in order to get into work included going to college to get training in the building trades, such as plastering, tiling, bricklaying, painting and decorating. Some interviewees said they already had skills in these areas, but felt that they needed a qualification to prove that they could do it to potential employers. Others wanted to get a trade so that they could set up their own business. Other courses interviewees said they were interested in doing were varied and included: music technology, bodyguarding, business studies and accounting, advertising and commercials, and gym/fitness instructor.

A few prisoners wanted to go to university after their release (one of whom had already applied) and another prisoner from Eastern Europe wanted to go to college to improve his written English¹⁶.

¹⁶ Interestingly, in this case, the interviewee said he had not learnt anything from a class he had attended in prison, as he felt the teacher had focused on helping other prisoners in the class who could not speak English – which he could.

For some interviewees it was clear that their thoughts about going into training or education were more of an aspiration, or something they might want to do in the future, rather than an actual plan. Others, though, said they did intend following up their plans on release. Affordability was a key feature that was mentioned as a probable barrier to participating in education or training. The kinds of problems raised included not being able to afford to train and not work, having to save up money first to be able to buy books, the cost of the training itself¹⁷, or having to re-sit exams or do a foundation course first due to not having any qualifications. Indeed, in a few cases plans had to wait almost a year anyway because their release date was after the start of the new academic year.

Receiving careers advice or support while in prison was not commonly reported. Those who did were all from the same prison. They had seen careers advisers based in the prison or met with representatives from local colleges who attended the regular pre-release event at the prison (this was the same prison as referred to at Section 2.5.2). Support received included advice and information on the different options and courses available and information on payment of fees. In a few cases, staff had helped prisoners to apply for a college place.

2.6.2 Post-release plans and activities

Despite what was said prior to their release, few interviewees followed-up their plans to go into education or training on release¹⁸. The reasons given for not doing so included:

- drug relapse – as a result, prisoners either returned to prison or their priorities were focused on getting off drugs;
- losing interest or changing their mind – priorities for these prisoners on release were focused on work and earning money; and
- cost of education and training was felt to be prohibitive.

The plans and circumstances of those who did follow-up with education and training on release were all different. However, while they had either received careers advice in prison, been referred to training by their probation officer, or applied to go to university, none had actually started in education or training by the end of the follow-up period – in some cases this was as a result of plans falling through or having to be postponed. Prisoners' experiences reflect the concerns they had prior to their release, such as cost, having to wait several months before

¹⁷ For example, one interviewee wanted to become a bodyguard, but the cost of the training course to renew his licence, which he had gained while in the army, was £3,000.

¹⁸ The Eastern European prisoner declined to participate in any further interview, therefore it is not known whether or not he followed-up his plans to attend English classes.

being able to get on to a training course¹⁹ and the unavoidable delays caused by having to fit plans around course start dates. Thus, having to wait for several months to get a place on a training course or having to wait until the start of a new academic year, would seem to make it less likely that ex-prisoners will realise their aims for training or education when they face considerable uncertainty on release and when their circumstances are liable to change very quickly.

2.7 Case studies

Tim's story (age 19)

Tim's story illustrates the difficulties faced in finding employment as a result of being on a curfew and having a criminal record and illustrates how plans to go into higher education fell through due to problems of cost. Tim's employment experience on release was one of repeated moves in and out of work across several different employers.

Tim had been imprisoned for grievous bodily harm as a result of being in a drunken fight. It was his first offence. Before his imprisonment Tim had worked as a support worker for adults with mental health conditions and learning disabilities. Tim was released early from prison on a tag (Home Detention Curfew) and returned to live with his parents.

He had been hoping to return to his old job, but his employer was unable to take him back due to his criminal record. He applied for similar jobs with other employers, but in each case was unsuccessful because he failed Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks. Instead, Tim started looking for any kind of work and found several jobs, but none of them lasted for very long. He did not disclose his criminal record to potential employers because he thought it would prevent him from finding work.

When on the tag Tim felt that it was his main barrier to work. He was unable to leave home until 7.15 am, but most job vacancies he was looking at started at 7.30 – 8.00am which did not allow him enough time to travel to work unless it was local. The tag also restricted his ability to work late as he had to be back home by 7.15pm. At one job he was asked to work overtime which he couldn't do because of his curfew hours. He needed a letter from his employer to give to his probation officer in order to get his curfew hours changed. When he asked his employer for this letter and thereby had to reveal that he had been released from prison on a tag, he was no longer needed to work overtime and was laid off very shortly after.

Continued

¹⁹ One interviewee who was on a waiting list had returned to prison before getting a training place.

Tim found other jobs – packing work, cutting down a tree, but they were all temporary and ended once the job was finished. Six months after his release Tim was working part-time for a friend doing casual labouring work as and when his friend needed extra help.

Tim's longer-term goal was to have a career as a social worker, for which he needed to complete a social work degree. While in prison, and with the help of a member of staff, Tim applied to the Open University to do a degree in health and social care which would start around three months after his release. The course fees were £525 which Tim was advised would be paid for him if he was out of work. On release Tim was claiming benefits and went to the Jobcentre to get his paperwork stamped to get his fees paid. However, when the course was due to start he was no longer in receipt of benefits and was required to pay the fee which he could not afford. As a consequence Tim did not start his degree course, but was hoping to save up enough money from his wages to pay the fees and start the course in six months time.

Graham's story (age 34)

Graham's story illustrates a range of barriers to work, including homelessness, employer discrimination, not being able to get a reference as well as illustrating difficulties in accessing employment support.

Graham had worked for 16 years in double-glazing sales before getting involved in drug dealing. He was also a qualified chef. On release Graham had nowhere to live and ended up staying with a friend when housing support did not materialise. After being kicked out of his friend's house he slept rough for a while. He was offered a place to stay with an acquaintance, but did not stay there long as he began using drugs with them, and left, preferring to sleep rough.

Despite his accommodation difficulties Graham was determined to find a job. He went to the Jobcentre several times a week to find work and had several job interviews. At his first few job interviews he disclosed that he had just come out of prison but found that *'the conversation just died'* and that the interviewers lost interest. After this he stopped disclosing his offending background, except for admitting to a driving ban. Graham thought he may have been disadvantaged at other job interviews due to looking a bit *'rough'* as a result of sleeping on the streets. He used public swimming baths to get washed and changed in.

Continued

Graham went to the Jobcentre wanting financial help to buy protective clothing needed for a job vacancy he had found. Jobcentre staff told him the only way he could access this was if he was on New Deal, but because he had not been claiming JSA for six months they couldn't put him on it. Despite an apparent reluctance from Jobcentre staff to refer him, after some persistence and determination on Graham's part, he was eventually put on New Deal – *'I said I want to be put on the New Deal. And it wasn't until I was put on the New Deal that I left the Jobcentre.'* He did not get the job.

The closest Graham got to getting a job was as a live-in kitchen porter at a hotel. He found the vacancy at the Jobcentre and recognised the name of the manager as someone his brother-in-law used to work with. He called the manager, told him of his connection to the brother-in-law and was invited for an interview. Graham was offered the job but needed two references. His brother-in-law gave him one reference leaving him needing one more from a 'professional'. Not knowing who else to ask he asked his probation officer for a reference, but he never received it and did not get the job. In his view Probation let him down.

Three months after his release Graham was back in prison having been caught for a house burglary. Graham said he did it because he was living on the streets and had no money. Not having a job was also a contributory factor.

Daniel's story (age 37)

Daniel's story is an example of where appropriate employment support was provided and was successful in helping him find work. However, work was not permanent – moving in and out of work with the same employer.

Daniel had mostly been in employment since leaving school, working in warehouses. He met p2w/p2w-LinkUP in prison and they arranged to meet with him again on release. p2w/p2w-LinkUP paid for Daniel to re-take his fork lift licences which had expired. Within a week of meeting his adviser Daniel had his new licences. Daniel compared this to the 13 week course he had been offered at his local Jobcentre – which he felt was ridiculous as he had been driving fork lifts for 20 years.

Two weeks later Daniel had found work in a factory via an employment agency. Although Daniel would probably have found work himself anyway, he felt that the support he had received had helped him to get a better job than he might otherwise have done.

Continued

Work via the employment agency was temporary, on a week by week basis. He spent three weeks unemployed after being laid off, but was then called directly by the employer and asked to come back. At the end of the sixth month follow-up period Daniel was still working at the factory on a temporary basis, but was intending to apply for a permanent position that had just come up.

James' story (age 26)

James' story is presented to illustrate how someone who was not in a position to look for work on release moved closer to the labour market as a result of receiving drugs support and returning home to his parents.

James left school aged 14 with no qualifications and was kicked out of home at the age of 16. He had some work experience, but had mostly earned money by selling drugs or by claiming benefits, or both. He had been using heroin and other drugs for about ten years and was regularly in and out of prison. Before this sentence, James had been staying temporarily with friends. He came off drugs as a result of going into prison and so was 'clean' before release. His main concern on release was finding somewhere to live. He was expecting to return to drug dealing in order to raise enough money for a deposit on a private let. James had aspirations to work, but needed somewhere to live first and to be off heroin.

On release he claimed JSA as a temporary measure until he was able to get a sick note from his GP. Within his first week of release he used money from friends and family and from his Discharge Grant to set up in 'business' again and started selling and using heroin. After arrangements for a flat share with a friend fell through he stayed with another friend (also a heroin user), but three months after release they were expecting to be evicted.

James' circumstances changed when he was arrested for possession of heroin and received a deferred sentence with a DTTO and moved back to his parents. Through being arrested James was referred to a drugs agency, given methadone and was required to attend weekly drug testing. He changed his benefit claim to IB. Six months after his release James was adjusting to being on methadone and was now thinking about work for when he felt more stable. He was considering warehouse work (which he had done before) and wanted to take his driving test which would help him find employment (although he had an outstanding charge for driving without insurance, licence or MOT and was expecting to receive a driving ban).

Continued

In the meantime there was the possibility of doing some cash-in-hand labouring work for a family friend, although he did not yet know how this would fit in with having to go to the chemist every day to take his methadone. James saw work as a means of keeping busy and keeping his mind off drugs, as well as providing him with money.

3 Housing

Summary

Support with gaining stable housing is a critical need for ex-prisoners in the period immediately following release. Without it, many other goals – such as seeking employment or trying to live free of drugs – are much more difficult and, for many, these additional difficulties result in a return to prison.

Their experiences show that:

- although for some it worked well, the housing advice and support in prison was generally considered to be poor;
- too often 'support' was simply a case of prisoners being provided with a list of hostels, bed and breakfasts and private landlords or being told about and having to find relevant agencies themselves; and
- although people returning to their family home after prison have little need for support, the greatest need for timely advice and support is clearly for those who know they have no accommodation to go to on release.

For some of the most vulnerable ex-prisoners, not being able to find accommodation meant they were left in situations where there was a high risk of re-offending, re-engaging in substance abuse, and, ultimately, returning to prison.

In this chapter we examine interviewees' experiences of housing, both before they entered prison and on their release and trace any changes once they were out of prison. We were interested in whether prisoners entered prison from settled or insecure accommodation; whether they had experienced any difficulties in finding or keeping accommodation in the past; whether they had expectations about where they would go on release; and whether the reality matched their expectations. Here we focus on the interviewees' experience and perceptions of their housing issues and the types of support available. We then look in more detail at the range of experiences interviewees had after leaving prison. We will look briefly at the plans all of the prisoners (i.e. 40 in total) had for accommodation

on their release, and how these plans worked in practice for the 31 who were re-interviewed at Waves 2 and/or 3.

Housing is particularly important for ex-prisoners. The evidence is clear that those who are homeless are more likely to be reconvicted; less likely to find paid work; and find it difficult to access other support services (Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), 2002). Moreover, up to a third of prisoners lose their accommodation during periods in custody. Homeless ex-prisoners find it difficult to access housing, with a limited supply of hostel accommodation and many private landlords demanding deposits and bonds that are difficult for ex-prisoners to find. This is exacerbated by the fact that up to a third of prisoners do not have permanent housing before their imprisonment. Thus, for many ex-prisoners, a lack of stable housing can lead to a lack of services and support, no employment and potential re-offending.

Research suggests that stable accommodation can make a difference of over 20 per cent in terms of reduction in reconviction. This is unsurprising as the need to look for housing makes it hard to find a job and earn money legitimately – over three times as many ex-prisoners with an address on release were in paid employment as those without an address (emphasis in original) (SEU, 2002: 95).

3.1 Housing support in prison

Since April 2005, all local prisons have been required to carry out a housing needs assessment of every new prisoner, including those serving short sentences (DCLG, 2006). As such, all the prisoners interviewed for this research should have been asked about their plans for accommodation after release and could have requested housing advice and support while they were in prison.

Although most interviewees said they had requested such support, many said they had not received it at the point of the first interview for this research (shortly before release). Some of those about to be released said the support they had been offered was inadequate or inappropriate, often consisting of a list of local hostels, bed and breakfast hotels and private landlords.

Perhaps not surprisingly, those who intended moving back into the family or parental home did not seek housing support while in prison. Although some of them had longer-term plans to live independently, they were clear that they were happy to live with their families initially and try to sort out independent accommodation at some point in the future. Having their families to fall back on clearly reduced the uncertainty faced by many of the other interviewees and removed the need to attempt to get housing support while in prison.

Those who had nowhere specific to go to on release from prison were more likely to say they had requested housing advice and support when in prison, although some of them had been in insecure housing situations (sleeping rough, periodically staying in hostels and with friends) in the past and were aware of the provision of hostels. However, some of them felt that the existence of long-standing rent

arrears meant that social housing was unlikely to be offered and, as such, did not feel they had many options open to them. Perhaps reflecting this, interviewees in this group tended to be fairly negative about the support offered in prison. Criticisms of the housing support provided in prison were that it was provided too late to be of any use, and did not provide them with definite accommodation on release:

'The housing support in this place is completely abysmal, absolutely useless. Nine times out of ten it doesn't matter how long a sentence you do, they'll probably turn up about a week before you get out, and most of all they do is say "Well, we can't get you anywhere" or "Here's a list of places".'

(Chris, age 33)

'I mean, my main concern is housing and furnishings, because when I leave here I've got absolutely nothing. I've got two kids to support, you know. I've put applications in to see a housing officer...I've not seen a housing officer at all.'

(Vince, age 34)

'Just filled in an application form to see the housing officer. She should have come to see us before the end of September, but they haven't done that. There's no help whatsoever. All she's given me today, she said 'I'm sorry I couldn't have sorted anything out for you' and she's give us a list of six bed and breakfasts and a photocopied sheet of some private landlords...but you must have a month's rent and a grand up front, and where are you going to get that sort of money from?'

(Graham, age 34)

The point Graham made about private landlords was echoed by many of the interviewees. Although private rentals were available to them, few could afford the deposit and a month's rent in advance. This exacerbated the problems of those to whom social housing was unavailable due to rent arrears.

Where help was in the process of being arranged, prisoners were unclear about what was happening, which added to their anxiety. For example, the Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare Services (CARATS)²⁰ worker was working alongside an external drug agency to find hostel accommodation for a prisoner awaiting drug rehabilitation. At the time of his first interview he had received no confirmation about where he was going to go and he saw a further prison sentence as a fall-back if things did not work out. In another case, the prison housing officer was seeking social accommodation for a prisoner with a

²⁰ CARATS provide non-clinical drug interventions. They are available in all prisons and offer low intensity support, such as managed withdrawal and detoxification, as well as referral to community support.

serious health condition. Again, the prisoner had received no confirmation of arrangements at the time of the first interview, shortly before release.

Although a commonly expressed view was that housing support within prisons was inadequate, for some it appeared to work well. For example, the prisoner mentioned above, who had a serious health condition, did get accommodation arranged with the help of the prison housing officer and a voluntary sector housing association after release. The accommodation – a furnished flat – was temporary and available within a week of his release. In the interim he stayed with his sister. His housing support worker continued to work with him, securing him a permanent tenancy within six months of release.

3.2 Housing support in the community

Once out of prison, there were more agencies and opportunities available for housing support. These included probation, local authority homeless officers, voluntary organisations and family members. Ex-prisoners' experiences of such support varied, some support being seen as being more constructive than others.

The importance of family support cannot be over-emphasised. When interviewees were able to move into the parental/family home, they had more time to find suitable independent accommodation and a stable environment in the interim. Family support could also be utilised before the interviewees left prison. In some cases parents could provide a safe haven for drug users and prevent a further custodial sentence, in others they could arrange accommodation or housing support for release. For example, Steve, a former heroin addict, was staying with various friends when he entered prison. His family did not live in the city where the prison was located, making it more difficult for Steve to access housing support in prison. His brother worked for the local authority and arranged for Steve to see a housing officer on release. This resulted in Steve moving straight into a local authority temporary, furnished flat and, by the final interview, he had a permanent tenancy (see Steve's case study, Section 3.4).

3.3 Transitions on release from prison

Following their release from prison, the interviewees fell into four broad categories regarding their housing situation:

- those who intended going to their parental/family home;
- those who intended returning to a partner;
- those who had previously lived alone and intended returning to their own homes; and
- those who had nowhere specific to go on release.

We will look at each of these categories in turn.

3.3.1 Those intending going to the parental/family home

Some interviewees said they intended living in the parental/family home on their release from prison. Most of these had been living with their families prior to their imprisonment and said they anticipated no accommodation problems. However, for others, moving to the parental/family home was not a matter of choice, it being a result of having lost a tenancy on entering prison or a relationship ending while in prison.

For most of these interviewees, the move back to the parental home was achieved as anticipated. Where things did not go as planned, this was because of a range of reasons, which included:

- not being allowed back into the parental home and being accepted as homeless on release (and subsequently being housed by the local authority);
- going into residential rehabilitation for heroin addiction; and
- re-establishing a relationship and moving back in with a former partner.

Once resident in the family home, interviewees were able to register with Jobcentre Plus and actively seek employment immediately, unlike those who had no settled accommodation. Furthermore, parents were likely to allow their sons to live with them rent-free, thus alleviating the financial difficulties of those who had to pay rent and buy food. Although living in the parental home resulted in housing security and the ability to register with Jobcentre Plus and actively seek work, it did not deter interviewees from re-offending or breaching their license and returning to prison.

By the third interview, six months after release, the range of circumstances of the interviewees was very diverse and complex. While most of this group were still living in the parental home, the experiences of the others indicate the difficulties that this group of people represent in terms of developing an effective policy response:

- Dominic, age 21, returned to his family home, but within three weeks was using crack cocaine. After approximately a month and a half he was back in prison for theft. He had been stealing to support his drug habit.
- Shane was accepted as homeless on release from prison and sought help from the local authority. He had previously been looked after by the local authority. He went first to a bed and breakfast, then to a hostel, then a bedsit and finally a flat. Once in the flat, Shane had parties resulting in complaints from the neighbours. He was recalled to prison as a result of this as he was in breach of his licence (see Shane's case study, Section 3.4).
- Liam had been living with his family and had already had a brief return to prison for breaching a curfew. By the final interview he was back in prison serving a six-month sentence. He anticipated returning to the parental home once again on release (see Liam's case study, Section 3.4).

- John, age 25, had returned to his partner on release even though the relationship had (temporarily) ended while in prison, had once again separated, been re-imprisoned and released and had returned to his partner between the second and third interviews.

Previous housing issues

Most of this group had not experienced any previous housing or accommodation problems. This is mainly because they tended to be younger, typically in their twenties, and had never lived anywhere other than the family home. Where problems did exist this was in the form of rent arrears from previous accommodation.

3.3.2 Those intending returning to a partner

Some interviewees had been living with a partner before their imprisonment and said they intended returning to that partner on release. This was achieved by most of them on release, but by the time of the final interview, not all were still with their partners. Reasons for moving out included:

- temporary separation;
- return to prison; and
- moving into residential rehabilitation.

For example, one interviewee who planned to move in with his partner, but did not do so, was a heroin addict whose partner refused to have him back until she saw whether he remained drug free. He went to live with his father and started using heroin on his first day out of prison. Once his father realised his son was using heroin again, he asked him to leave and the interviewee ended up sleeping rough.

While having a partner to return to offered an element of housing stability, it did not necessarily deter the interviewees from returning to crime or using drugs again.

Previous housing issues

Some of those returning to partners had previously experienced housing difficulties. These interviewees were heroin users, and in some cases, their partners were also users. Instability was a way of life that usually extended to their living arrangements:

'[I stayed] mainly at my girlfriend's, and at friends' as well, in between. Before I was with my girlfriend I was at different friends'. Just unstable, my lifestyle, just moving about and that...I've been in and out of my own housing and that. I've had council houses, losing them through coming into jail, so it's been a bit hectic and unstable really.'

(Gareth, age 36)

Some of those who were living with partners continued to experience some difficulties. For example, one interviewee was living in overcrowded accommodation with his partner and four children, but was unable to get re-housed by the local authority due to rent arrears.

3.3.3 Those intending returning alone to existing home

A few prisoners reported having been living alone in their own accommodation before entering prison. Some of these prisoners were intending to return to their own home on release. However, others said they had nowhere to live on release or were intending to live in the parental home. This was because they had lost their accommodation when they were imprisoned.

Parents were important in supporting some ex-prisoners in returning to their own home. For example, in one case a prisoner's parents had taken care of his flat while he was in prison, paying bills and re-decorating. He reported that they had continued to offer a high level of both practical and financial support on his release.

As will be seen below, the loss of accommodation on entry to prison can have a huge impact on a prisoner's future.

3.3.4 Those with nowhere to go on release

Some interviewees said they anticipated that they could be without accommodation on release. This group's previous living arrangements were varied and included having previously been living with partners; living alone; living as a lone parent; living in shared accommodation; being in the army; and having no settled accommodation prior to being imprisoned (this latter group including living with friends, in hostels or on the streets).

By the second interview, when the interviewees in this group had been out of prison for three months, most had found accommodation. Those who still had no settled accommodation had either been staying with friends, in hostels, on the streets, or had returned to prison.

Where accommodation was found

Of those who had found accommodation, they had either returned to the family/parental home, gone back to previous partners, were in private rented accommodation or were in temporary accommodation awaiting a permanent home. In addition, a few were living in flats owned by family and friends; again (as with employment), highlighting the importance of family and friends in helping ex-prisoners in the early days after release from prison.

Six months after release, interviewees remained in accommodation provided by parents and friends. Those who had been in temporary accommodation had been housed and now had permanent tenancies. These ex-prisoners had all

achieved some housing stability. Those who were fit to work were actively seeking employment although none had found work.

Those who remained with no settled accommodation

As might be expected, those ex-prisoners who remained with no fixed abode fared less well than those who found (and retained) some accommodation. They were likely to be living rough or spending nights with friends and acquaintances. All of these were either drug users or had alcohol problems. Six months after release they had either returned to prison or moved into the parental home.

Although the interviewees who had no settled accommodation experienced more instability than those who returned to family or partners or to live alone, they appeared to be no more likely to return to prison. The single most significant factor for those returning to prison was drug use, specifically heroin addiction. Some of the interviewees felt that they would almost inevitably end up back in prison if they failed to find accommodation. This was partly due to being forced back into the company of other drug users when they were trying to remain drug free, but also because prison was considered more comfortable than living rough, especially in winter.

Previous housing issues

Some of those who anticipated having nowhere to live on release had experienced previous housing difficulties. Drugs were a common factor in their losing or being unable to retain accommodation. The lack of housing meant that often the only place they could go was to other drug using friends. This invariably resulted in them using drugs again themselves. As one commented when asked whether anything could help him to remain crime-free:

'Decent accommodation would make a difference. You see, if you're going out, you're going straight back into your mate's house and they're all doing whatever, do you know what I mean? That's what I've been having to do for the last few years to get by...and you're just banged straight back into it [drugs and crime].'

(James, age 26)

Insecure housing situations were often a way of life for these drug using interviewees:

'I was homeless before and I've been homeless on and off for the last five years...[I stay] in sheds, and sofa surfing at friends' houses, stuff like that'.

(Chris, age 33)

'It was finding somewhere to live that was the hardest part. And if my mate hadn't put us up I would have been on the streets. My mam and dad wouldn't take us back'.

(Graham, age 34)

Being in rent arrears compounded the problems many of the homeless ex-prisoners experienced as they found it difficult to access social housing:

'I've got arrears with the council so I can't have a place'.

(Matt, age 24)

'When I was with my ex-partner we, with the housing forms, with not filling the right forms in properly we got into like £1,400 rent arrears debt with the council, so we got evicted. Up to now I think I owe £600 and something. Because I paid all that amount of money that I paid off it, she was able to get re-housed because of the kids. And even though I'm the one that's paying it, they won't re-house me until it's below £200. So I've still got to keep paying it'.

(Chris, age 33)

It is clear that the interviewees who had no settled accommodation to go to initially experienced more instability than those who had accommodation arranged. However, most did find somewhere to live, the exceptions being ex-prisoners with long histories of drug use and fewer family resources to fall back on. The experiences of this group strongly suggest that specific efforts should be made to ensure prisoners have accommodation arranged for them on release, especially those who have drug issues.

3.4 Case studies

Vince's story (age 43)

Vince's experiences demonstrate the problems that can occur when prisoners lose a secure tenancy on admission to prison. It also shows the importance of self-determination and the tenacity required when prison housing support is inadequate.

Vince lived with his two children before entering prison. He had been a lone parent since his children were very young and was living in social housing and in receipt of benefits. He lost his tenancy when he was imprisoned and a fire in his unoccupied house destroyed all his belongings. In common with many people on a low income he had no insurance. On release he visited the neighbourhood office who put him in contact with the local council homeless team. He spent three weeks in bed and breakfast and was then placed in temporary accommodation where his children joined him. By the third interview he had a permanent tenancy through the local authority. Vince was very determined to reunite his family and actively sought support. As he did not live in the same locality as the prison (into which he was transferred partially through his sentence) there was little they could do to help. Self-determination and a knowledge of the local support available were invaluable.

Mark's story (age 33)

Mark's story is a good example of prison housing support working well. As a prisoner with ongoing health problems, housing was an even higher priority than with other prisoners, and this example demonstrates how prison and community support can work together.

Mark has a health condition that requires regular hospital treatment. Before being imprisoned he lived alone in a rented flat, but lost his tenancy when he went to prison. The housing officer from the prison liaised with a voluntary housing organisation on Mark's behalf and this organisation arranged for him to move into one of their emergency furnished flats a week after his release. He spent the first week with his sister. The voluntary organisation that provided the flat also provided a housing support worker who worked with Mark, helping him to apply for social housing and a community care grant. By the final interview Mark had his permanent tenancy. Mark was very positive about his support worker and the agency that helped him.

Chris's story (age 33)

Chris's story demonstrates the downward spiral that can happen when the only housing option is hostel accommodation and when drug rehabilitation is not available.

Chris has a long history of drug use that began with amphetamines and LSD as a teenager and eventually resulted in heroin addiction. He has had many custodial and community sentences, all for theft to provide money to buy drugs. Before entering prison he was living in a hostel, but he has also lived on the streets and with various drug using friends. He has rent arrears from several years ago and is unable to access social housing until this debt is reduced. Chris was getting help with his addiction before going to prison and was using Subutex. During his time in prison he used methadone.

Chris was hoping to go into residential rehabilitation on release, but there was no place for him. He slept rough for three weeks before getting a hostel place, but was asked to leave when he failed to meet the conditions imposed on residents. He was then in an insecure housing situation and lived on the streets and with various friends. He returned to prison after breaching his licence by missing a probation appointment. During this time Chris managed to avoid using heroin, but did use amphetamines to make living rough more bearable. He was shoplifting to survive, but was not caught. When he was released for the second time during the six-month research period, he was still on the waiting list for residential rehabilitation and was hoping to get accommodation in a hostel.

4 Substance misuse

Summary

Most prisoners had substance misuse problems. For prisoners with drug problems, becoming abstinent after release was often a priority, and seen as key to helping them become crime free and gain stability in their lives. Interviewees experienced multiple problems through drug use that included lack of housing, relationship breakdown, unemployment, re-offending, and poor mental and physical health.

Their experiences show that:

- prisons were, on the whole, effective in providing low intensity support such as detoxification;
- where arrangements to help prevent drug relapse on release were put in place, they were generally realised. However, for some ex-prisoners, essential arrangements were missing, most significantly a lack of suitable accommodation for release;
- relapse was common even where reasonably good relapse prevention measures were in place. When individuals' situations unravelled, they often did so very quickly after release; and
- some prisoners viewed prison itself as a form of 'drug treatment'.

Patterns of alcohol consumption varied and most interviewees did not consider that they had a drink problem. It was felt that alcohol treatments were less well developed than those delivered through drug treatment services.

This chapter examines interviewees' experiences of drug and alcohol support in prison and on release, and explores the trajectories made in relation to drug/alcohol use and employment for those who were re-interviewed after release. We were interested in whether arrangements for release subsequently materialised, and whether any other arrangements were put into place once they were living in the community. Drug users and alcohol mis-users are reported separately.

Drugs and alcohol misuse are strongly associated with offending. For example, the Home Office estimate that one-third of crime related to theft can be linked to the purchase of heroin or cocaine (National Audit Office (NAO), 2002). Drugs and alcohol misuse can make re-integration into the community highly problematic. Prisoners with drug or alcohol problems are more likely to encounter problems moving into employment or training on release (Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), 2002), to report problems with finances and relationships, and to experience poor mental health (Singleton *et al.*, 1998).

4.1 Coming off drugs and/or alcohol while in prison

The Prison Service Drugs Strategy was introduced in 1998 and aims to develop a comprehensive treatment framework. The Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare Services (CARATS) is available in all prisons and offers low intensity support, such as managed withdrawal and detoxification, as well as referral to community support. Less widely available are intensive treatment programmes, aimed at prisoners with moderate to severe drug misuse problems.

The Prison Service Alcohol Strategy is less well developed than the Drugs Strategy, and delivery has been reported as patchy (SEU, 2002). Again, the focus is on assessment, managed withdrawal and detoxification, and referral to community support.

4.1.1 Interviewees' experiences of prison treatments for drug use

Interviewees with drug problems were most commonly addicted to opioids and stimulants such as heroin and cocaine. All of the interviewees with drug problems had previous convictions, with many having served at least four previous prison sentences. Most were serving sentences of less than 12 months.

Most drug users said they had received at least one visit from a CARATS worker. As a result they had been placed either on a methadone²¹ maintenance treatment programme or were receiving methadone during a detoxification treatment programme. It was not always clear that prisoners who underwent detoxification were intent on achieving abstinence either in prison or on release. For example, one prisoner admitted to supplementing his treatment programme with heroin acquired within the prison.

Some prisoners who were formerly opioid-dependent, were abstinent at the time of the prison interviews; in some cases because they had completed detoxification at previous prisons before being transferred. The drug Naltrexone²², was prescribed

²¹ Methadone hydrochloride is a synthetic opiate, and is prescribed as a substitute for heroin and other opioids.

²² Naltrexone is recommended as a treatment option in detoxified formerly opioid-dependent people who are highly motivated to remain abstinent.

for some abstinent interviewees although Subutex²³ was not generally available as a treatment programme in the prisons. This resulted in one abstinent interviewee being forced to discontinue his community-based treatment programme of Subutex when he entered prison.

A few drug users had decided 'to go it alone' although they had been offered support by a CARATS worker. Reasons given were that they did not like taking methadone, and because it was quicker (albeit more painful) to withdraw without methadone. These interviewees underwent what is described as 'the rattle': symptoms include sickness and vomiting, stomach ache, diarrhoea, shivering, sweating and agitation. In one case, the tranquillizer Diazepam had been prescribed to alleviate symptoms.

A few interviewees received counselling although it was not always clear what type of psychological therapy this had entailed. Some interviewees were disparaging about counselling. They felt CARATS workers could not fully understand their situation or that counselling was not the support they needed:

'[CARATS workers] just offer to listen to you, but you're banged up 24/7 with a pad mate. If you want someone to talk to you've got a cell mate.'

(John, aged 25)

'[The CARATS worker] will come and talk to you about drugs...but they haven't fucking been there, do you know what I mean.'

(James, aged 26)

Some interviewees said they continued their drug habits within prison, either by continuing to take heroin or by abusing Subutex²⁴. They said these were acquired illegally within the prison.

Several prisoners said that they had requested to see a CARATS worker, but claimed they had had no response. However, analysis of the data shows that these interviewees did have some contact with the CARAT service. It is perhaps, therefore, the case that these interviewees perceived the level of service offered to them to be inadequate or inappropriate for their needs. For example, one interviewee had undergone detoxification, but was disappointed that he had not been offered therapeutic counselling alongside.

Very few interviewees with drug problems had attended courses specifically related to drugs awareness. Only one interviewee had requested the course, but had received no response from the prison education department.

²³ Subutex is the brand name for opioid buprenorphine, a prescribed treatment for heroin withdrawal and abstinence.

²⁴ Subutex causes mild euphoria.

Some prisoners who wished to give up drugs perceived that prison offered them a range of services and opportunities. For some it provided a refuge from an addiction that was soaring out of control:

'That's why I was pleased I'd come to jail in a way or I wouldn't like to say what would have happened, do you know what I mean, because I was using more and more and more.'

(Alan, aged 32)

Others saw prison in more ambitious terms: as an opportunity to start their lives afresh, or to become better parents by giving up drugs. For another it was simply the realisation that his current lifestyle was becoming too hard.

4.1.2 Interviewees' experiences of prison treatments for alcohol mis-use

For interviewees with alcohol problems there is no substitute treatment for alcohol (as in the case of methadone treatment programmes) and there were no cases of interviewees illegally acquiring alcohol in prison. Therefore, detoxification is usually the only option. The symptoms of withdrawal described by prisoners were generally mild to moderate: sweating, shaking, disturbed sleep patterns and nightmares.

Prisoners varied in their attitudes toward alcohol with some acknowledging that they had a problem and others describing, for example, alcohol-fuelled violence as 'a one-off' incident, a 'moment of madness'. Interviewees also varied considerably in their reported level of alcohol use and patterns of alcohol consumption. Whereas some interviewees may have been alcohol dependent, others appeared to display non-dependent but, nonetheless, hazardous relationships with alcohol. Crimes committed by these prisoners included drink driving, and violent crimes associated with heavy drinking. Some prisoners said they believed that their crimes had been alcohol-related.

As yet there are no clinical guidelines for the identification and management of alcohol use disorders and it was apparent that none of the interviewees had been offered assessments and/or comprehensive treatment programmes for their alcohol problems.

Most of the prisoners with alcohol problems had not received any support or medical treatment for their drinking problem during their sentences. Some did not feel they needed support. Indeed, one interviewee had refused to see a CARATS worker. However, there were examples where interviewees had requested to see a CARATS worker, but support had not been forthcoming.

Of interviewees who did receive support, most had been prescribed a short course (usually of six weeks duration) of the drug Librium²⁵. Others received counselling²⁶, or education specifically related to alcohol misuse.

4.2 Interviewees' expectations of drug use on release and support arranged

Although prisoners with drug problems can make good progress in prison the chances of continuing drug programmes or remaining drug-free on release are slim (SEU, 2002).

At the time of the prison interviews, the CARAT service was making release arrangements for most of the interviewees. Arrangements encompassed:

- organising residential rehabilitation;
- appointments with drug workers from social services or probation;
- prescriptions for either Subutex or Naltrexone;
- referrals to voluntary organisations; and
- setting up arrangements for completion of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTOs).

Some prisoners said they had no arrangements in place for their release. For example, one interviewee had not been able to see a CARATS worker until very late in his sentence. He was disappointed by this, and also felt alienated by the service because during a previous prison sentence the CARAT service had failed to arrange a prescription for Subutex in time for his release. He said he had decided 'to find his own way'.

Prisoners varied considerably in their expectations of how their drug habits might evolve on release. Some were (cautiously) optimistic about staying off drugs; others were more confident, and felt that they had proven they could stay off drugs by remaining abstinent in prison.

On the whole, prisoners were circumspect, and acknowledged it was probably easier to refrain from taking drugs within the prison environment. For these interviewees, the biggest concern was the temptation of drugs within the context of a network of friends associated with the drug scene. One prisoner on a methadone treatment programme explained:

²⁵ Librium is a benzodiazepine, prescribed to relieve the symptoms of sudden alcohol withdrawal.

²⁶ Both were longer-term prisoners, and both said that they suffered from depression. It was not clear, therefore, whether the counselling had been triggered in response to an alcohol disorder or the depression.

'[Drugs] are going to be there really. I'll stay at my girlfriend's, my girlfriend's on [heroin]...I'll just stay with her and that and help her, its just the risk of me getting on it myself then I suppose.'

(Gareth, aged 36)

Several prisoners said they probably would return to drug taking on release, either because of their circumstances on release, such as having no job, or because of the compelling nature of the drug itself.

Interviewees often cited the element of temptation as the reason for preferring opioid blocker drugs, such as Subutex, to other treatment programmes. Blockers were viewed as a medical means of eliminating the temptation (although social pressures would remain).

4.3 Drug use and support after release

Drug users most commonly left prison clean of drugs having undergone detoxification. Detoxification followed by opiate abuse carries the risk of overdose. However, no interviewees said they had experienced an overdose on release.

4.3.1 Interviewees without drugs support

All but one of the ex-prisoners without drugs support said they were using heroin, cocaine, or crack cocaine within two to three weeks of release (one said he started using the day he was released). Ex-prisoners also admitted to re-offending within the first few weeks of release in order to fund their drug habits. Shoplifting, trading in stolen goods, and drug selling were the crimes most commonly described. Interviewees had either been arrested, returned to prison or intended to return to prison because of lack of accommodation. Housing problems were a feature of this group: interviewees described either sharing with friends who were also drug users or sleeping rough. Patrick's case study (Section 4.6) illustrates the role drugs can have in generating housing difficulties.

There was only one example of an ex-prisoner without support in place for release who remained abstinent throughout the fieldwork period. He appears atypical compared with the other interviewees in three key respects: he expressed extremely positive views about remaining drugs free throughout, he had close and supportive siblings, and had local authority housing in place in time for his release date, which he said had been arranged by his brother.

4.3.2 Interviewees with drugs support

Support following release invariably consisted of counselling, methadone treatment programmes, medication, rehabilitation or a combination of these. Support was often provided via Drugs Interventions Programmes (DIPs)²⁷ and DTTOs, by social services, voluntary agencies, and General Practitioners (GPs). There was only one example of the CARATS successfully organising emergency housing for a drug user. It was not always clear which organisations had referred interviewees for support nor which organisations were providing treatments.

The arrangements for drugs support on release materialised in all but one case (this was for a prescription for Subutex). One interviewee rejected a prescription for Naltrexone even though it had been arranged for him. He did not feel he needed it. All the others received medication and/or attended appointments (although in one case an interviewee postponed his appointment for a couple of weeks).

Some ex-prisoners in this group admitted to using drugs within the first few weeks of release. This included the interviewee whose Subutex prescription had not materialised. Of those using drugs, they were either committing crime or were fearful of committing crime to fund their drug habit and were seeking help to come off drugs. Scott's case study (Section 4.6) illustrates this point.

It was not always the case, however, that drug relapse occurred within the first few weeks of release. For example, in one case an interviewee remained abstinent from heroin with drugs support for several months before relapsing. He felt his relapse had been mainly due to mixing with drug-using friends when he moved back into his mother's house following a relationship break up.

Nevertheless, regardless of release arrangements, interviewees tended to fall quickly into one of two groups:

- drug users seeking help; and
- abstainers.

4.3.3 Drug users seeking help

What is striking is the apparent degree of demand among ex-prisoners for support to help them stop using drugs within the community. None of the drug users were first time offenders and, broadly speaking, interviewees seemed familiar with a range of community agencies to support offenders with drug problems.

Referrals to methadone treatment programmes or rehabilitation units came via the CARATS, social services, probation, police, judges, and sometimes interviewees.

²⁷ The DIP was introduced in April 2003 with the aim of developing and integrating measures for directing adult drug-misusing offenders into drug treatment and reducing re-offending.

Help was sometimes accessed via statutory agencies where interviewees had a probation or social worker. In one case this resulted in a referral to a residential rehabilitation unit where the interviewee undertook the 12 Step Programme for the remainder of the fieldwork period.

Ex-prisoners also self-referred to treatment programmes, often delivered by local charities. Self-referrals were not always successful, however, because of long waiting lists or re-arrest before treatment could commence.

A few interviewees said they had deliberately decided to commit crime in order to return to prison. This was because they were sleeping rough and needed somewhere to live during the winter months, and also because prison provided an opportunity to detoxify. For example, one interviewee said he had tried to work with the DIP, but his housing situation had not been addressed and had become too severe. Another interviewee had left prison with no drug relapse support in place and was convinced his GP would only refer him to a local charity, which from his past experience entailed a very long waiting list. He felt his housing situation and state of health had become too critical to wait.

4.3.4 Interviewees abstinent from drugs

A few interviewees successfully remained abstinent from drugs throughout the fieldwork period. They were either receiving no treatment or were continuing a methadone maintenance programme started in prison. These interviewees were positive about staying off drugs, had supportive families and stable housing arrangements, and saw value in avoiding friends and acquaintances who they knew to be drug users. Their achievements appeared to be supported by a mixture of practical and emotional support, combined with impressive amounts of willpower.

Clearly, not all the ex-prisoners had such resources to draw on. For example, some long-term drug users appeared to have little contact with non-users.

The end-point of fieldwork clearly does not represent the end-point in individuals' journeys to recovery from addiction. All the above abstainers described previous treatment programmes undertaken and/or periods in their lives when they had been abstinent before.

4.3.5 Drug use and employment

Of the ex-prisoners who remained abstinent throughout the fieldwork period, they had either found full-time employment or were seeking employment.

The remaining ex-prisoners had not found employment and were most commonly not seeking employment alongside tackling their addictions. Interviewees attending methadone treatment programmes often felt it was difficult to hold down a job at the same time, not least because of the practical difficulties around attending appointments.

The chaotic lives of some of the interviewees would clearly undermine the ability to secure and retain employment. Many described the 'revolving door' of re-offending and re-conviction, returning to prison within six months of release either for new crimes or breach of community conditions.

4.4 Interviewees' expectations of alcohol use on release and support arranged

There were no examples of any arrangements being made within the prisons to support prisoners with alcohol problems on their release, and most said they did not feel they would have a problem with alcohol when they left prison. Some interviewees said they would continue to drink, but not in the manner that would contribute to health or social problems.

A few prisoners said that they would not have a problem with alcohol simply because they would not be able to afford to drink very much.

There was only one example of a prisoner who said he might have a problem with alcohol on release. This depended on whether his plans for work and housing could be realised:

'If my life runs smooth and I get back to work and they sort me out with a flat...I'd say no. But if I go out and haven't got anywhere properly and can't get a job I should imagine it will be yeah, because I haven't got my family around me and my friends, so I can imagine I'll turn to alcohol.'

(Kevin, aged 48)

4.5 Alcohol use and support after release

Most ex-prisoners said they had drunk to celebrate their release, and that they were drinking occasionally and moderately. A few said they were unable to drink to the quantities they had drunk before prison as their constitutions could no longer tolerate excess alcohol.

However, some ex-prisoners admitted to drinking heavily during the first few weeks of their release, most commonly drinking heavily the same day they were released from prison. A few had found themselves too drunk to attend their Freshstart appointments and/or had spent their discharge grant on alcohol.

Very few interviewees were receiving any form of support within the community on release. Support was GP-led and consisted of repeat prescriptions for vitamin B supplements, and an assessment to attend an anger management course.

Some ex-prisoners rejected support offered to them. For example, one interviewee had found employment and claimed he did not have a drink problem when he

was working. Another discontinued the prescribed drug Antabuse²⁸ because of unpleasant side effects. This interviewee faced multiple problems: he was homeless, in poor health and suffering from depression. He felt he had little support from friends and family.

As time progressed, only one interviewee continued to drink heavily. He described alcohol consumption that resulted in 'black outs'. Although he was still receiving repeat prescriptions for vitamin B supplements he had not visited his GP in over a year. He had a supportive family and stable housing arrangements. He smoked cannabis on a daily basis to ease pain in his knees. He said he drank to alleviate boredom and because of depression. Although his family were concerned for him, he did not feel his drinking was a problem because he was not getting into trouble with the police.

Previously heavy drinkers had cut back on their alcohol consumption for family reasons. For example, in one instance this was due to concern about children going into care. In another case, the ex-prisoner was caring full-time for his elderly father, and he believed that both the responsibility of caring for his father and his reduced income from giving up work had resulted in him drinking less.

Several of the persistent moderate drinkers spoke of their becoming 'older and wiser' as a result of their prison sentence and they were subsequently taking steps to avoid drinking as before. Examples included avoiding pubs they knew to be associated with fighting, of limiting alcohol consumption to weekends only, or working nightshifts to avoid drinking at the weekends. Some of the ex-prisoners had found that their friends had 'moved on' while they were in prison, and now had girlfriends, children and/or jobs. Friends were, therefore, also drinking less as a result of their newly found responsibilities.

A few interviewees returned to prison during the period of the fieldwork, and as far as can be established, alcohol had been a factor.

4.5.1 Alcohol use and employment

Among moderate drinkers, most were either working or seeking work.

Only the heavy drinker did not feel able to work and was not expecting to return to work due to problems with his knees (he needed a knee-cap replacement) and was claiming IB.

²⁸ Antabuse contains the active ingredient disulfiram, and is prescribed to recovering alcoholics to help them abstain from drinking alcohol. If someone taking this medicine drinks alcohol, it quickly causes a severe, unpleasant and potentially dangerous reaction and knowledge of this fact can help to stop people from drinking.

4.6 Case studies

Patrick's story (aged 35)

Patrick had been a heroin addict for 12 years. He had been in and out of prison nearly every year since his heroin addiction began. He had a girlfriend and two young children. They meant a lot to him.

Patrick 'rattled' while in prison. He had no post-release arrangements in place.

Patrick had been looking forward to living with his girlfriend and children on release, but his girlfriend had refused to take him back because she was worried about his drug taking. Patrick had felt bereft and returned to using drugs for 'a bit of comfort'. Although his father had allowed Patrick to live with him, within weeks it became clear to Patrick's father that he was using again. He insisted Patrick leave his house. Patrick stayed with friends when he could, but often slept rough. He could no longer afford to buy heroin and instead took large amounts of painkillers.

Patrick had decided he could no longer sleep rough, and he knew of no agencies that could provide urgent help. Although he said he had not committed any crime during the first few months of release he had finally decided that he would shoplift in order 'to get caught'. He could not think of another option and was upset about bringing more shame on his family. He felt very alone, and described his drug use as worse than ever. He saw prison as the only means of 'getting sorted'.

Patrick did get arrested and returned to prison to serve two months. As before, Patrick 'rattled' in prison and saw the CARATS worker once. Again, he had left prison with no post-release arrangements in place. In the two weeks since his release he had remained drug free. He was planning to see his GP because he would like to be prescribed an opiate blocker. As long as he stayed drug free he could live with his father and see his children. He was trying to stay busy and said he would like to find work. Patrick was not confident about staying drug free, but hoped that he would.

Scott's story (aged 36)

Scott had started using heroin when he was 19 and had served about ten custodial sentences since that time. He had a girlfriend (who was disabled) and four children with whom he lived.

Scott underwent a methadone detoxification programme in prison and had requested Subutex for his release. He felt Subutex offered him a different approach to tackling his addiction to that which he had tried in the past.

The Subutex prescription did not materialise. Scott felt the CARATS worker tried but failed because his prison sentence was too short for arrangements to be put into place. He started using drugs shortly after his release. He was very worried about getting back into crime and social services were threatening to take his children into care.

Scott contacted his social worker. His social worker referred him to a methadone maintenance programme. Scott felt the programme had helped to stabilise his family life. He felt better able to look after his disabled partner and four children. He feels less need to commit crime, due in part to the practical support provided by social services (e.g. the supply of a washing machine for the family when their own had broken down). He feels very positive about the support that social services have provided for him and his family. Scott feels able to function normally on methadone and has been able to take his children to school. Their educational attainment is improving as a result. Four months is the longest time Scott has managed to stay off heroin. He is cautiously optimistic.

5 Ex-prisoner finances

Summary

Ex-prisoners experienced a gap in their finances on release from prison due to having to wait several weeks to receive their first benefit payment, but received a Discharge Grant designed to cover living expenses for only the first week. However, most ex-prisoners had access to other forms of financial support to fall back on.

Their experiences show that:

- Freshstart works in providing an integrated 'through the gate' service for people leaving prison and claiming benefits;
- there was no evidence that crime committed within the first few weeks of release was linked to financial hardship;
- prisoners with drug misuse issues and who were homeless (sleeping rough or had no settled accommodation) on release had more difficulty negotiating their way through the benefit claim system;
- family and friends were a key source of financial support and help protect ex-prisoners from financial hardship;
- those who experienced the most hardship on release faced long delays receiving their first benefit payment and did not have financial support from family or friends;
- many who remained on benefits found it a struggle, whereas those who moved into employment were mostly better off; and
- potential gaps in finances as a result of moving from benefits into work were managed by not 'signing off' immediately.

This chapter discusses the support received in prison by interviewees making benefit claims and explores how prisoners managed the financial transition from prison back into the community. The analysis distinguishes between the immediate financial transition from prison and ongoing, longer-term finances. Links between financial hardship and crime are also explored.

5.1 Support in prison with benefit claims

Most prisoners were expecting to claim benefits on release. Those who weren't were expecting to find work very quickly after release.

Most interviewees intending to claim benefits on release saw an Employment and Benefit Surgery (EBS) adviser and were offered a Freshstart new claims appointment. However, for one interviewee, the appointment was inappropriate given his status as an asylum seeker. Most Freshstart appointments were arranged for the first two days of their release date.

A number of interviewees claimed not to have seen anyone regarding making a benefit claim. Most of these were from the same prison. One interviewee believed the lack of service was due to staff shortages.

Interviewees who declined the offer of a Freshstart appointment did so because they expected to be claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB) or Income Support (IS) and/or because they were already familiar with the benefit system, or because they needed to make a joint claim with a partner. Others who declined were either ambivalent about the need for a pre-arranged benefits appointment, such as those who expected to find employment easily on release, or felt that a pre-arranged appointment would not be appropriate given their indefinite plans:

'Being as I've got nowhere to live, you know, I mean, I've got to get somewhere to live basically to put in for benefits, so I can sort that out.'

(Vince, aged 43)

Support from EBS advisers with getting and sending off application forms for Community Care Grants²⁹ was also received by a few interviewees.

5.2 The first few weeks

The first few weeks of release are a critical time financially for ex-prisoners. They are likely to be either waiting to receive benefit payments or waiting to receive wages from work. The concern is that: *'Not having enough money is likely to increase the danger of a prisoner re-offending within the first few weeks after release'*. (SEU, 2002).

²⁹ Community Care Grants are available to individuals in receipt of Pension Credit, IS or Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Payments are discretionary and are intended to promote Community Care by, for example, helping individuals set up home as a planned programme of resettlement.

All except one interviewee made a claim for benefit on release from prison. Most claimed JSA, while the others claimed IB or IS³⁰.

The one interviewee who did not claim benefits was returning to self-employment running a small business. He found himself in several months' mortgage arrears on release, but was very quickly able to sort this out.

5.2.1 New benefit claims

All of those claiming benefits on release appeared to be familiar with the benefits system. Most interviewees followed up their pre-release plans in relation to claiming benefits. Those who did not follow up on pre-release plans included:

- interviewees who had changed their minds and either claimed a different benefit or decided that they did want to make a benefit claim³¹;
- those whose circumstances on release differed from their expectations. For example, one ex-prisoner who was no longer taking methadone claimed JSA rather than IB, and another started using heroin on his first day of release and so changed his plans and claimed IB;
- an interviewee who thought that he might still be entitled to IS as a single father, but found that he had to claim JSA now that his youngest child was aged 16; as well as
- those who did not have any definite pre-release plans in relation to work or benefits.

Among those who claimed JSA on release were some interviewees who were not, in fact, able to work. All were (ex) heroin addicts who had come off heroin during their sentence, but were still addressing their drug addiction. One chose to claim JSA until he was able to see his own GP for a sick note. The others, who were either attending regular appointments at a drugs support agency³² or waiting for a place in residential rehabilitation, seemed either unaware that they were entitled to claim IB or found themselves claiming JSA even though they had intended to claim IB, suggesting a possible lack of communication about their circumstances at the new claim interview. Interviewees may not have realised that volunteering information about their circumstances would have helped their adviser to identify that JSA was not the appropriate benefit for them. Due to disclosure issues advisers are not allowed to ask customers for personal information, such as drug use.

³⁰ This was a result of the ex-prisoner taking on full-time childcare responsibilities (in addition to requiring support for a heroin addiction) due to his partner being ill.

³¹ Before release this interviewee had said that he did not want to claim benefits because he wanted to return to college, or if this was not possible, he would rather work.

³² One interviewee was on a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO), the other was attending voluntarily.

Of those who had a Freshstart appointment, most attended. Reasons for not attending were re-arrest and being too drunk. These interviewees re-arranged their new claim appointments.

Those who did not have a Freshstart appointment arranged, either because they were not offered one or did not want one, (with one exception) made their own new claim appointment during the first week of their release. The exception was an interviewee, who had no settled accommodation and was an alcoholic, who waited three weeks before making a claim for JSA:

'I didn't need the money, I was just drinking, I wasn't eating which is why I feel so awful now. I met people and there's always someone who gets paid [a benefit payment] on a different day...drink just keeps coming from somewhere.'

(Brian, age 35)

5.2.2 Speed of receipt of first benefit payment

Interviewees commonly reported receiving their first benefit payment within two weeks of making a claim, with most receiving their first benefit payment within three weeks.

However, not everyone received their first payment this quickly and a few interviewees were still waiting to receive a first payment by the time of the three month follow-up interview. The different kinds of experiences and problems ex-prisoners came across included:

- no explanation or apparent reason as to why first payments took more than four weeks to arrive;
- problems with claims made before going to prison that needed to be resolved before a new claim could be accepted;
- delays caused as a result of living in unsettled (temporary) accommodation and moving address, or having no address;
- dispute over prison admission and release dates; and
- problems caused by not closing down a claim on entry to prison which resulted in a fraud investigation and the new claim being suspended³³.

Interviewees who had to wait more than two weeks for benefit payment included those who attended a Freshstart appointment. The Freshstart appointment service gives priority to those leaving prison and speeds up the time they have to wait for a new claims appointment, but does not offer any guarantees that claims will be processed quickly or that benefits will arrive any sooner.

³³ In this case the interviewee felt that it was not his responsibility to notify Jobcentre Plus that he was in prison and did not recall being offered help to close down his existing claim on entry to prison.

However, there was one example where a Freshstart appointment may have prevented delays with a benefit claim. Nigel, who did not want a Freshstart appointment because he was making a joint claim with his partner, suffered long delays (of over three months) and financial hardship as a result of a dispute with Jobcentre Plus over his prison admission and release dates.

5.2.3 How ex-prisoners managed while waiting for their first benefit payment

As described above, commonly interviewees waited a few weeks before receiving their first benefit payment, although some waited considerably longer. This section outlines how they managed financially during this time and the extent to which they suffered hardship.

The Discharge Grant

Before release, prisoners³⁴ can apply for a discharge grant from the Ministry of Justice to help them with living expenses incurred during the first week after they leave prison. Prisoners aged 25 and over are entitled to a grant of £46.75, while those aged 18 to 24 are entitled to £37.00. The current discharge grant rates which were set in 1995 have been criticised as being insufficient for meeting ex-prisoners' needs on release (Rowlingson *et al.*, 1997; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; NCAB, 2007).

Most interviewees received a discharge grant on release. There was one example where an interviewee missed receiving his discharge grant because he was immediately re-arrested on the day of release, held overnight in police cells and not released from court until the following day. He, therefore, missed the 24 hour time period within which he could have returned to the prison to collect his discharge grant.

Although interviewees tended to be vague about the exact amount of discharge grant they received (often rounding the amount they received up or down), there was evidence to indicate that the discharge grant was not always administered correctly. For example, prisoners aged 24 or under received the higher age rate.

Regardless of the exact amount of discharge grant interviewees received, it was spent within a few days.

How they spent their discharge grant depended upon their circumstances on release. Those who were returning to live with their parents, or who had financial support from their parents on release, tended to spend it on new clothes and on going out. For those who were returning to live with a partner (and children) the discharge grant contributed to paying for household living expenses.

³⁴ Discharge grants are not payable to (most) prisoners aged under 18, prisoners waiting to be deported, those serving less than fourteen days, remand prisoners, civil prisoners and those released from hospital.

'[lasted] An hour, not even an hour. As soon as I got out, went to the shop, bought a new pair of trainers, a new pair of bottoms. By the time my mother came to pick me up from [shopping centre] I didn't have no money on me.'

(Dominic, age 21)

Other ways the discharge grant was used were:

- Graham who had no accommodation arrangements on release and slept rough for the first few nights spent his grant on buying food and paying to get into the local swimming baths so that he could shower and wash his clothes.
- James pooled his discharge grant money with money received from friends and family to buy heroin to re-start his 'business'.
- Brian who was living in unsettled accommodation on release ('sofa surfing' at friends) and an alcoholic, spent his discharge money on buying alcohol and visiting his mother.

Other sources of financial support

Once the discharge grant ran out interviewees fell back on other forms of financial support. The main source of financial support they were able to access was from family members – parents, grandparents and siblings – who either gave or lent them money. The next most common sources of financial support were friends, who either lent, gave or owed them money, and crisis loans.

'If I wouldn't have had me family around me I'd have been really struggling like, because it was nearly a month before I got any money off them, except 50 quid like.'

(Kevin, age 48)

'It was two or three weeks before I got any real money, as soon as I made me new claim and that I went to the Social and got £39 Crisis Loan to last us like two weeks or something.'

(John, age 25)

Other sources of financial support included:

- Prison wages – some prisoners saved up the wages they earned in prison and so left prison with additional money to the discharge grant.
- Money owed – some interviewees had money owing to them, which they collected soon after release. Their debtors included Jobcentre Plus and friends/associates who owed them money in relation to past drug deals.
- Savings – some had their own savings or money in bank accounts from before their prison sentence, which they used on release.

- Community Care Grants – two interviewees received Community Care Grants before being released of £250 and £160. Both prisoners were homeless³⁵ on release and were intending to use the grant money, in one case to pay for a deposit on a private let, and in the other to buy furniture when accommodation was eventually found for him. Both ended up using the money on daily living costs. Another interviewee received a £100 grant, which he spent on buying new clothes.

'I wanted to keep that, I didn't want to spend it because I knew if I found like a private landlord he would have said "I'm going to need a bond off you"...I think it was £255 Community Care Grant I got, it burnt a hole in me pocket when I was lying in the car park in [town], because I knew I could have went and got a bed and breakfast, but that would have been me bond out the window. ...In the end it just went on like buying food and that.'

(Graham, age 34)

Extent of financial hardship

Most interviewees managed to get by until they received their first benefit payment by having access to alternative sources of money and financial support as described above. While it is not possible to draw an exact line above or below which interviewees did or did not experience financial hardship during their first few weeks of release, the findings show that some managed more easily than others. Their experiences varied from those who managed relatively easily to those who struggled.

Of those who managed better, most were helped out financially by family and friends. Many were also living with their parents or grandparents (either permanently or temporarily), although there were also interviewees living with a girlfriend/partner, staying with friends, or living independently. Of the interviewees who were living independently, their parents had paid their initial accommodation costs.

Interviewees who did not have financial support from friends or family, but who did not report difficulties, were able to fall back on savings, or had saved money from their prison wages.

Interviewees who were able to get by, but found it more of a struggle, also had financial help from friends or family, but with some exceptions, tended to be either living with a girlfriend/partner or were staying in unsettled accommodation, rather than living with their parents.

There were a few examples where ex-prisoners appeared to suffer more severe financial hardship on release. In all these cases they did not have any family or

³⁵ One was living in temporary local authority accommodation (see Steve's case study); the other (Graham) slept rough before being put up by a friend for a few weeks.

friends to help them out and all faced considerable delays in receiving their first benefit payment. Most were staying in unsettled accommodation on release (see Shane's case study, page 73), while one returned to live with his partner and children.

5.2.4 Links between crime and initial financial hardship

There was no evidence that crimes committed by interviewees within the first few weeks of release were linked to financial hardship. Some interviewees admitted to re-offending within the first few weeks of their release:

- James re-started his 'business' selling heroin. He had money on release from his discharge grant, money given to him by his family and money owed to him by friends and associates, which he used to buy heroin. In James' view it was his only means of supporting himself: *'There's nowt else I can do, it's all I've done for years.'*
- Gareth, who has been a drug addict for fifteen years, returned to using heroin and crack the day of his release and funded his habit by stealing from cars.
- Dominic made a claim for JSA, but three weeks later received a letter refusing his claim and asking him to attend a meeting in relation to benefit fraud. The timing of this letter, which coincided with Dominic's decision to *'f*** it'* and start smoking crack (which he funded through shoplifting), cannot be seen as a direct link between financial hardship and crime, but may have been a contributory factor.
- Andrew was caught in possession of stolen cheques that he was intending to cash. Although in Andrew's view he and his partner were just about managing financially (at this time Andrew was receiving Crisis Loans until he received his first benefit payment), he was under pressure from his partner to bring in more money.

Thus, crime committed in the first few weeks of release was related to various factors including, drug use, returning to previous patterns/modes of behaviour and outside pressures.

5.3 Ongoing finances

This section describes how interviewees managed financially after the first few weeks of release once benefits had started to be paid. The transitions they made from benefits into work or back into prison and links between financial hardship and criminal activities are also explored.

Interviewees' circumstances after release can be summarised as:

- those who remained on benefits;
- those who moved off benefits and into employment – some of whom returned to benefits; and

- those who left benefits due to a return to prison – some of whom were released within the follow-up period and re-claimed benefits.

The exception was the one interviewee who did not make a benefit claim and returned to self-employment running a (legitimate) small business. He continued in self-employment throughout the follow-up period as well taking on a full-time paid job.

Debt was not an uncommon characteristic amongst ex-prisoners. Debts which interviewees were paying and which caused financial problems – for those who remained on benefits as well as those who moved into employment included:

- deductions from benefits to repay Social Fund loans;
- re-payment of personal loans;
- re-paying Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) arrears; and
- paying compensation to the victim of the crime for which the interviewee had been imprisoned.

In managing on a day-to-day basis costs associated with housing were an area of expenditure that interviewees, both those on benefits and those who had moved into employment, found particularly difficult to meet. Expenditure that interviewees struggled to manage included:

- money for a deposit and month's rent in advance in order to move into a private let;
- replacing broken appliances;
- providing furniture and appliances once they had moved into settled accommodation – in either social housing, or a private let; and
- managing HB shortfalls.

5.3.1 Ongoing benefit claims

Most interviewees did not experience problems with their benefit claim after receiving their first payment. Some problems which were encountered included payments not arriving on time, which seemed to cause more frustration than actual financial difficulties, and suspension of a claim due to suspected fraud – which was soon resolved. Most interviewees who were reliant on benefits as their main source of income found it a struggle – money was tight or ran out:

'It's just the benefit at the moment, I'm finding it hard, but I'm managing.'

(Jamie, age 31)

5.3.2 Supplementing benefit income

Few interviewees lived solely on their benefit income.

Friends and family

Again, family and friends were a key source of financial assistance. Where interviewees were living with parents or friends they provided free or subsidised accommodation and commonly gave or lent them money when their benefit money ran out. Among those living with girlfriends (and children) or living independently, some received financial support from family or friends, but not all. Family and friends gave or lent money, helped out with buying shopping or providing meals and assisted with buying or providing second hand furniture for new accommodation. In a few households girlfriends or partners provided financial handouts from their income.

Social Fund

The Social Fund was a source of financial help, but less so compared to the first few weeks of release. A few interviewees applied for and received Community Care Grants, which were used to buy new clothes, and one interviewee received a budgeting loan to help him over Christmas.

Casual work

Supplementing benefit income by undertaking paid work was not uncommon. Most work undertaken in the months after release amounted in total to just a few days work helping out friends and family, for example gardening or labouring and was paid cash in hand. Due to the occasional nature of the work and the small amount of money earned, £20-£40 per day, it was not considered worth declaring.

Other sources of money and financial help

Other sources of income included money raised by selling or pawning possessions, money won at the 'bookies' and financial support received from a family social worker who had access to funding to replace a broken washing machine and tumble dryer. Some interviewees claiming IB were intending to claim, or had claimed (but were awaiting a decision) Disability Living Allowance (DLA), which would provide them with additional benefit income.

Crime

Crime was also a source of income for some interviewees. Low-level crimes were committed to supplement benefit income. Examples of this included:

- HB fraud where an interviewee, in collusion with their landlord, had set up a false claim. The landlord received the HB and passed some of the money onto the interviewee;

- selling imported tobacco and cigarettes; and
- carrying cannabis for a friend for which the interviewee received a small cash-in-hand payment.

There was one example where more serious crime was committed as a means of getting by. In this case financial need was related to being a rough sleeper:

'I was broke, on my bum, had no money, nothing and I did a burglary.'

(Graham, age 34)

Crime was also committed by interviewees who were using heroin and crack to fund their drug use. Criminal activities included selling heroin, shoplifting and car crime.

5.3.3 In work finances

With the exception of one interviewee, those who moved into work reported being better off financially in work and were managing well:

[Managing] Not too bad really. I've obviously got a lot of debt and a lot of bills...but I've got enough to cope with. But as I say, when you're working it's not really a problem financial-wise, it's alright, comfortable.'

(Kevin, age 48)

The exception was an interviewee who after paying bills for food did not have much money left. He was also repaying a loan and trying to save up enough money to pay for a deposit and a month's rent in advance for a private let, having split up with his girlfriend with whom he was previously living.

For those in work, wages were the main and sole source of income, aside from help from family and friends who provided accommodation or lent money. The exceptions were: one interviewee who continued to claim JSA because he worked less than ten hours per week; and another who was fraudulently claiming JSA whilst working (see below).

5.3.4 Transitions

Transitions from unemployment benefits into work and returns to prison did not raise any particular financial problems. Interviewees who moved into employment from benefits managed any potential gaps in their income by not signing off immediately. Rather they waited until they had received their first pay packet or waited until they were sure that they wanted to stay in the job before signing off, or giving up the job. One interviewee continued to claim benefits throughout the two-month period that he was in work. His employer paid him cash in hand and allowed him time off to attend his signing on appointment at the Jobcentre.

As discussed in Chapter 2, repeated moves between unemployment benefits and work were not uncommon. Moves back onto benefits were not reported as being

particularly problematic. While waiting to receive benefit payments, interviewees had wages or savings to live on, or were helped out financially by their family.

Similarly, interviewees who moved across benefits did not report any financial problems as a result of this transition. In all these cases interviewees were (ex) heroin users who moved from JSA to IB.

During the six-month follow-up period a number of interviewees returned to prison. Some returned to prison for only a short time and were able to restart their previous benefit claims without experiencing a gap in their finances on release. One interviewee applied for a Crisis Loan to last him until he received his first benefit payment.

5.4 Case studies

Liam's story (age 20)

Liam is an example of someone who did not struggle financially during the first few weeks of release. He received financial support from his family as well as a Crisis Loan.

Liam left prison and returned home to live with his mother, step-father and sister. He left prison with a discharge grant which he spent within a few days on drink, food and going out. His mother and grandmother also gave him money on his release. He missed his Freshstart new claims appointment because he had been out drinking, but was able to re-arrange it for the following week. At his new claims appointment he applied for and received a Crisis Loan of £46 which lasted him until the following week when he received his first JSA payment.

In contrast, Martin's and Shane's stories illustrate some of the difficulties (such as benefit payment delays, not having a permanent address and lack of family support) faced by interviewees who found it more of a struggle to get by during the first few weeks of release.

Martin's story (age 25)

On release Martin returned home to live with his girlfriend and their baby. He left prison with a discharge grant. Due to missing his last signing on appointment before going to prison, his benefit claim took longer to process, and he waited six weeks to receive his first JSA payment. In the meantime he lived on the benefits and child tax credits his girlfriend received. His girlfriend's father also gave them £10 – £15 each week which they spent on food. Martin had no other sources of money and no family of his own who could help. Martin did not apply for a Crisis Loan or interim payment. It is not known if he was aware of these or whether he decided against this as an option.

Shane's story (age 18)

Shane had no arrangements for where he was going to live on release. For the first few weeks of his release he was housed in a B&B before being moved to a bail hostel. He spent four weeks at the bail hostel and was then moved into a bedsit before finally being given his own flat. Shane waited over six weeks to receive his first JSA payment, because each time he moved address he had to report his change of circumstances, which delayed his claim. His only source of money during this time were Crisis Loans, which he received each week (equivalent to £4 per day). Although Shane had family nearby, for reasons not known they were not a source of financial assistance.

Steve's story age 36

Finally, Steve's story is an example of how interviewees managed financially after the first few weeks of release.

Steve was claiming JSA while trying to find work gardening or labouring. He was just able to manage on his benefit money, but found it difficult. He had deductions made for Social Fund loans he had taken out several years earlier. These deductions reduced his income from £118/fortnight, to £87/fortnight, although six months after his release his payments increased to £102/fortnight. Steve gave all of his benefit money to his brother to manage for him so that he did not spend it all at once. While looking for work Steve was offered a couple of days work labouring, for which he was paid cash in hand, but did not declare.

Continued

On release from prison he moved into temporary local authority accommodation and then moved into settled accommodation, arranged by his (local authority) housing worker. HB covered the full cost of his rent. He furnished his new accommodation with furniture and appliances given to him by friends and family.

He also obtained some items from a local charity furniture store. Steve had received a Community Care Grant of £162 before he left prison to help him buy furniture, but had spent this in the first few weeks of his release on day-to-day living costs. Thus, he was ineligible to receive another grant when he moved into his new accommodation.

6 Perspectives of service providers

Summary

Service providers raised a number of issues that made delivering resettlement support services in prisons and in the community difficult. Some of these issues reflect and help to explain prisoners' views that support was patchy and inconsistent.

These issues included:

- physical constraints of working in prisons in relation to lack of space for delivering services and access to prisoners;
- lack of interest and motivation among ex-prisoners, as reflected in them declining offers of support, not showing up at referral appointments, or dropping out of services. Apparent lack of interest or motivation was recognised as being related to wider issues, such as substance misuse and housing issues;
- within a prison, prisoners can come from a wide geographical area which made it difficult for service providers to provide information and link with community-based services that were not local to the prison;
- working in prison industries did not increase prisoners' employability on release;
- community-based support services were reliant on other agencies to refer clients to them;
- housing issues impacted on the ability of agencies providing employment and drugs support to help ex-prisoners; and
- helping ex-prisoners into employment was limited by a lack of funding to pay for (more expensive) training courses and by a lack of training places.

This chapter presents the views and experiences of service providers in delivering resettlement support services to prisoners and ex-prisoners. It focuses on the main issues and difficulties raised by providers in delivering services. The chapter is divided into two main sections and presents separately the issues raised by service providers based in prison (providing pre-release support) and those based in the community (providing post-release support).

6.1 Resettlement support in prisons

Interviews were conducted with prison resettlement staff³⁶ and Employment and Benefit Surgery (EBS)³⁷ advisers who raised a number of issues in relation to delivering resettlement services in prisons, including:

- resources and physical restrictions;
- lack of prisoner interest/motivation;
- the geographical spread of prisoners within local prisons; and
- a lack of relevance of prison industries to local labour markets.

The following sections discuss each of these issues in turn.

6.1.1 Resources and physical restrictions

Resources and physical restrictions were a main limitation reported by prison resettlement staff, of which space was a key limiting factor. Prison resettlement teams were comprised of staff from a variety of agencies including: the Prison Service, the Probation Service and staff from a range of external organisations. External agencies typically included Jobcentre Plus; EBS advisers, housing/homeless agencies³⁸, careers services and Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare Services (CARATS) teams, that were based permanently in the prison. While resettlement staff were interested in inviting other external agencies into prison to extend the range of support services they could provide, restrictions on space limited the number of external agencies that could be permanently based there. Resources in relation to staff were also a limiting factor in developing resettlement support services. For example, one prison was unable to provide training in all of their workshops due to lack of staff resources.

EBS advisers, working as part of resettlement teams, were limited in what they could do and how they delivered services due to restrictions imposed by the

³⁶ Interviews were conducted with a Resettlement Manager or senior member of resettlement staff.

³⁷ Employment and Benefit Surgery advisers are Jobcentre Plus staff who work in prisons providing job and benefits advice.

³⁸ Housing/homeless agencies included a local authority service (in the Scottish prison) and third sector agencies in the other case study areas.

prison environment. For example, some EBS advisers lacked space from which to run surgeries and meet with prisoners on a one-to-one basis. Consequently, interviews with prisoners were conducted through the cell door or outside cells on the landing. As well as lacking privacy, advisers were unable to use the laptops on prison wings to access job vacancies and conduct job searches. At another prison the EBS adviser delivered services by putting forms under cell doors, which prisoners completed if they wanted assistance with benefit claims or employment. Those wanting assistance were followed-up, although meeting prisoners face-to-face to deliver help was difficult. Such problems were not reported where an EBS was based within a dedicated resettlement unit. Here advisers had access to rooms where they were able to meet with prisoners in private.

More generally working from within a prison meant that EBS advisers were restricted in their access to prisoners:

- prisoners are only available at certain times of the day;
- advisers rely on prison officers to unlock prisoners from their cells – this could be problematic if prison officers were busy with other duties;
- prisoners might be unavailable to attend appointments with EBS advisers – due to being in segregation, in hospital, having visitors, or working; and
- appointments with prisoners might also have to be re-arranged as a result of a prison 'lock-down' for cell searches.

6.1.2 Lack of prisoner interest/motivation

Lack of interest and motivation among prisoners in receiving resettlement support was another key issue raised.

On entry to prison, prisoners could receive a range of support including help with closing down benefit claims, liaising with housing providers and mortgage lenders, liaising with employers (in respect of seeing whether a job could be kept open) and families, and receiving drugs and alcohol support such as detoxification programmes. However, take-up of these services was voluntary and prisoners could choose whether or not to make use of them. For example, prisoners might not want help with closing down a benefit claim, or might not want their employer to know that they are in prison.

Prisons ran a range of other courses which prisoners could attend during their sentence, for example: first aid, offender behaviour courses (such as anger management, stress management, domestic violence awareness, responsible driving), motivational and thinking skills courses, drug and alcohol awareness courses, or smoking cessation groups. Individual counselling was also available

to prisoners in relation to substance misuse or bereavement. For most courses attendance was voluntary³⁹.

In the English and Welsh prisons attending work or education was compulsory for all convicted prisoners. Prisoners could refuse, but would not receive any money and lose any privileges as a result. In the Scottish prison⁴⁰ it was not compulsory for convicted prisoners to work or attend education. Where attending work or education was not compulsory (or where prisoners refused) prisoners could choose to stay in their cells.

Lack of interest and motivation among prisoners was also found in relation to job searches and referrals to post-release employment support and training. EBS advisers raised a number of issues, some of which echo the findings in Chapter 2:

- it was felt that many prisoners were not in a position to consider moving into employment on their release because of drug problems;
- where prisoners did not know where they were going to live on release it was very difficult to engage them in discussions about work and training;
- prisoners might only show an interest in employment support and job search to improve their chances of parole, rather than being genuinely interested;
- prisoners who were claiming IB before entering prison wanted to claim IB on their release, even though they might have been working in the prison workshops or using the gym facilities during their sentence – it was felt to be very difficult to change prisoners' views towards work and that IB was not a claim for life;
- if prisoners did not want to disclose to a potential employer that they were in prison, then EBS advisers could go no further in helping prisoners than conducting job searches; and
- it was difficult to get across to prisoners that there were outside agencies who understood their situation, could relate to them and really help them.

EBS advisers also reported that not all prisoners wanted to have a Freshstart appointment arranged and even when appointments were arranged prisoners did not always attend them.

³⁹ For some courses, such as 'PASRO' (Prisons Addressing Substance Related Offending and 'Enhanced Thinking Skills' attendance was a requirement of prisoners' sentence plans.

⁴⁰ In Scotland, prisons are run by the Scottish Prison Service, whereas those in England and Wales are run by HM Prison Service.

6.1.3 The geographical spread of prisoners within local prisons

Although the four case study prisons were all local prisons, they were having to take in prisoners from other regions as a result of prison overcrowding. The difficulty this placed on resettlement staff and external agencies working in the prison was that they did not have the necessary contacts for service providers or knowledge of funding arrangements in other regions. Whereas local prisoners had the opportunity to meet with local service providers before release, prisoners from other regions might only be given a telephone number of someone to contact – if that.

Where prisoners were not local it was more difficult for EBS advisers to conduct job searches and signpost prisoners onto services when they were not familiar with the area that the prisoner was being released to.

This issue is likely to get worse with an increasing prison population.

6.1.4 Lack of relevance of prison industries

Work opportunities for prisoners in prison industries and workshops included:

- factory and assembly workshops where prisoners worked on outside contracts or made furniture or other items for the prison estate – the types of work that prisoners might undertake in these workshops included woodwork, joinery, metal fabrication, textiles, concrete and IT data entry;
- providing internal services for the running of the prison, such as working in the kitchens, laundry, gym, gardens, cleaning or recycling; and
- training-based workshops where prisoners learnt construction trades, such as bricklaying, plastering, painting and decorating, and gained basic vocational qualifications.

Prison resettlement staff identified a mismatch between the types of workshops available in prisons and local skill shortages, and felt that the experience prisoners gained from working during their sentence did not increase their employability on release (as commented on in Chapter 2).

However, changes had been made at some prisons or were in the process of being made at others to better integrate training and education within prison industries. For example, some prisons had linked training opportunities to work in prison kitchens, the gym, gardens and cleaning, whereby prisoners could gain vocational qualifications in catering, weight training instruction, horticulture or gain an industrial cleaning certificate. At one prison, education staff had been placed in the workshops to help prisoners with literacy and numeracy basic skills as part of their daily work.

6.1.5 Other issues

Other issues raised by some resettlement staff and EBS advisers (but not all) in delivering resettlement support included:

- a lack of links with local employers – although prisons were able to provide prisoners with qualifications and training, local employers were reluctant to develop links with the prison as a means of recruiting new staff;
- competing priorities within prisons: resettlement staff at some prisons felt that the provision of resettlement services was not as high a priority as other functions of the prison which hindered the development and improvement of services; and
- some EBS advisers reported problems linking into the Jobcentre Plus benefit claims process due to a lack of awareness among Jobcentre Plus staff of their role, which caused difficulties, for example, with booking Freshstart appointments or closing down prisoners' benefit claims and getting outstanding benefits paid to them in prison.

6.2 Resettlement support in the community

Interviews were conducted with staff from a range of community-based organisations including: Jobcentre Plus advisers, progress2work-LinkUP (p2w-LinkUP) providers, staff from probation services (with responsibility for delivering Employment Training and Education (ETE) services), housing/homeless agencies (which included a local authority service and third sector organisations), drug/addiction agencies and two ex-prisoner mentoring services.

Service providers raised a number of issues in relation to delivering resettlement services to ex-prisoners, including:

- lack of prisoner interest/motivation;
- reliance on receiving referrals from other organisations;
- housing issues; and
- a lack of (funding for) training provision.

The following sections discuss each of these issues in turn.

6.2.1 Lack of prisoner interest/motivation

Community-based service providers also reported a lack of interest or motivation among ex-prisoners to take up offers of support.

This issue was raised by Jobcentre Plus advisers in relation to offering ex-prisoners referrals to voluntary specialist support such as p2w/p2w-LinkUP. Receiving support from a probation officer was one reason given by some ex-prisoners for not wanting further support. Furthermore, those who agreed to a referral appointment often

failed to attend (a problem also reported by p2w-LinkUP, see below):

'You can advise them and you can try and help them as much as you can, but you cannot take them to the interviews.'

(Personal Adviser)

It was the view of one Jobcentre Plus adviser that ex-prisoners were not job-ready at the new claims stage and were only interested in setting up their benefit claim.

Similar issues were raised by probation services, whereby they felt there was a lack of interest and motivation among ex-prisoners to participate in services, such as job search support, education and basic skills training, work placements, and referrals to p2w/p2w-LinkUP and New Deals. Mentoring services reported ex-prisoners dropping out due to losing motivation.

P2w-LinkUP providers also reported difficulties with the referral process, in that a high proportion of ex-prisoners referred to them failed to turn up for their initial meeting; and a significant proportion of prisoners who met with p2w-LinkUP in prison failed to re-contact the provider after their release (although meeting with prisoners in prison before release was felt to reduce this). Drop out from p2w-Link Up and a failure to sustain employment were also reported to be common. However, providers did not attribute this to a lack of interest or motivation, but rather attributed it to clients relapsing with alcohol or substance misuse, or as a result of meeting up with old friends and returning to previous lifestyles.

Interestingly, housing and drug/addiction agencies did not raise as a difficulty a lack of interest or motivation among ex-prisoners in receiving help.

6.2.2 Reliance on referrals from other organisations

Some agencies were reliant on other organisations to refer clients to them. P2w-LinkUP, for example, received client referrals from a range of organisations including prisons (who were a main source of referrals), Jobcentre Plus, probation services, alcohol agencies, homeless/housing agencies⁴¹, arrest referral teams, and Connexions. Providers of ETE in probation services received referrals via probation officers/social workers and mentoring services received referrals via prisons.

Issues raised by ETE service providers which impacted on their ability to provide support to those needing help were that:

- not all probation officers addressed employment issues in their supervision plans; and
- ETE services were limited to prisoners being released on licence which excluded those serving short-term sentences from receiving support.

⁴¹ This included third sector agencies, hostels and (in the Scottish case study area) local authority homeless teams.

P2w-LinkUP staff in one case study area reported a lack of referrals from Jobcentres, which they attributed to low awareness among Jobcentre Plus staff of p2w-LinkUP and linked this to high staff turnover. Similarly one of the mentoring services reported that they no longer received referrals from one local prison as a result of staff, with whom they had developed good relationships, leaving.

From the perspective of Jobcentre Plus advisers, a key component of new claims and restart interviews was providing information and advice on the help and support available and making referrals to training programmes and specialist support. The main programme advisers told ex-prisoners about was p2w and p2w-LinkUP. However, advisers said that they did not have enough detailed knowledge as to the different kinds of help people referred to p2w and p2w-LinkUP received, which made it difficult for them to assess whether or not a referral was appropriate. Jobcentre Plus advisers felt that more feedback from p2w and p2w-LinkUP regarding whether or not someone they referred had actually attended their appointment and how clients were progressing would help in this.

Some housing and homeless agencies reported receiving very few, if any, referrals from prisons or probation officers. One agency which did receive referrals from prisons commented that these were often made too late (supporting findings made in Chapter 3) – in the final few weeks before a prisoner was due to be released. This did not give staff enough time to speak to referring officers at the prison to find out about the prisoner's background to enable them to offer appropriate accommodation. In the Scottish case study area, the local authority-run housing agency had a team of support workers with specific responsibility for securing accommodation for prisoners before their release. Though, where this process sometimes fell down was if prisoners were released earlier than expected.

6.2.3 Housing issues

Housing was raised by providers of other services as being a key issue which impacted on their ability to deliver successful resettlement support.

P2w-LinkUP providers (who target their services at people experiencing disadvantage in the labour market as a result of an offending background, alcohol misuse or homelessness) felt that housing was a key barrier to employment, but was an area in which they had limited ability to intervene, other than referring clients to the appropriate agencies and waiting lists.

Similarly, housing issues impacted on the work of drug/addiction agencies. Staff interviewed in the English and Welsh case study areas reported that finding accommodation for clients was a key problem⁴². Difficulties mentioned were that:

⁴² This issue was not raised in the Scottish case study area.

- there were long waiting lists for social housing and their clients would be '*on the bottom of the pile*' due to having criminal records and problems with substance misuse;
- it was reported that where accommodation was available it tended to be in areas with drug and crime problems which was not ideal for people trying to stay away from drugs; and
- in Wales⁴³, where ex-prisoners are a priority housing needs group, entitlement to local authority accommodation required ex-prisoners to have either a relative living in the area or to have lived in the area previously. This was said to present a difficulty for those people leaving prison who wanted to make a fresh start in a new area.

Perspectives of housing/homeless agencies

The main difficulties reported by housing/homeless agencies themselves in accessing accommodation for their clients and providing housing support were a lack of social housing stock to meet local demand and discrimination by social landlords. These issues were raised by interviewees in all four case study areas.

More specifically, difficulties included:

- A lack of (appropriate) social housing stock which resulted in people having to stay longer than they should in short-stay or supported accommodation. When settled housing did become available it tended to be in more deprived, hard-to-let areas, suffering from problems with drugs and crime. This was reported as being particularly difficult for ex-prisoners trying to resettle and stay away from drugs and crime.
- Discrimination by social landlords was reported when trying to find accommodation for people from more difficult backgrounds, such as ex-prisoners. Social landlords were reported to exclude people with a range of past behaviour including: violence or anti-social behaviour, drug dealing, previous convictions, and rent arrears – even if these were from several years ago.
- Accessing accommodation in the private rented sector was also reported to be problematic. Barriers included:
 - discrimination from private landlords;
 - lack of money for a deposit; and
 - HB shortfalls where rents in the private rented sector tended to be more expensive than those in the social sector.

⁴³ In Wales, ex-prisoners are a priority need group whom local housing authorities are required to house on release (Welsh Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 607). This is not the case, however, in England and Scotland.

6.2.4 Lack of (funding for) training provision

A key component of the services provided by community-based resettlement agencies was referring clients to training providers. Training courses not only provided clients with skills and qualifications, but also helped with confidence and self-esteem.

P2w-LinkUP referred clients to a range of training providers, including local colleges, local construction initiatives, drugs councils, Learn Direct and YMCA. The types of courses their clients undertook included: IT, catering and food hygiene, hair and beauty, joinery, fork lift truck driving, off-shore working on oil rigs, Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and motivational courses.

ETE providers within probation services referred clients to local colleges to access: basic skills training; vocational training courses, such as car mechanics, painting and decorating and plumbing; and advanced education classes.

Mentoring services also referred their clients to training courses such as CSCS licence (needed for working on building sites) and fork lift driving courses and referred clients on to other employer agencies (such as p2w-LinkUP and Action Teams) so that through them clients could access funding for training courses.

All mentioned difficulties in accessing training courses for their clients due to:

- a lack of funding to pay for clients to attend courses – some courses clients wanted to do were expensive; or
- a lack of training places – some courses were no longer available because of funding cuts, or because some courses were very popular requiring places on alternative courses to be found.

6.2.5 Other issues

Jobcentre Plus advisers raised several issues which they felt made delivering employment support to ex-prisoners more difficult:

- the advice given to ex-prisoners by advisers on disclosing their convictions on job application forms varied. Some advised ex-prisoners to be honest and to disclose their criminal record, while others did not feel confident giving advice on this issue;
- some advisers found ex-prisoners difficult to manage. For example, some had come across ex-prisoners trying to shock or scare them with accounts of their criminal backgrounds. They felt some ex-prisoners did this to discourage them from asking too many questions or pursuing job vacancies with them. Others reported that interviews with ex-prisoners could be more difficult because they were less willing to engage in conversation about their past, for example, discussing activities undertaken in prison, or discussing barriers to work; and

- one adviser felt that there was no time available away from the frontline desk in which to find out more about the range of organisations and support available locally for ex-prisoners.

For the p2w-LinkUP provider in the more rural area, where local job opportunities were limited, finding employment for clients was harder compared to providers based in urban areas. In the rural area where the local labour market was not buoyant and job opportunities were limited, p2w-LinkUP staff placed more emphasis on the role of voluntary work as a link in to full-time employment.

However, p2w-LinkUp also had distinct features which appeared to contribute to its success:

- providing a 'through the gate' service and meeting with prisoners before release had several advantages – advisers could start investigating training, education or employment opportunities so that they were in place, in time for prisoners' release and reduced the occurrence of 'no shows' at the initial post-release appointment;
- the programme is voluntary – staff reported that this was a key selling point whereby clients did not have to worry about benefit sanctions if they dropped out; and
- the service is client led in that the pace and content of the programme is determined by what clients want to do. Staff reported that clients were often surprised that there was no set regime they had to follow.

7 Conclusions

This chapter first presents some concluding points before drawing together the overarching conclusions from the research and offering some thoughts on how the circumstances of ex-prisoners might be improved.

7.1 Re-offending

Evidence from this study shows that re-offending, substance misuse and housing problems are closely entwined.

There was evidence that lack of money was a contributory factor in some non-drug related crimes, but financial need was in some cases related to interviewees' wider circumstances, such as having nowhere to live and financial pressure from a partner. Low-level crime was an additional source of income for some ex-prisoners.

It is not possible to draw a link between interviewees' employment status on release and crime. Rather, their employment status was more of a reflection of their circumstances in relation to substance misuse and housing, which were themselves factors that contributed to re-offending behaviour.

7.2 Employment

For many prisoners, it is clear that getting a job or going on to do education or training on release was a priority. While practical prison-based training was valued for providing relevant work-related skills, resettlement support was not always available (particularly for those serving shorter sentences) or effective. This was reflected in the difficulties many experienced getting or retaining jobs due to their having a criminal record, the attitudes of employers to ex-prisoners, curfew restrictions and being unable to find jobs that matched their skills, experience and interests. Wider personal difficulties in respect of substance misuse, housing problems and health conditions prevented some from considering work on release.

To improve the employability of ex-prisoners, it is clear that more support is needed to help them understand the reality of their position in the labour market – in particular how to cope with or avoid multiple moves in and out of work during a relatively short period of time, how to accept that they may need to take jobs that they do not wish to do as part of a return to work plan, how to disclose criminal records to potential employers and how to seek support from relevant agencies.

Jobcentre Plus, as the main employment provider with whom ex-prisoners come into contact, has a key role to play in enabling access to appropriate resettlement support both in prison and on release, even if this role is as a 'gateway' to specialist employment agencies.

However, even the best employment support will have limited success without arrangements in place to assist ex-prisoners with housing problems and substance misuse issues. Agencies working on employment need to work closely with education, housing and drug rehabilitation agencies and probation services to attempt to meet the complex needs of ex-prisoners. The Freshstart appointment, which most ex-prisoners attend, could be a useful mechanism by which to refer relevant individuals to drugs or housing support or on to progress2work-LinkUP. A key area of employment agencies' efforts will need to be directed towards changing employers' attitudes to employing ex-prisoners and involving employers in employment support programmes.

7.3 Housing

While many ex-prisoners return to the family home and require little immediate support or advice, for others support with gaining stable and affordable housing is a critical need in the period immediately following release. For some of the most vulnerable ex-prisoners, being unsupported in their efforts to find accommodation serves to force them into situations where the chance of them re-offending or re-engaging in substance misuse and, ultimately, returning to prison, is high.

To improve potential outcomes, there is a clear need for the housing needs assessment being used while they are in prison to ensure that all ex-prisoners have some accommodation arranged for the period following their release, the means (e.g. rental deposit) of securing it and that prison resettlement services, housing support services and drug rehabilitation services work together effectively to make the period of release seamless in terms of the provision of support. For example, for those living alone in rented accommodation before going into prison (especially for short sentences), it may be cheaper and more effective in the long-term to keep tenancies open for longer than happens now, rather than have to re-house prisoners on release.

7.4 Substance misuse

Before going into prison, it is clear that many prisoners experienced multiple problems due to their drug use including: relationship breakdown, unemployment, re-offending, poor mental and physical health and loss of accommodation. Becoming abstinent after their release from prison was often a clearly stated priority and was seen as key to helping them become crime free and gain stability in their lives after release.

Providing the appropriate and timely support to achieve this is difficult. However, the evidence suggests that were drug treatment programmes to focus on addressing the needs of shorter-term prisoners – for example, by finding ways of delivering intensive treatments within shorter sentence periods and by strengthening their throughcare services after release – then ex-prisoners' likelihood of remaining drug free may be increased. Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare Services (CARATS) staff should advise individuals on when it is important to disclose drug use to support agencies. Being abstinent on leaving prison does not mean a drug problem has been resolved, and abstinent ex-prisoners need clear advice on how to access appropriate ongoing support in the community. Further, providing ex-prisoners who take drugs again after release with fast-track support in the community could also help reduce the wider potential consequences. All these require improved linkages between services being provided, particularly housing and mental health services, in order to prevent ex-prisoners slipping through the net and losing their jobs, losing their accommodation, re-offending and ending up back in prison.

Alcohol misuse was less commonly reported, but among those who did so it was felt treatment was less well developed than that delivered through drug treatment services.

What the evidence does suggest, however, is that alcohol services need further development to enable them to identify and treat the most vulnerable. An important role for alcohol services may be in helping individuals to recognise they have a problematic relationship with alcohol.

7.5 Finances

Although many interviewees had access to other forms of financial support to fall back on – mainly family and friends – and received a Discharge Grant to cover living expenses for the first week after release, many experienced a gap in their finances for several weeks after their release due to having to wait to receive their first benefit payment.

To improve this situation and, critically, provide some stability in the time immediately after release, it should not be assumed by prison resettlement services that ex-prisoners have other financial sources to fall back on. This means that until

benefit claims processing is speeded up the Discharge Grant should be increased, or ex-prisoners should be advised of the means by which they can access other funds in the first weeks of being released.

7.6 Service providers' views

Service providers raised a number of issues that they felt made delivering resettlement support services in prisons and in the community difficult. Some of these issues reflect and help to explain prisoners' views that support was patchy and inconsistent.

Both prison and external staff felt that physical constraints of working in prisons made it difficult to provide resettlement advice and support. Providers (in prison and in the community) also felt that many prisoners were not motivated to find work and that they often declined offers of support, failed to turn up for referral appointments or dropped out of services. However, they did accept that in some cases this reflected wider problems such as substance misuse.

Other issues raised included difficulties in linking up with community-based services that were not local to the prison, lack of training places and funding to pay for (more expensive) courses, and employment and drugs support undermined by housing problems.

7.7 Supporting ex-prisoners in their lives after prison

While in prison, many prisoners had high hopes in terms of their future plans in respect of their moving into employment, education or training, staying off drugs, staying out of prison and re-gaining some stability in their lives. However, these plans were often made in the absence of timely joined-up advice and support, and in some cases were unrealistic and unlikely to ever become reality.

Ex-prisoners faced considerable barriers in getting and keeping work. Key barriers included substance misuse, not having settled or secure housing, employer attitudes and, in some cases, restrictions placed on them by curfew arrangements. Inadequacies in the provision of support and advice received while in prison and the lack of inter-agency co-ordination around and following the time of their release, compounded difficulties for some. When ex-prisoners are being realistic about the difficulties they face in overcoming their problems and, for example, say that they do not expect to find work, there is a danger that (in some cases) this is being mis-interpreted by professionals as a lack of motivation.

The support offered by friends and family is critical to many ex-prisoners. They can help by offering accommodation, practical advice and financial support. Often friends and family are the means by which ex-prisoners access the labour market and find employment. The needs of ex-prisoners' families should not be overlooked since, without their free support, many ex-prisoners may fare less well.

Friends and family – social networks – can be protective, but can also have negative effects. This is most noticeable where drug taking is an issue. Drug users often mix only with other drug users and the support they offer can lead to renewed or continued drug use and further criminality.

There are three overarching conclusions arising from this research that would help to improve outcomes for prisoners after their release:

- **While in prison** it should be ensured that all prisoners (especially those with short sentences) receive timely and appropriate advice, support and training focused on developing skills, planning for their release – in particular, beginning the process of managing their expectations for release. It should be ensured that training courses are run regularly and can be accessed by all prisoners who want to do so. External agencies should begin preparations for the resettlement process as early as possible.
- **In the lead up to the release**, given that some prisoners do not come from the area in which they are imprisoned, resettlement services should ensure that all prisoners are in touch with relevant services local to where they will live that can provide or arrange stable and affordable housing, help them access financial support (where necessary), assist with accessing employment, education or training and with drug rehabilitation. Referral appointments to community-based services should be made prior to release, backed up by provision of a 'release information pack', for example, containing contact details of local service providers. In particular, prison resettlement services need to ensure that 'first night' accommodation and finances are in place before release.
- **After release from prison**, there should be a further contact after a short period by either resettlement services or another agency to see whether any further support or advice is needed. Further contact after about a month would allow ex-prisoners time to settle back in the community, but would pick-up quickly those whose plans had fallen through as a result of drug relapse, being unable to return to a previous employer, problems with benefit claims and living arrangements falling through, for example. Given that most ex-prisoners claimed benefits and that Jobcentre Plus was the main provider they came into contact with on release, it may be the case that Jobcentre Plus are best placed to take on an overall co-ordinating role (for example, by re-arranging curfew restrictions with probation officers in order to accommodate any work opportunities). Alternatively, the overall co-ordinating role could be delegated to a more specialist agency such as those providing progress2work-LinkUP.

Appendix A

Technical appendix

The research design is outlined in Chapter 1. This appendix provides further information on the recruitment of interviewees and attrition of interviewees from the study and their background characteristics.

A.1 Recruitment

Prisoners who were soon to be released attended (in small groups) an information presentation about the research, and volunteers were sought. Recruitment presentations continued until enough prisoners had volunteered. Some prisoners refused to attend the information presentation. There was no sampling of prisoners, except for the exclusion of sex offenders and prisoners who were considered to pose a possible risk to the safety of the researchers.

The research design sought to recruit and interview ten prisoners per prison. However, due to attrition between recruitment and the pre-release interview additional prisoners were recruited at prisons visited later on during the Wave 1 fieldwork period (see Table A.1). Recruitment and Wave 1 pre-release interviews took place between August and October 2006. Most prisoners were interviewed during the last week of their sentence. The longest time between conducting the Wave 1 interview and release was 17 days.

A.2 Attrition

Given that ex-prisoners can be a hard-to-reach group, due to accommodation difficulties and substance misuse, a number of strategies were employed to minimise the attrition of prisoners from the study:

- at Wave 1, prisoners were asked to supply their own contact details as well as those of family members through whom they could be contacted. Where relevant, and where prisoners were willing, contact details of probation officers and drugs workers were also collected;

- A key strategy was contacting interviewees by telephone between interview waves. For example, interviewees were contacted at two weeks and six weeks after being released and again before the Wave 2 interview to arrange an appointment. The purpose of these contacts was to check whether contact details were still accurate and to allow early tracing, of those who were not contactable, to occur quickly, via family members, agency staff and prisons. These contacts also reminded participants that a follow-up interview would be occurring and helped to build a relationship with interviewees;
- where contacting interviewees either directly or via their friends and family by telephone and letter, had been unsuccessful, home addresses were visited several times;
- to build rapport and minimise attrition there was continuity throughout the study with the same researcher conducting all the follow-up contacts and interviews with the interviewees;
- incentive vouchers were given to interviewees who participated in a post-release interview, with a higher amount given at Wave 3 (£30), than at Wave 2 (£20) to encourage continued participation in the study; and
- where it had not been possible to contact interviewees, prison staff provided invaluable help with checking whether un-contactable interviewees had returned to prison, which in some cases they had.

Follow-up interviews took place at a variety of venues including: pubs and cafes, libraries, parents' homes, interviewees' homes, a drug rehabilitation centre and prisons – for those who had returned to prison.

Table A.1 shows the number of prisoners who participated in each wave of interviews and the attrition of interviewees from the study.

Table A.1 Number of prisoners participating in each wave of fieldwork

Case Study Area	Number recruited	Number of W1 interviews	Number of W2 interviews	Number of W3 interviews
A	11	8	6	4
B	10	8	4	4
C	12	11	10	9
D	14	13	9	8
Total	47	40	29	25

Attrition in prison, in the time between recruiting prisoners to take part in the research and the Wave 1 interview appointment, occurred for a variety of reasons, including:

- prisoners changed their minds and no longer wanted to participate;
- one prisoner was released early from prison on Home Detention Curfew (tagging);
- one prisoner was transferred to another prison;
- ill-health;
- suicide; and
- one prisoner after volunteering to participate was then excluded following a security check which showed that he posed a potential risk to the researchers.

There were eight interviewees who only participated in the Wave 1 interview. Reasons why they took no further part in the research included:

- three did not get released from prison as had been expected and so were ineligible to take part in further interviews;
- three could not be traced; and
- two did not want to participate in another interview.

In total, 32 interviewees participated in a follow-up interview, either at Wave 2 or Wave 3, with 22 of these participating in all three interview waves.

Reasons why interviewees dropped out of the study after Wave 2 included:

- one interviewee could not be found again at Wave 3;
- three interviewees were back in prison by the time of the Wave 2 interview and remained in prison throughout the remainder of the fieldwork period – in these cases it was decided not to conduct the Wave 3 interview as their circumstances would not have significantly changed; and
- one interviewee was in residential rehabilitation at Wave 2 and remained there for the rest of the fieldwork period.

Just three interviewees missed the Wave 2 interview, but participated in a Wave 3 interview. Two could not be found at Wave 2 and the third failed to attend his Wave 2 interview, despite re-scheduling it several times.

Wave 2 interviews took place between December 2006 and February 2007. Wave 3 interviews took place between March and May 2007.

A.3 The background characteristics of interviewees

Information on prisoners' backgrounds was collected at the Wave 1 interview, shortly before the interviewees were released.

Age and ethnicity

Interviewees were aged between 18 and 48 with an average age of 30.

One interviewee was Asian, the remainder were either white British, white European or white 'other'. Of the white interviewees, only one, a prisoner from eastern Europe, did not have English as a first language. Within the sample of 40 prisoners the Asian prisoner was atypical as his current and previous sentences were the result of his immigration/residence status rather than criminal offences. He was not permitted to work in the UK and so his experiences post-release were excluded from further analysis at Waves 2 and 3 because the issues and difficulties he faced on release, related to his immigration status and possible deportation. These issues did not apply to the rest of the sample who were white British or European. The eastern European prisoner failed to attend any further interviews, thus all of the follow-up interviews were conducted with prisoners who were white British or white 'other' and who spoke English as their first language.

Living arrangements and relationships

Interviewees had a variety of living arrangements before their entry to prison. Sixteen of them had been living with partners (and often children), nine were living with parents or other family members and six were living alone. The remainder had no permanent accommodation, staying with various friends – what one interviewee referred to as 'sofa surfing' – or in hostels or sometimes on the streets. The one interviewee who was in shared accommodation lost this on entry to prison. The remaining prisoner had been in local authority care before his entry to prison.

Fifteen interviewees reported previous housing/accommodation problems at some time in the past although only seven had no fixed abode before entering prison. Prior accommodation problems included having no permanent accommodation and relying on friends, hostels etc., being in rent arrears and, therefore, unable to access social housing, and relationship or family breakdown resulting in lost accommodation. Many of these issues were longstanding.

It was apparent from interviews that relationships – with both partners and parents – were significant to many of the prisoners' ability to secure and maintain accommodation. Although 16 interviewees had been living with partners before being imprisoned when they were interviewed at Wave 1, shortly before release, only 12 of them reported themselves in a cohabiting relationship. The other four relationships had ended while the men were in prison. Some of these interviewees anticipated problems finding accommodation on release. Three interviewees had girlfriends, but were not living with them and 25 were single. Twenty-six interviewees were fathers, but only 11 of them were living with some or all of their children before entering prison.

Education and employment

Of the 40 interviewees, 17 left school before the official school leaving age and 22 left with no formal qualifications. Very few of those who had qualifications had 'A' levels, the remainder having GCSEs, CSEs, NVQs or 'O' levels. Of those who left school early, some simply ceased to attend, others were either expelled or excluded. Four of those who left school early were either taken into care or into secure accommodation (borstal or Youth Offending Institutions) and so continued to have an element of education.

Most interviewees had some employment experience, although five had never worked. However, only seven had been in paid employment before their entry to prison, the remainder being reliant on some form of welfare benefits, mainly Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), but also Income Support (IS) or some form of sickness benefit. A small number were engaged in criminal activities while also claiming benefits. The small number of interviewees in paid employment immediately before entering prison indicates the potential difficulties of getting ex-prisoners back into the labour market, on their release.

Those whose sole or main income was derived from criminal activities were drug users who were either stealing, or dealing drugs in order to survive and to maintain their drug habits.

Crimes and sentences

Interviewees had been given sentences lasting between six weeks and four years and most expected to serve half of their sentence. Twenty-six prisoners were given sentences of less than 12 months; 14 were sentenced to 12 months or more. Those who had a sentence of 12 months or more (regardless of how long they actually served) would be released on probation. The remainder were released on licence, but could be recalled to complete their sentences if they got into any further trouble.

Of the 40 interviewees, three-quarters had served previous custodial sentences. The number of previous custodial sentences ranged from one to more than ten, with a third of the interviewees having between two and five previous custodial sentences. Five interviewees were unable to remember the exact number as there had been so many.

Of the ten prisoners experiencing their first custodial sentence, two were in prison for breaching a previous order. However, four of the ten had no previous convictions, although one had been in 'bits of trouble' in the past, resulting in cautions but no convictions.

Interviewees had committed a range of offences, with crimes of a violent nature, including assault, actual and the most common, grievous bodily harm. Theft, burglary or robbery came a close second, with drug-related crimes of possession and supply being the third most common offences. Five interviewees were imprisoned as a result of breaching previous orders.

Drugs and alcohol

Drugs and alcohol misuse featured heavily in the lives of most of the interviewees. We have included all illegal drug use, whether the interviewee considered it to be problematic or not. Where alcohol was the major issue, none of the interviewees considered themselves to be alcohol-dependent, yet they were drinking way in excess of recommended guidelines (currently 21 units of alcohol per week for men) and most freely admitted that alcohol consumption had been a factor in their crime.

The figures suggest a strong correlation between the interviewees' problematic drug or alcohol use and their criminal activity: drugs were a factor in 17 crimes, alcohol in ten. Where drugs were an issue, some interviewees were imprisoned for supply or possession, while others were imprisoned for theft or burglary – crimes that had been committed in order to raise money for drugs. Where alcohol was a factor, it was often associated with fighting, and/or driving under the influence. We are not suggesting that drugs and/or alcohol were the only factor in the prisoners' criminal behaviour, merely that they were a **contributory** factor.

The most common drug being used was heroin alone, but heroin was also regularly used by those with multiple drug habits, the most common combination being heroin and cocaine.

Health

Just over half (21) reported one or more health problems. Of these, there were seven reports of physical health problems, nine of mental health problems and five reported both physical and mental health problems. Physical health problems included back and joint problems, heart and blood pressure problems, renal problems, HIV and Hepatitis C. Of those reporting mental health problems, 11 had depression and one had schizophrenia.

Looking at the prisoners' characteristics we can see that many of them lead unstable lives. They are prone to experiencing accommodation problems which are exacerbated if relationships break down. Although most of them have some employment experience, unemployment is common and few have specific employment skills. Drugs and alcohol are a factor in many of the prisoners' lives and those with drug addictions appear likely to experience homelessness and lead chaotic lifestyles. Recidivism levels are high, even for the very young interviewees, and only a third of the sample had served no previous custodial sentences. All of these factors can interact and exacerbate one another. For example, homelessness or a lack of a permanent home can make it difficult for ex-prisoners to find work or claim benefits. A lack of qualifications, in conjunction with a criminal record, can disadvantage them in the labour market. Reliance on drugs can lead to family and relationship breakdown resulting in homelessness, and can result in criminal activities to provide the income necessary to buy illicit drugs on the black market.

Appendix B

Prisoner interview topic guides

This Appendix contains topic guides for Wave 1, 2 and 3 interviews with ex-prisoners. See Appendix A for more details.

B1 Ex-Prisoners – Wave 1 (Pre-Release) Interview Schedule

Interview aims

- To find out about prisoners' backgrounds as a means of understanding their barriers to work.
- To find out what prison activities/industries prisoners have participated in; why they chose to participate or not participate; and views on participation.
- To find out what pre-release support prisoners have received and the extent to which prisoners have thought this beneficial.
- To find out what prisoners' future plans are.

Introduction

- Introduce self and CRSP.
- Explain purpose of the interview.
- Explain confidentiality agreement.
- Ask permission to record the interview.
- Ask interviewee to complete the consent form

PART 1 BACKGROUND

Biographical details & family circumstances

Age

Ethnicity

Marital status

Number and ages of children, if any

Where and with whom are children living with while parent in prison?

Other important family e.g. parents, siblings, grandparents and others

What were your usual living arrangements before prison sentence?

Have you experienced any housing/accommodation difficulties in the past prior to this prison sentence?

Have you remained in contact with close family/partner/children/friends while in prison?

Probe – frequency and nature of contact, e.g. letters, phone calls, visits

Educational background

At what age did you leave school?

What type of school did you attend?

General experience of school:

Did you attend regularly? Did you like/dislike school? Did you get on well with teachers, other pupils etc?

If you experienced problems at school, what was the nature of the problems?

Qualifications obtained, if any

Any further/higher education undertaken?

Employment background

When discussing your employment history we are interested in all of your jobs, both formal employment – where you paid tax and NIC – and 'informal' – cash-in-hand.

At what age did you first start work?

Nature of first employment – type of job, how found e.g. via friends, Jobcentre etc.

Length of time that remained in first job

Other jobs held:

– number of jobs held and types of work undertaken

– reasons if has held several jobs

– reasons if has had periods of unemployment and length of time unemployed

Were you in employment immediately before entering prison?

If so, what was your job?

If not, what were you doing?

– unemployed claiming JSA; ill/sick claiming IB; family responsibilities; unemployed claiming JSA but also working informally

If claiming JSA:

– were you actively seeking work?
– what measures were you taking to find work?

Have you undertaken any training?

– e.g. via an employer or Jobcentre Plus programme, or Apprenticeship

What skills have you acquired either through work or training?

What would you say are your main work skills or trade?

Offending history

How long was this prison sentence and what was it for?

Have you spent all of your current sentence here or have you been at other prisons?

Is this your first time in prison?

If not, how many other custodial sentences have you had – how long were they for?

Have you received any community service/sentences?

If so, how many and what were these for?

What age were you the first time you got into trouble with the police?

What was this for?

How old were you when you were first in prison?

Is there anything that could have stopped you from re-offending?

– closer family ties, employment, staying off drugs, avoiding disruptive friends etc.

Have there been any periods in your life when you haven't been in any sort of trouble?

If so, what was different about those times compared to the times when you were in trouble?

Health

Do you have any ongoing physical or mental health problems?

Have you experienced any mental health problems in the past?

– explore impact on life, work, offending etc.

Have you experienced any physical health problems in the past?

– any long-term or chronic illness/disability that has had an impact on life, work, offending etc.

Are you currently receiving any medical treatment or medication?

Do you have any other health issues or learning difficulties?

Substance misuse

Are you currently taking any (illegal) drugs?

Are you currently taking methadone?

Have you done so in the past?

If yes:

What drugs, regularity of use, drug combinations?

What were the circumstances that led to you using drugs?

Would you say you now have, or have had in the past any problems with alcohol?

When not in prison, how many units of alcohol would you take in an average week?

(1 unit = ½ a pint of beer, a small glass of wine or a pub measure of spirits)

What were the circumstances that led to your problems with alcohol?

Have drugs or alcohol resulted in any problems in your life?

– relationship problems, employment problems, crime

Prior to this prison sentence, have you ever sought or received any support for alcohol/drug misuse?

If so, what type of support?

– DAT, clinic/hospital admission, medication e.g. methadone, antabuse

How effective did you think this support was?

Have you received any support with drug or alcohol problems while in prison?

If so, what support was offered and by whom?

How effective do you think this support was?

PART 2 ACTIVITIES IN PRISON

Prison activities

This section asks about activities undertaken during sentence. Pre-release activities are asked about separately below

What types of activities have you been involved in while in prison?

- workshops/prison industries
- offender behaviour courses
- training courses or education
- going to the gym
- any special responsibilities or privileges

Probe for details:

- length of time spent on each activity
- what was involved
- any qualifications or certificates obtained

What was your reason for attending?

- interest, relieve boredom, prepare for outside employment, assist with early release

Did you get to choose which activities you wanted to do?

If yes – why did you choose the activities you did?

What did you think of these activities?

What difference do you think this will make when you leave prison?

What (other) activities would you have like to have done?

If has not been involved in any activities, why is this?

What activities might you like to have done?

If not involved in any activities, how have you occupied your time?

Resettlement Support/Participation in pre-release activities

What support have you received during the last few months to prepare you for **employment** on release?

Have you taken part in any pre-release courses or activities?

- what was the nature of the course/activity?
- who provided the support?

If not, was any support offered and, if so, why did you refuse it?

What other support have you received during the last few months to prepare you for your release?

Have you taken part in any pre-release courses or activities in relation to:

- Education/training – attending courses or advice on courses post-release
- Basic Skills (reading, writing, numeracy)
- Housing
- Life/personal skills e.g. anger management, self-esteem, money management
- Benefit advice or Freshstart appointment

For each mentioned probe for details:

- who provided the support?
- what was involved?

If not, was any support offered and, if so, why did you refuse it?

Have you attended any talks or met with any external agencies offering you support after you leave prison?

If yes: Have you signed up for help from any of these agencies – which ones?
Reasons for signing or not signing up

If not: Did you have the opportunity to attend any talks – why did not attend?

Overall, how would you rate the support that you have received while in prison?

If has **not** received any support relating to employment and resettlement, has any been arranged before your release date?

PART 3 THE FUTURE

Reflecting on your time in prison, has this influenced your feelings about the future?

– personal safety, future criminality, relationships with family/partner/friends, other

Once you have left prison what do you intend to do?

– spend time with family, get a job, retrain, go to college

Do you think you will remain crime free?

What would keep you free from crime?

– family, employment, staying off drugs

What are your plans for the future on release from prison regarding the following:

Housing

Do you have **definite** accommodation arranged for when you are released?

If so, where will this be? – family home, parental home, with friends, other

If not, how do you intend finding accommodation?

Do you anticipate any housing difficulties on release?

If so, what type of problem?

If problems anticipated: Where will you go for help and assistance?

Are you aware of any specialist services such as Shelter, homelessness support services, hostels, night shelters etc.?

If resettlement support received while in prison [referring to information from previous section]:

Do you feel the support you have received while in prison has been useful in helping you find somewhere to stay on release?

If so, what aspect of the support helped and why?

If not, why not?

Employment

Do you have a job to go to when you are released?

If yes: probe for details on type of work, who will be working for, hours of work, whether formal or informal (cash-in-hand) work

If not:

Will you be claiming benefits when you leave prison – what benefit (IB, JSA, IS)?

If you do **not** have a job to go to and you will **not** be claiming benefits:

– How do you plan to live/where will your income come from?

– Why don't you want to claim benefits?

If claiming IB:

Probe for reasons why – nature of health problem, if contradicts work activities undertaken whilst in prison

If claiming JSA or IS:

Will you be actively seeking work? – type of work sought – reasons

What are your expectations of finding a job?

What type of work/industry will you be seeking?

What are your expectations of staying in work?

If has been unemployed in the past:

How do you usually go about finding work?

What problems do you think you might encounter on release in relation to finding employment?

If employment support received while in prison:[referring to information from previous section]

Do you feel that the support you have received while in prison has prepared you for employment?

If so, what has helped and why?

If not, why not?

Do you feel confident about finding work on release?

Do you have a Jobcentre appointment arranged on release?

If yes: Who has arranged this? What are your views on this service?

If not: Why not -was one offered?

Ask all benefit claimants:

Where is your local Jobcentre?

How do you feel about going to the Jobcentre and receiving help from Jobcentre Plus staff?

Substance misuse

Relate to information from previous section if specific support has been utilised while in prison.

Do you have any concerns around drug or alcohol misuse on release from prison?

How easy or difficult will it be for you to access drugs/stay away from alcohol?

If has a history of abuse, but no concerns – why not?

General

If, on a scale of 1-10, 10 is where you want to be, where would you say you are now?

What are you hoping for on release from prison?

- relationships
- employment
- future criminality
- other

Are you being released on Probation?

If yes – do you know the name of your Probation Officer and where they are based?

If being released on home detention (tagging):

What are the conditions of your home detention order?

END OF RECORDED INTERVIEW

B2 Ex-Prisoners – Wave 2 Interview Schedule

Interview aims

- To explore change – what has happened since Wave 1?
- To find out what difficulties/issues people have had to deal with. Have plans and intentions talked about at Wave 1 materialised?
- To find out what organisations, agencies, support people have engaged with – how this has been accessed; what has it entailed; and views on support.
- To explore people's intentions and experiences of employment and employment support (including Jobcentre Plus).

Introduction

- Explain purpose of the interview (see above aims).
- Check that they are still happy to take part in the research.
- Check that they are still happy for the interview to be recorded and understand and agree to the confidentiality arrangements.
- Ask interviewee to sign a new consent form.

Opening questions

What are the main things that have happened since your release from prison?

What were the first two weeks of your release like – was there anything that was particularly difficult?

How have you been occupying your time?

- probe for main activities
- probe motivations/reasons for main activities

Generally, how are you feeling – happy, sad, confident, depressed?

Housing

Interviewer to recap on plans/expectations from Wave 1

Did any expected pre-release support materialise?

Were any appointments made prior to release actually attended after release – why not?

What's happened since Wave 1

Where are they living?

Who are they living with?

What kind of accommodation is it? e.g. private rent, council, housing association

Number of addresses since release

How was accommodation found?

- If help was received from any agencies – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS
- If help was not received – why/why not?
 - probe awareness of support agencies
 - probe views/impressions of support agencies

Suitability of current accommodation

- probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. crime, drug use, relationships
- if unsuitable – what are they doing about it – any support sought?

Reflections on changes since Wave 1

Why were Wave 1 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans

Is current accommodation temporary or permanent – any moves planned?

Substance misuse (drugs and alcohol)

Interviewer to recap on plans/expectations from Wave 1

Did any expected pre-release support materialise?

Were any appointments made prior to release actually attended after release – why not?

What's happened since Wave 1

What are they using? e.g. what combination of drugs or alcohol
(include methadone and Subutex)

How much are they using? e.g. in an average week, is this more or less than before?

Is use: as expected, better, worse?

IF ARE USING – Are you under the influence of drugs or alcohol now? (during interview)

How has change happened? – probe for triggers

e.g. self-change, influence of family/friends, involvement of support agencies or lack of (anticipated) support

If help was received from any agencies – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

If help was not received – why/why not?

- probe awareness of support agencies
- probe views/impressions of support agencies and reasons why might not seek help

Probe for current attitudes towards drug/alcohol use

Probe for impacts of drug/alcohol use on other areas of life e.g. employment, crime, relationships, health

Reflections on changes since Wave 1

Why were Wave 1 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans/concerns

Probe

Health (mental and physical)

Interviewer to recap on plans/expectations from Wave 1

Did any expected pre-release support materialise?

Were any appointments made prior to release actually attended after release – if not why not? e.g. with GPs, hospitals

What's happened since Wave 1

Any changes in health: no change, better, worse

Any changes in treatment/medication, medical support, appointments attended

Any changes in sport activities undertaken/fitness

How has change happened? – probe for triggers

– If appropriate – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

Probe for impacts of health on other areas of life e.g. employment, crime, substance misuse, relationships

Reflections on changes since Wave 1

Why were Wave 1 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future health expectations/concerns

Probe

Family/Friends/Relationships

Interviewer to recap on plans/expectations from Wave 1

What's happened since Wave 1?

Why has any change from expectations happened? – probe for triggers

– If help was received from any agencies e.g. family support, solicitors – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

Probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. employment, crime, substance misuse, health

Reflections on changes since Wave 1

Why were Wave 1 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans/concerns

Probe

Employment

Interviewer to recap on plans/expectations from Wave 1

Did any expected pre-release support materialise?

Were any appointments made prior to release actually attended after release – if not why not? e.g. new claim appointment at local Jobcentre

What's happened since Wave 1?

Are they working, claiming Benefits? – which benefits, doing something else?

Have there been moves between unemployment and work since their release?

ASK ALL (even if working)

New Benefit Claims:

Did they claim any Benefits when first released? e.g. Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Disability Living Allowance

IF YES: ask the following:

What happened when they went to make a new claim?

– was a job search conducted?

– if claiming IB or IS, what reasons did they give for being unable to work?

– was their offending background discussed at all?

– was any help or support offered? e.g. p2w-LinkUP, training courses, New Deals

How would they describe the new claim experience? – positive, negative, useful

– was it time consuming?

How long did it take for any benefit money to come through? (distinguish between JCP benefits and Housing Benefit)

ASK ALL THOSE CURRENTLY CLAIMING BENEFITS

Benefit Claimants:

How long have they been claiming benefits? (since their release)

Probe experience of ongoing Jobcentre Plus help and support:

- what help or support have they received? e.g. referral to any programmes
- have they applied for any jobs – which jobs and why?

If have been referred to programmes - GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

Probe motivations and attitudes towards work:

- how do they feel about work?
- what work would they like to do? – type of work, industry sector, pay
- (what) are they doing anything to look for work?

What is preventing them from finding a job/moving into work?

- probe perceived barriers to work

What would they do if somebody offered them a job – would they consider it?

How do they feel about going to the Jobcentre and receiving help from Jobcentre Plus staff?

How useful do they feel about the support they have had?

Overall, how would they rate the service provided by Jobcentre Plus?

ASK ALL THOSE IN WORK OR WHO HAVE WORKED SINCE RELEASE

Work:

Number of jobs since release?

What kind of job(s)?:

- type or work
- who working for
- hours of work
- formal/on the books (where pay tax and NIC), or informal/cash-in-hand
- permanent, temporary, contract work
- location of work in relation to home
- pay

How was employment found?

How easy was it to find work?

How quickly did they find a job?

- probe for any barriers to work experienced

Did they disclose their offending background to their employer?

- why/why not?
- if yes: how did their employer respond?

If help was received from any agencies – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

If help was not received – why/why not?

- probe awareness of support agencies
- probe views/impressions of support agencies and reasons why might not seek help

If have had more than one job since release – probe reasons for changing jobs

If were in employment but are now claiming benefits – probe why stopped working

Suitability of (current) employment:

- suitability re skills and qualifications
- does it pay enough?
- how happy are they/do they enjoy their job?
- probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. crime, drug use, relationships
- probe for any difficulties or problems they are having at work

If unsuitable – what are they doing about it – any support sought?

If are working in the informal economy i.e. cash-in-hand – why – what are the advantages of this?

Would they consider working in the formal economy i.e. on the books?

ASK ALL

Reflections on changes since Wave 1

Why were Wave 1 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans

Any changes to employment status anticipated/planned/hoped for?

If are claiming benefits:

Do they expect to work in the future – why/why not

How would they expect to find work?

How confident are they about finding work?

If are in work:

What are their expectations of staying in work and/or progressing in work?

Finances

How are they managing financially?

Main sources of income: work, benefits, tax credits

Other sources of money: Community Care Grants, applications to charities

Sources of large expenditure e.g. substance misuse

Have they experienced any financial difficulties since release?

How did they manage in the first two weeks after their release?

– probe adequacy of discharge grant

If claimed benefits: How did they survive whilst waiting for their benefits to arrive?

If have moved from benefits into work: How did they manage the financial transition from benefits to work?

If have had periods since release of not working and not claiming benefits: How did they survive?

Probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. working on the side, crime, substance misuse, health, family/relationships

Other (any activities not already covered e.g. Education/Careers)

Interviewer to recap on plans/expectations from Wave 1

Did any expected pre-release support materialise?

Were any appointments made prior to release actually attended after release – why not?

What's happened since Wave 1?

How has change happened? – probe for triggers

e.g. self-change, influence of family/friends, involvement of support agencies (or lack of)

If help was received from any agencies – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

If help was not received – why/why not?

– probe awareness of support agencies

– probe views/impressions of support agencies and why might not seek help

Probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. employment, crime, substance misuse, health

Reflections on changes since Wave 1

Why were Wave 1 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans/concerns

Probe

Agency Questions: REPEAT FOR EACH AGENCY, SERVICE MENTIONED

Name of Agency/Service/Professional

How did they find out about them? – in prison, friend, via another agency, in contact with them prior to prison sentence

How did they get in touch with them? – agency referral, self-referral

Why did they choose to use this agency/service?

How often do they attend the agency?

– ongoing support, or one-off

What help and support have they received?

– probe fully for nature of help – what does it involve?

How useful do they feel about the support they have had?

– has it achieved what it was supposed to? e.g. found them accommodation, prevented substance misuse, helped them with employment, skills, confidence

– what has helped and why?

– what hasn't helped and why?

Overall, how would they rate the service provided by AGENCY?

Probation

Check: Are they under supervision of the Probation Service?

ASK ALL UNDER SUPERVISION

What are their licence conditions?

How often do they see their Probation Officer?

If claiming JSA or looking for work – How do their licence conditions impact on their ability to find a job?

What happens when they see their Probation Officer?

– what help, support, advice is offered

– have any referrals to other agencies been made? – IF YES GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

How useful do they feel about the support they have had?

Overall, how would they rate the service provided by the Probation Service?

How much longer will they be on probation for?

Criminal Activities/Recidivism

Interviewer to recap on offending background and plans/expectations from Wave 1

What's happened since Wave 1?

Are they still involved in crime?

If yes:

- what activities?
- when? – explore in relationship to employment status
- how does it compare to before? – same activities, more/less involvement
- reasons for engaging in criminal activities e.g. financial, peers

If not:

How easy has it been?

How has change happened?

- probe for triggers e.g. self-change, influence of family/friends, involvement of support agencies (or lack of)

If are back in prison:

- what happened? – reason for sentence
- how long is their sentence?
- what have they been doing during their sentence? e.g. prison industries, education, gym

ASK ALL

Probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. employment, finances, substance misuse, health

Reflections on changes since Wave 1

Why were Wave 1 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans/concerns

Do they expect to stay away from crime?

If are back in prison – do they expect this sentence will make them feel any different about getting involved with crime again?

Probe attitudes towards crime – something they want to stay away from; inevitable

How important do you think having a job is in terms of staying away from crime?

Closing questions

Looking back, how did prison and resettlement services help prepare you for your release?

– what was useful and why?

What would you say has been the most difficult thing you've had to deal with since being released?

Is there anything that could be provided in prisons to help people like yourself?

If, on a scale of 1-10, 10 is where you want to be, where would you say you are now?

What are your main aims or priorities for the next 3 months?

END OF RECORDED INTERVIEW

- Give incentive voucher and collect signature
- Confirm whether current contact details are still relevant - collect new contact details if necessary.
- Explain timing and follow-up arrangements for Wave 3 interview.

B3 Ex-Prisoners – Wave 3 Interview Schedule

Interview aims

- To explore change – what’s happened since Wave 2
- To find out what difficulties/issues people have had to deal with. Have plans and intentions talked about at Wave 2 materialised?
- Have people accessed/engaged with any new organisations, agencies, support – how this has been accessed and reasons why; what it has entailed; and views on support?
- To explore people’s intentions and experiences of employment and their continued experience of employment support e.g. Jobcentre Plus.

Introduction

- Explain purpose of the interview (see above aims).
- Check that they are still happy to take part in the research.
- Check that they are still happy for the interview to be recorded and understand and agree to the confidentiality arrangements.
- Ask interviewee to sign a new consent form.

Opening questions

What are the main things that have happened since I last met you (3 months ago)?

How have you been occupying your time?

– probe for main activities

– probe motivations/reasons for main activities

Housing

Interviewer to recap on interviewee’s plans and expectations at Wave 2

What’s happened since Wave 2?

Did plans, expectations happen?

Has anything changed – why/why not?

– where are they living?

– with whom are they living?

– what kind of accommodation is it? e.g. private rent, council, housing association.

Number of addresses since release

Are they in contact with any new/different agencies re. any housing issues?

e.g. Council, housing associations, homelessness agencies – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

If have moved ask:

How was accommodation found?

- If help was received from any agencies – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS
- If help was not received – why/why not?
 - probe awareness of support agencies
 - probe views/impressions of support agencies

Ask All:

Suitability of current accommodation

- probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. crime, drug use, relationships
- if unsuitable – what are they doing about it – who would they go to if needed support?

If circumstances have changed:

Reflections on changes since Wave 2

Why were Wave 2 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans

Is current accommodation temporary or permanent – any moves planned?

Substance misuse (drugs and alcohol)

Interviewer to recap on interviewee's plans and expectations at Wave 2

What's happened since Wave 2?

Did plans, expectations happen?

Has anything changed – why/why not?

- what are they using? e.g. what combination of drugs or alcohol (incl. methadone)
- how much are they using? e.g. in an average week, mls of methadone – more or less than at W2?
- is use: as expected, better, worse?
- are they still in contact with any agencies from W2?
- are they in contact with any new/different agencies?

IF ARE USING – Are you under the influence of drugs or alcohol now? (during interview)

How has change happened?

- probe for triggers e.g. self-change, influence of family/friends, involvement of support agencies or lack of (anticipated) support

If help has been received from any agencies – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

If have stopped receiving help – why?

If help has not been received – why not?

– probe awareness of support agencies – who would they go to for support?

– probe views/impressions of support agencies and reasons why might not seek help

Probe for current attitudes towards drug/alcohol use

Probe for impacts of drug/alcohol use on other areas of life e.g. employment, crime, relationships, health

Reflections on changes since Wave 2

Why were Wave 2 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans/concerns

Probe

Health (mental and physical)

Interviewer to recap on interviewee's health status at Wave 2

What's happened since Wave 2?

Did plans, expectations happen?

Any changes in health: no change, better, worse?

Any changes in treatment/medication? medical support, appointments attended

Any changes in sport activities undertaken/fitness?

How has change happened? – probe for triggers

– If appropriate – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

Are they registered with a GP/Doctor – reasons if not?

Probe for impacts of health on other areas of life e.g. employment, crime, substance misuse, relationships

If health has changed:

Reflections on changes since Wave 2

Why were Wave 2 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future health expectations/concerns

Probe

Family/Friends/Relationships

Interviewer to recap on interviewee's plans and expectations at Wave 2
What's happened since Wave 2?

How and why has any change happened? – probe for triggers
 – If help was received from any agencies e.g. family support, solicitors – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

Probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. employment, crime, substance misuse, health

**If circumstances have changed:
 Reflections on changes since Wave 2**

Why were Wave 2 plans/expectations met or not met?
 What difficulties were encountered?
 How should things have happened?

Future plans/concerns
 Probe

Employment

Interviewer to recap on interviewee's plans and expectations at Wave 2
What's happened since Wave 2?

Did plans, expectations happen?

Are they still working, claiming Benefits – which benefits, doing something else?
 Have there been moves between unemployment and work; or moves across different benefits?

ASK ALL THOSE CURRENTLY CLAIMING BENEFITS

How long have they been claiming benefits? (since their release)?
 – have they been continuously on benefits since release?

Are they still claiming the same benefits as at W2 – reasons for any change?

If were in employment at W2, but are now claiming benefits – why stopped working?
 – probe fully

Probe experience of ongoing Jobcentre Plus help and support

Ask if claiming JSA:

What help or support have they received? e.g. referral to any programmes, courses

Have they attended a 12 week review meeting?
 – if yes: what was discussed?

What happens when they sign on fortnightly – what is discussed?

Have they applied for any jobs – which jobs and why?

Ask if claiming IB or IS:

What contact have they had with the Jobcentre over the last three months/since making their new benefit claim?

e.g. further meetings, referral to any programmes, training

What reasons did they give for being unable to work?

ASK ALL Benefit Claimants:

If have been referred to programmes – GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

Probe motivations and attitudes towards work:

- how do they feel about work?
- what work would they like to do? – type of work, industry sector, pay
- (what) are they doing anything to look for work?

What is preventing them from finding a job/moving into work?

– probe perceived barriers to work

What would they do if somebody offered them a job – would they consider it?

How do they feel about going to the Jobcentre and receiving help from Jobcentre Plus staff?

- have they always felt like this?
- if views have changed – probe how and why

How useful do they feel about the support they have had?

Overall, how would they rate the service provided by Jobcentre Plus?

ASK ALL THOSE IN WORK OR WHO HAVE WORKED SINCE WAVE 2

Are they still in the same job as at W2 – if not, number of jobs since W2?

What kind of job(s)?:

- type of work
- who working for
- hours of work
- formal/on the books (where pay tax and NIC), or informal/cash-in-hand
- permanent, temporary, contract work
- location of work in relation to home
- pay
- any changes in the above if are still in the same employment

Ask if are in a new job since W2:

How was employment found?

e.g. friends/family, employment agency, Jobcentre, local adverts

How easy was it to get work? – probe for any barriers to work experienced

When did they start the job?

Did they disclose their offending background to their employer?

– why/why not?

– if yes: how did their employer respond?

If help was not received – why/why not?

– probe awareness of support agencies

– probe views/impressions of support agencies and reasons why might not seek help

If have had more than one job since W2 – probe reasons for changing jobs

Ask all:

Suitability of (current) employment:

– suitability re skills and qualifications

– does it pay enough?

– how happy are they/do they enjoy their job?

– probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. crime, drug use, relationships

– probe for any difficulties or problems they are having at work

If unsuitable – what are they doing about it – any support sought?

If are working in the informal economy i.e. cash-in-hand – why?

– what are the advantages of this?

– what are the disadvantages of this?

Would they consider working in the formal economy i.e. on the books?

– if yes – what is stopping them from doing this?

ASK ALL – BENEFIT CLAIMANTS AND PEOPLE IN WORK

Have they heard of progress2work or progress2work-LinkUP?

If yes, probe:

– where heard about it

– what do they know about it?

– views towards signing up to it – why not?

– have they tried it previously and then dropped out – why?

If find that are on it/have been on it since release— GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

Reflections on changes since Wave 2

Why were Wave 2 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans

Any changes to employment status anticipated/planned/hoped for?

If are claiming benefits:

Do they expect to work in the future – why/why not?

How would they expect to find work?

How confident are they about finding work?

If are in work:

What are their expectations of staying in work and/or progressing in work?

Finances

How are they managing financially?

Main sources of income: work, benefits, tax credits

Other sources of money e.g. Community Care Grants, applications to charities, family

Sources of large expenditure e.g. substance misuse

Have they experienced any financial difficulties since W2?

If claimed benefits: have there been any problems with their benefit claim since W2?

– if yes: probe for details

If have moved from benefits into work: How did they manage the financial transition from benefits to work?

– did they access any additional financial support? If so, from where?

If have had periods since W2 of not working and not claiming benefits: How did they survive?

Probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. working on the side, crime, substance misuse, health, family/relationships

Other (any activities not already covered e.g. Education/Careers)

Interviewer to recap on interviewee's plans and expectations at Wave 2

What's happened since Wave 2?

Did plans, expectations happen?

How has change happened? – probe for triggers

e.g. self-change, influence of family/friends, involvement of support agencies (or lack of)

If help was received from any agencies - GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

If help was not received – why/why not?

– probe awareness of support agencies – who would they go to if wanted support

– probe views/impressions of support agencies and why might not seek help

Probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. employment, crime, substance misuse, health

If circumstances have changed:

Reflections on changes since Wave 2

Why were Wave 2 plans/expectations met or not met?

What difficulties were encountered?

How should things have happened?

Future plans/concerns

Probe

Agency Questions: REPEAT FOR EACH AGENCY, SERVICE MENTIONED

Name of Agency/Service/Professional

Is this an agency they were in contact with at W2?

If is a new agency:

– how did they find out about them? – in prison, friend, via another agency, in contact with them prior to prison sentence

– how did they get in get in touch with them? – agency referral, self-referral

– why did they choose to use this agency/service?

How often do they attend the agency?

– ongoing support, or one-off?

– is this different to W2?

What help and support have they received?

– probe fully for nature of help – what does it involve?

How useful do they feel about the support they have had?

– has it achieved what it was supposed to? e.g. found them accommodation, prevented substance misuse, helped them with employment, skills, confidence

– what has helped and why?

– what hasn't helped and why?

Overall, how would they rate the service provided by AGENCY?

Probation – Ask if were under supervision of Probation Service at W2

Check: Are they still under supervision of the Probation Service?

ASK ALL UNDER SUPERVISION

What are their licence conditions?

How often do they see their Probation Officer?

If claiming JSA or looking for work:

How do their licence conditions impact on their ability to find a job?

What happens when they see their Probation Officer?

– what help, support, advice is offered?

– have any referrals to other agencies been made? – IF YES GO TO AGENCY QUESTIONS

How useful do they feel about the support they have had?

Overall, how would they rate the service provided by the Probation Service?

How much longer will they be on probation?

Criminal Activities/Recidivism

Interviewer to recap on offending background and plans/expectations from Wave 2

What's happened since Wave 2?

Are they still involved in crime?

If yes:

– what activities?

– when? – explore in relationship to employment status

– how does it compare to before? – same activities, more/less involvement

– reasons for engaging in criminal activities e.g. financial, peers

If not:

How easy has it been?

How has change happened? e.g. self-change, influence of family/friends, involvement of support agencies (or lack of)

If are back in prison:

– what happened? – reason for sentence

– how long is their sentence?

– what have they been doing during their sentence? e.g. prison industries, education, gym

ASK ALL

Probe for any impacts on other areas of life e.g. employment, finances, substance misuse, health

**If activities have changed:
Reflections on changes since Wave 2**

Why were Wave 2 plans/expectations met or not met?
What difficulties were encountered?
How should things have happened?

Future plans/concerns

Do they expect to stay away from crime?

If are back in prison – do they expect this sentence will make them feel any different about getting involved with crime again?
– any plans for finding work when released?

Probe attitudes towards crime – something they want to stay away from; inevitable

How important do you think having a job is in terms of staying away from crime?
– Probe why important/not important

Closing questions

What would you say has been the most difficult thing you've had to deal with since being released?

If, on a scale of 1-10, 10 is where you want to be, where would you say you are now? – recap on score given last time

If you were in charge of helping ex-prisoners to resettle, what would you change?

If are out of prison:
What would they say is the main factor that has stopped you returning to prison?

If are back in prison:
What would you say is the main factor that contributed to your return to prison?

Is there any one agency or organisation that stands out as being
– really good; or really bad?

Is there any one individual that stands out as being
– really good; or really bad?

What are you main aims or priorities for the future?

What has it been like taking part in this research study?
– probe for positives and negatives
– would they do it again?

END OF RECORDED INTERVIEW

- Give incentive voucher and collect signature
- Explain next steps.
- Ask if would like to receive a summary of the research findings
if yes – check address details

Appendix C

Staff interview schedules

C1 Employment Benefit Surgery Dvisers

Introduction

Introduce self/CRSP

Introduce research project

Emphasise that we are not evaluating staff

Explain confidentiality Ask permission to record the interview

Remind that the focus of the research is on **ex-prisoners**, rather than ex-offenders, defined in this project as people who have been released from prison within the last year.

Introductory questions/Background

What is your job title?

How long have you been in your present position?

What was your job before becoming a Jobcentre Plus Employment Benefit Surgery (EBS) adviser?

Could you give a brief description of your main roles/responsibilities in relation to EBS in prisons?

Overview of job

Specialist roles/responsibilities

Line management responsibilities

Are you a dedicated full-time EBS adviser?

IF NOT:

What proportion of your time is spent working as an EBS adviser?

What other roles/responsibilities do you have?

Ask All:

Which prison(s) do you work at?

Where are you mainly based?

What training or guidance have you received for your role as EBS adviser?

How did your previous job prepare you for your current role as an EBS adviser?

– *past experience of working with ex-prisoners*

Who is your line manager within Jobcentre Plus?

– *job title/position*

What information, help, support do you receive from your line manager?

At beginning; on-going basis

How many other Jobcentre Plus staff/advisers work with you in the EBS?

About Employment and Benefit Surgeries in Prisons

What are the aims of EBS in prison?

Are all prisoners seen on entering prison?

How many prisoners would you see in an average week?

If not, why?

What are the aims/purpose of these contacts?

– *probe for services/support offered on entering prison:*

– *in relation to benefit claims*

– *in relation to employment/training/job search*

Are all prisoners seen prior to release?

How many would you see in an average week?

If not, why?

What are the aims/purpose of these contacts?

– *probe for services/support offered on release:*

– *in relation to benefit claims*

– *in relation to employment/training/job search*

To what extent is support targeted at particular groups?

– *on entering prison; – pre-release*

What groups of prisoners do you have difficulty reaching?

Freshstart:

What information do prisoners receive about Freshstart?

When do prisoners receive this information?

Roughly what proportion of prisoners eligible for Freshstart take up an offer of a Freshstart appointment?

– *reasons why prisoners do/do not take up offer*

– *probe for characteristics of those who do compared to those who don't*

Do you know what proportion of prisoners actually attend their Freshstart appointment?

– *reasons why prisoners do not attend*

progress2work-LinkUP:

What information, if any, do you give prisoners about progress2work-LinkUP?

Extent of information; format of information – verbal, leaflets etc.

When do prisoners receive this information?

How do prisoners respond to this information?

Other Jobcentre Plus Services:

What information do you give prisoners about other Jobcentre Plus services?

progress2work, New Deals, training opportunities

How do prisoners respond to this information?

What, in your opinion and experience, are the main barriers to work experienced by ex-prisoners?

What disincentives do you think there are for ex-prisoners in moving into work?

Client Outcomes

Do some types/groups of prisoners respond better to EBS services than others?

Which groups and why

Are different approaches better for some prisoners than others?

– *probe for an example*

How many of the prisoners supported leave prison and go on to find employment?

What targets do you have and how easy are these to meet?

What management information do you record? How is this used?

How well do these arrangements work?

Partnership working with the Prison Service

Do you work closely with any of the prison staff? e.g. *Resettlement Officers*

How would you describe this relationship?
Has it changed since you first started working in prisons?
What works well/less well?

Are there any ways in which prison staff work that complements or makes more difficult your work with prisoners?

Prison culture
Cell searches
Accompanied movement of prisoners
Prison Service Targets

How supportive were prison service staff when the EBS first started operating in the prison?

Other Partnership Working

Within Prison:

Do you work closely with any other agencies/organisations who operate within the prison? e.g. *NACRO, SOVA, Shelter, Probation Service, education/training providers*
How does this work?

How would you describe these relationships?
What works well?
What works less well?

Outside of Prison

Do you work closely with any other agencies/organisations who operate outside of prison? e.g. *Probation service, progress2work-LinkUP, Jobcentre Plus, Drug Action Teams etc.*
How does this work?

How would you describe these relationships?
What works well?
What works less well?

Do you signpost prisoners on to any other post-release services?
 If so, Which? e.g. *progress2work-LinkUP, Housing, drug/alcohol support, others*

Does a multi-agency approach e.g. Prison Service, Probation Service, p2w-LUP, Drug Action Teams and others, make provision and co-ordination of support easier or more difficult?

Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

What hinders partnership working?

To what extent does the Data Protection Act impact on partnership working and the provision of a 'joined-up' service?
 – *suggestions for overcoming any difficulties mentioned*

How 'joined-up' would you say current arrangements are for supporting prisoners and ex-prisoners into work?

Overall, to what extent do prisoners receive continuing support, both in prison and following their release?

What factors hinder the provision of continuing support?

Concluding questions

What do you consider to be the main limitations of EBS in prisons?

What lessons do you feel have been learned so far from EBS?

What improvements do you feel could be made?

– *ask for top three*

To what extent do you think helping ex-prisoners into work reduces re-offending rates – and why?

Revolving door/recidivism

Thank and close.

C2 Jobcentre Plus Advisers

Introduction

Introduce self/CRSP

Introduce research project

Emphasise that we are not evaluating staff

Explain confidentiality

Ask permission to record the interview.

Remind that the focus of the research is on **ex-prisoners**, rather than ex-offenders, defined in this project as people who have been released from prison within the last year.

Introductory questions/Background

What is your job title?

How long have you been in your present position?

What was your job before becoming a Jobcentre Plus adviser?

What are your main roles and responsibilities?

Overview of job

Any specialist responsibilities

Employment Support and Advice for Ex-Prisoners

What experience do you have of providing employment advice and support to ex-prisoners?

At new claim stage

Ongoing advice and support/review interviews

How frequently do you see ex-prisoners?

Never

Occasionally

Fairly often

What written guidance and information have you received in relation to working with ex-prisoners?

– prompt if not mentioned: the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act

What training have you received in relation to working with ex-prisoners?

Do you ever have information prior to seeing a customer informing you that they are an ex-prisoner?

– *information from where*

– *probe for examples*

How would you/do you respond at a new claim interview or at a review interview if a customer says they are an ex-prisoner?

What information/advice would you give them?

Job search/job submissions

In-work benefit calculations

Disclosure of criminal record to employers

Specialist services e.g. drug/alcohol, housing

Information/signposting to New Deal services

Information/signposting to other services

Information/signposting to training/education providers

Would this differ from the information/advice you would give other customers – how?

To which specialist service providers might you tell them about or refer them?

What, in your opinion and experience, are the main barriers to work experienced by ex-prisoners?

What disincentives do you think there are for ex-prisoners in moving into work?

Overall, how confident do you feel giving information, advice and support to ex-prisoners?

*Ask if progress2work-LinkUP has **not** been mentioned:*

Are you aware of any specialist provision for ex-prisoners in your area?

– probe for details

Have you heard of progress2work-LinkUP?

If **yes**, how did you hear about it?

What do you know about it – aims and purpose, services provided?

If **no**, give explanation

*Ask if progress2work-LinkUP **has** been mentioned:*

You mentioned progress2work-LinkUP, what's your understanding of the aims of progress2work-LinkUP and of the services they provide?

Under what circumstances would you refer an ex-prisoner to progress2work-LinkUP?

How do you assess whether it is appropriate for a customer?

Ask if the following have not been mentioned:

To what extent are you aware of specialist providers such as NACRO, Rainer, Apex Trust, SOVA?

Contact with Jobcentre Plus Programmes for Ex-Prisoners

What contact, if any, do you have with the Jobcentre Plus progress2work-LinkUp coordinator or progress2work-LinkUP staff?

Frequency, nature of contact

Establish whether any formal channels or networks for contact or partnership working between JCP advisers and p2w-LinkUP

What contact, if any, do you have with the advisers who run the Employment and Benefit Surgeries in prisons?

Frequency, nature of contact

Establish whether any formal channels or networks for contact or partnership working between JCP advisers and EBS advisers

Concluding questions

How successful do you think Jobcentre Plus is in helping ex-prisoners into work?
e.g. Freshstart, p2w-LUP, EBS in prisons

What do you consider to be the main limitations?

What suggestions or examples of good practice do you have that would be useful in helping ex-prisoners into work?

To what extent do you think helping ex-prisoners into work reduces re-offending rates – and why?

Revolving door/recidivism

Thank and close.

C3 Progress2work-LinkUP Advisers

Introduction

Introduce self/CRSP

Introduce research project

Emphasise that we are not evaluating staff

Explain confidentiality

Remind that the focus of the research is on **ex-prisoners**, rather than ex-offenders, defined in this project as people who have been released from prison within the last year.

Introductory questions/Background

What is your job title?

How long have you held this position?

What did you do before you took this position?

Could you briefly outline your roles and responsibilities in relation to progress2work-LinkUP?

Overview of job

Any specialist role/responsibilities

Ask if organisation provides other programmes e.g. p2w:

Do you work solely on p2w-LUP?

Proportion of time spent working on each programme?

How is work allocated?

How well does p2w-LUP fit together with other programmes you deliver?

Are you a generalist or specialist p2w-LUP adviser?

Type of client seen – ex-prisoners/homeless/alcohol misusers

What training or guidance have you received for your role as progress2work-LinkUP adviser?

Do you have any past experience of working with ex-prisoners?

What are the aims of progress2work-LinkUP?

What, in your opinion and experience, are the main barriers to work experienced by ex-prisoners?

What disincentives do you think there are for ex-prisoners in moving into work?

Routes onto progress2work-LinkUP

What are your main sources of ex-prisoner referrals – referrals from other organisations/agencies, or self-referrals?

– probe proportion of referrals vs self-referrals

If receive referrals: Which organisations/agencies refer ex-prisoners to you?
– names of organisations – which are the main organisations/agencies?

Under what circumstances would ex-prisoners be referred by you to other agencies?

Help with housing

Benefits claims

Drug/alcohol support

Job search

If receive self-referrals: For ex-prisoners who self-refer, how do they say they hear about p2w-LUP?

How do you decide who to take on?

– what criteria do you have?

– what kinds of issues or problems arise when making these decisions – particularly in relation to ex-prisoners?

Do you know what happens to those ex-prisoners who apply but who you do not caseload?

How many ex-prisoners do you have on your caseload at the moment?

Is this figure usual?

Are clients typical of the ex-prisoner population?

What proportion of p2w-LUP clients are ex-prisoners as compared to ex-offenders, homeless people, alcohol misusers?

Services/Support Provided

What **in-house** services/support does p2w-LUP provide to ex-prisoners?

Initially and later

Drug/alcohol issues

Housing advice

Job search support

Training/skills/education

Post-employment support

Ask only if not covered fully above:

– What **in-house** support and services do you provide to ex-prisoners in relation to employment?

– *Job search (including CV preparation, interview technique)*

– *Placements*

– *Disclosure of criminal record to employers*

– *Post-employment support*

Ask if relevant: What use is made of other programmes delivered by your organisation?

Ask if contractor also provides progress2work:

How do the services/support offered to ex-prisoners under p2w-LUP differ from those offered to p2w clients?

To which **out of house** services/support do you refer ex-prisoners?

Initially and later

With drug/alcohol issues

Housing advice

Job search support

Training/skills/education

Post-employment support

– probe for names of organisations that refer to

Under what circumstances would you refer an ex-prisoner to another agency/organisation?

– what factors are taken into consideration?

– what kinds of issues or problems arise when making these decisions?

Ask if not mentioned above:

To what extent do you direct ex-prisoners to Jobcentre Plus programmes, such as New Deals?

How many clients do you see on average – per week/month?

Of these how many are ex-prisoners?

How are services delivered – on a one-to one basis or group work?

With regard to just ex-prisoners:

How frequently do you meet with clients?

Where do you meet clients?

How long do you usually work with individual clients?

– number of contacts

– period of time

What difficulties do you experience when working with ex-prisoners?

– are these difficulties particular to this client group

Do you have a system for assessing ex-prisoners to help define their level of need and to measure their progress?

Client Outcomes

What would you define as a successful outcome(s) for someone on p2w-LUP?

How successful is p2w-LUP with ex-prisoners?

– *does it work better with some types/groups of prisoners than others?*

– *which groups and why?*

Are different approaches better for some ex-prisoners than others?

– *probe for an example*

What proportion of ex-prisoners 'drop out' of your service?

– reasons for drop out

Are there ever any occasions when you have to take a client off your books because you cannot work with them?

– probe for an example

How many of your ex-prisoner clients go on to find employment?

– *how does this compare with job outcomes for other p2w-LUP clients and why?*

What types of jobs do ex-prisoners move into?

– *probe for industry sectors, skilled/unskilled, wages, hours,*

For how long do ex-prisoners tend to stay in work?

– *what proportion find sustained employment?*

Partnership working with other agencies/organisations

Which agencies/organisations do you work with?

– *who do you work with most closely?*

What is the extent and nature of your relationship with these agencies?

Formal networks, channels

How would you describe these relationships?

– what works well?

– what works less well?

Do you work closely with any of the prison staff?

– *Resettlement Officer*

Does a multi-agency approach e.g. Probation Service, p2w-LUP, Drug Action Teams and others, make provision and co-ordination of support easier or more difficult? Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

What hinders partnership working?

To what extent does the Data Protection Act impact on partnership working and the provision of a 'joined-up' service?

– *suggestions for overcoming any difficulties mentioned*

How 'joined-up' would you say current arrangements are supporting ex-prisoners into work?

Which organisations are recognised as having good reputations for helping ex-prisoners into work?

Partnership working with Jobcentre Plus

What links do you have with Jobcentre Plus staff?

– probe for nature and frequency of links

How would you describe these relationships?

What works well?

What works less well?

What do you think about other services provided by Jobcentre Plus for ex-prisoners?

Concluding questions

What do you consider to be the main limitations of p2w-LUP for ex-prisoners?

What lessons do you feel have been learned so far from p2w-LUP?

What improvements do you feel could be made?

– ask for top three

To what extent do you think helping ex-prisoners into work reduces re-offending rates – and why?

Revolving door/recidivism

Thank and close.

C4 Progress2work-LinkUP Manager

Introduction

Introduce self/CRSP

Introduce research project

Emphasise that we are not evaluating staff

Explain confidentiality

Ask permission to record the interview.

Remind that the focus of the research is on **ex-prisoners**, rather than ex-offenders, defined in this project as people who have been released from prison within the last year.

Introductory questions/Background

Confirm job title

How long have you held this post?

What was your position prior to becoming the progress2work-LinkUP Manager?

Can you tell me about your organisation?:

- aims
- programmes
- date founded

For how long have you held the p2w-LUP contract? When is it due to end?

Reason(s) why organisation bid for the progress2work-LinkUP contract?

Prior to winning the progress2work-LinkUP contract what experience did your organisation have of working with ex-prisoners?

What other programmes does the organisation deliver?

– e.g. progress2work

ASK if Organisation Delivers Other Programmes:

- How does p2w-LUP sit alongside these other programmes?
- Does respondent manage more than 1 programme?
- Do staff work on more than one programme?

if yes: How do they distinguish between work on p2w-LUP vs other programmes?

Could you give a brief description of your main roles/responsibilities in relation to p2w-LUP?

Overview of job

Specialist roles/responsibilities

Team management, size and scope

What training or guidance have you received for your role as progress2work-LinkUP manager?

How did your previous job prepare you for your current role as p2w-LUP Manager?

– past experience of working with ex-prisoners

What are the aims of p2w-LUP?

What, in your opinion and experience, are the main barriers to work experienced by ex-prisoners?

What disincentives do you think there are for ex-prisoners in moving into work?

About progress2work-LinkUP

How many staff do you manage who work on p2w-LUP?

– *line-management/team set-ups*

– *number of advisers and administrators*

Of the advisers:

– Do they work full-time or part-time?

– Are some more senior than others?

Have these advisers received specific training or guidance for their work with offenders?

Type of training – provided by whom?

Are any of the staff specialists in dealing with ex-prisoners?

Routes onto progress2work-LinkUP

How and where is the p2w-LUP programme marketed?

– *e.g. leaflets/posters; verbal communication*

– *e.g. in prisons, at Jobcentre Plus, Probation Service, other organisations*

What are your main sources of ex-prisoner referrals? – referrals from other organisations/agencies, or self-referrals?

– *probe proportion of referrals vs self-referrals*

If receive referrals: Which organisations/agencies refer ex-prisoners to you?

– *names of organisations*

– *which are the main organisations/agencies?*

How many applications do you receive overall per month – what proportion of these are ex-prisoners?

What percentage of ex-prisoners who apply do you take on?

What selection criteria do you have?

Do you know what happens to those ex-prisoners who apply but who you do not caseload?

How many ex-prisoners do you have on your caseload at the moment?

Is this figure usual?

Are clients typical of the ex-prisoner population?

What proportion of p2w-LUP clients are ex-prisoners as compared to ex-offenders, homeless people, alcohol misusers?

What management information do you record on p2w-LUP? How is this used?

Services/Support Provided

What in-house services/support does p2w-LUP provide to ex-prisoners?

Initially and later

Drug/alcohol issues

Housing advice

Job search support

Training/skills/education

Post-employment support

To which out of house services/support do you refer ex-prisoners?

Initially and later

Drug/alcohol issues

Housing advice

Job search support

Training/skills/education

Post-employment support

– probe for names of organisations that refer to

How do referral arrangements with other organisations work – do you have to pay for the services provided?

Ask if not mentioned above: To what extent do you direct ex-prisoners to Jobcentre Plus programmes, such as New Deals?

Ask if relevant: What use is made of other programmes delivered by your organisation?

Ask if contractor also provides progress2work: How do the services/support offered to ex-prisoners under p2w-LUP differ from those offered to p2w clients?

Client Outcomes

What would you define as a successful outcome(s) for someone on p2w-LUP?

What targets do you have for p2w-LUP and how easy are they to meet?

How do outcomes for ex-prisoners compare with outcomes for other p2w-LUP clients (homeless and alcohol users)?

What proportion of ex-prisoners 'drop out' of your service?

– *reasons for drop out*

How many of your ex-prisoner clients go on to find employment?

– *how does this compare with job outcomes for other p2w-LUP clients?*

What types of jobs do they move into?

– *probe for industry sectors, wages, hours*

Do you have any means of following up clients to examine longer-term employment outcomes?

– *how is this done?*

– *over what time period?*

For how long do your ex-prisoner clients tend to stay in work?

Do you do any work with, or raise awareness with local employers in relation to employing ex-prisoners?

Specific companies – why these companies?

Partnership working with other agencies/organisations

Which agencies/organisations do you work with?

– *who do you work with most closely?*

Do you work closely with any of the prison staff?

– *Resettlement Officer*

Does a multi-agency approach e.g. Probation Service, p2w-LUP, Drug Action Teams and others, make provision and co-ordination of support easier or more difficult? Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

What hinders partnership working?

To what extent does the Data Protection Act impact on partnership working and the provision of a 'joined-up' service?

– *suggestions for overcoming any difficulties mentioned*

How 'joined-up' would you say current arrangements are for supporting ex-prisoners into work?

Partnership working with Jobcentre Plus

How would you describe your working relationship with Jobcentre Plus and the p2w-LUP co-ordinator?

How much contact do you have?

What works well?

What works less well?

What information/help/support do you receive?

At beginning of contract

On-going basis

Is this sufficient?

What management information do you have to provide to Jobcentre Plus?

How is this provided?

How well do these arrangements work?

What do you think about other services provided by Jobcentre Plus for ex-prisoners?

Concluding questions

What do you consider to be the main limitations of p2w-LUP for ex-prisoners?

What lessons do you feel have been learned so far from p2w-LUP?

What improvements do you feel could be made?

– ask for top three

To what extent do you think helping ex-prisoners into work reduces re-offending rates – and why?

Revolving door/recidivism

Thank and close.

C5 Prison Resettlement Service

Introduction

Introduce self/CRSP

Introduce research project

Emphasise that we are not evaluating staff

Explain confidentiality

Ask permission to record the interview

Remind that the focus of the research is on prisoners and **ex-prisoners**, rather than ex-offenders, defined in this project as people who have been released from prison within the last year.

Introductory questions/Background

Confirm job title

How long have you been in your present position?

What was your previous post within the Prison Service?

Can you tell me about how the resettlement team is set up within this prison?

– *line management/team set-ups*

– *number of Resettlement Officers*

Who is your line manager?

Job title/position within Prison Service

Is there a Resettlement Unit?

Where is it located?

– *in a single area of the prison, or across several locations*

What are your main roles and responsibilities?

Overview of job

Any specialist responsibilities

Proportion of time spent on resettlement related activities

What training or specialist knowledge is required for your position?

Type of training – provided by whom

Services/Support Provided

Delivery of Services:

Within the prison as a whole, what priority is attached to resettlement activities?

What resettlement services are provided for prisoners?

Drug/alcohol treatment programmes

Training/skills/education

Housing advice

Employment advice

Who provides these?

- *Prison Service – Resettlement Unit/Officers*
- *external agencies/organisations*
- *probe for each service provided*

What role do prison industries play in the rehabilitation of offenders?

To what extent are the different types of resettlement support integrated?

At what point in an individual's sentence is support made available?

To what extent is provision made for more vulnerable groups of prisoners?

- e.g. young prisoners, those with mental health problems, or prisoners from ethnic minorities

What services are provided to short-term prisoners and those on remand?

How successful are resettlement services with prisoners?

- *does it work better with some types/groups of prisoners than others?*
- *which groups and why?*

Are different approaches better for some prisoners than others?

- *probe for an example*

What are the main difficulties in delivering resettlement services?

- any impacts due to the prison regime
- any impacts as a result of Prison Service targets

What is being done to overcome these difficulties?

Outcomes:

What would you define as a successful outcome(s) for a prisoner?

- *whilst in prison*
- *following release*

What targets do you have and how easy are they to meet?

What, in your opinion and experience, are the main barriers to work experienced by ex-prisoners?

What disincentives do you think there are for ex-prisoners in moving into work?

Partnership Working

What experience have Resettlement staff had of partnership working?

Employment and Benefit Surgeries in Prisons:

How closely do you work with the Jobcentre Plus EBS Advisers?

- *probe for nature, frequency of contact/links*
- *contact with whom?*
- *initially when set up*
- *on a day to day basis*

How would you describe your working relationship with EBS Dividers?

What works well/less well?

To what extent would you say the aims/roles of the two agencies complement each other?

– *meeting targets*

– *ascertain attitudes towards EBS in prisons – a good thing or not*

Overall, what do you think about the services provided by Jobcentre Plus for prisoners and ex-prisoners?

Probation Service (based outside of prison):

How closely do you work with the Probation Service working outside of the prison?

– *probe for nature, frequency of contact/links*

– *contact with whom?*

How would you describe your working relationship with the Probation Service?

What works well/less well?

To what extent would you say the aims/roles of the two agencies complement each other?

Overall, what do you think about the services provided by the Probation Service in relation to the resettlement of ex-prisoners?

Other partnership working:

Do you work closely with any other agencies/organisations that support prisoners with moving into work?

Closeness of working

Nature of relationship

Overall:

How 'joined-up' would you say current arrangements are for supporting prisoners move into work – during their time in prison and after their release?

What hinders partnership working?

To what extent does the Data Protection Act impact on partnership working and the provision of a 'joined-up' service?

– *suggestions for overcoming any difficulties mentioned*

[If not mentioned] What impact do Prison Service targets have on partnership working?

Concluding questions

What do you consider to be the main limitations of resettlement programmes in assisting prisoners?

What improvements do you feel could be made?

– *within the Prison Service*

– *and more generally*

To what extent do you think helping ex-prisoners into work reduces re-offending rates – and why?

Revolving door/recidivism

Where do you see the role of the Prison Service within wider government policies to assist prisoners into work following their release?

Thank and close.

C6 Probation Service

Introduction

Introduce self/CRSP
Introduce research project
Emphasise that we are not evaluating staff
Explain confidentiality
Ask permission to record the interview.

Remind that the focus of the research is on **ex-prisoners**, rather than ex-offenders, defined in this project as people who have been released from prison within the last year.

Introductory questions/Background

Confirm job title

How long have you been in your present position?

What was your previous post (within the Probation Service)?

Can you tell me about how the Probation Service is set up locally?

– *line management/team set-ups*
– *number of Probation Officers*

Who is your line manager?

Job title/position within Probation Service

What are your main roles and responsibilities?

Overview of job

Any specialist responsibilities

Team management, size and scope

What training or specialist knowledge is required for your position?

Type of training – provided by whom

To what extent did your professional training prepare you for helping ex-prisoners into work?

Services/Support Provided

Within the Probation Service as a whole, what priority is attached to the resettlement of ex-prisoners?

What resettlement services are provided for ex-prisoners?

Drug/alcohol treatment programmes

Training/skills/education

Housing advice

Employment experience/advice

Who provides these?

- *Probation Officers*
- *external agencies/organisations*

Client Outcomes

How successful are resettlement services with ex-prisoners?

- *does it work better with some types/groups of ex-prisoners than others?*
- *which groups and why?*

Are different approaches better for some ex-prisoners than others?

- *probe for an example*

What would you define as a successful outcome(s) for an ex-prisoner?

What targets do you have for ex-prisoners and how easy are they to meet?

What, in your opinion and experience, are the main barriers to work experienced by ex-prisoners?

What disincentives do you think there are for ex-prisoners in moving into work?

Partnership Working

What experience have staff had of partnership working?

Partnership working with the Prison Service

How closely do you work with Prison Service Resettlement Officers?

- *probe for nature, frequency of contact/links*
- *contact with whom?*

How would you describe your working relationship with Resettlement Officers?

What works well/less well?

To what extent would you say the aims/roles of the two agencies complement each other?

- *use of targets*

Contact with Jobcentre Plus programmes for ex-prisoners

Do you work with Jobcentre Plus?

- *probe for nature, frequency contact/links*
- *contact with whom?*

Have you ever directed any clients to Jobcentre Plus for help and support?

- *what programmes or services were they signposted to?*

Under what circumstances would you direct a client to Jobcentre Plus?

- *what factors are taken into consideration?*
- *what kinds of issues or problems arise when making these decisions?*

Do you work closely with any other agencies/organisations that support prisoners with moving into work?

Closeness of working

Nature of relationship

Ask if progress2work-LinkUP has not been mentioned:

Are you aware of any specialist provision for ex-prisoners in your area?

– probe for details

Have you heard of progress2work-LinkUP?

If **yes**, how did you hear about it?

What do you know about it – aims and purpose, services provided?

Establish nature, frequency of any contacts with p2w-LUP

If **no**, give explanation

*Ask if progress2work-LinkUP **has** been mentioned:*

You mentioned progress2work-LinkUP, what's your understanding of the aims and purpose of progress2work-LinkUP and of the services they provide?

How closely do you work with p2w-LUP?

– probe for nature, frequency of contact/links

– contact with whom?

Under what circumstances would you provide information or refer an ex-prisoner to progress2work-LinkUP?

How do you assess whether it is appropriate for a customer?

Ask All:

What do you think about the services provided by Jobcentre Plus for ex-prisoners?

Overall, how 'joined-up' would you say current arrangements are for supporting ex-prisoners move into work?

What hinders partnership working?

To what extent does the Data Protection Act impact on partnership working and the provision of a 'joined-up' service?

– suggestions for overcoming any difficulties mentioned

Concluding questions

What do you consider to be the main limitations of resettlement programmes in assisting ex-prisoners?

What improvements do you feel could be made?

– within the Probation Service

– and more generally

To what extent do you think helping ex-prisoners into work reduces re-offending rates – and why?

Revolving door/recidivism

Where do you see the role of the Probation Service within wider government policies to assist prisoners into work following their release?

Thank and close.

C7 Other Organisations/Agencies

Introduction

Introduce self/CRSP
 Introduce research project
 Emphasise that we are not evaluating staff
 Explain confidentiality
 Ask permission to record the interview

Remind that the focus of the research is on **ex-prisoners**, rather than ex-offenders, defined in this project as people who have been released from prison within the last year.

Introductory questions/Background

What is your job title?

How long have you been in your present position?

What was your previous job?

Can you tell me about your organisation:

- *aims/purpose*
- *voluntary, charity, private, statutory*
- *date founded*

What types of client does your organisation deal with?

Is focus on ex-prisoners or other groups/issues?

What are your main roles and responsibilities?

Overview of job

Specialist roles/responsibilities

Team management, size and scope

What training, specialist knowledge or expertise is required for your position?

How many staff are employed within your organisation [at local office level] and what are their roles?

How many of them provide advice/support to ex-prisoners?

Are any of your staff specialists?

Any specialists in dealing with ex-prisoners?

From where are your main sources of funding?

Any funding for work with ex-prisoners?

How and where do you market/advertise your organisation?

Services provided by your organisation

Can you tell me about the services your organisation provides?

Types of service/support offered

Aims/rationale for these services

Approximately how many clients would you say your organisation helps?

Per week/month/year

What proportion of your clients would you say are ex-prisoners?

How do you find your clients – are they referred to you or do clients self-refer?

If receive referrals: Which organisations/agencies refer clients to you?

Do you have any selection criteria for who you take on?

– what kinds of issues or problems arise when making these decisions – particularly in relation to ex-prisoners?

How do you work with ex-prisoners?

Any difference between this and services offered to other clients?

How are services delivered – on a one-to one basis or group work?

With regard to just ex-prisoners:

How frequently do you meet with clients?

Where do you meet clients?

How long do you usually work with individual clients?

What difficulties do you experience when working with ex-prisoners?

– are these difficulties particular to this client group?

Under what circumstances would you refer a client to another agency/organisation?

– what factors are taken into consideration?

– what kinds of issues or problems arise when making these decisions?

– to whom do they refer clients?

Client Outcomes

What would you define as a successful outcome(s) for one of your clients?

How do you measure client outcomes?

How successful do you feel you are in helping ex-prisoners to resettle and move into work?

What, in your opinion and experience, are the main barriers to work experienced by ex-prisoners?

What disincentives do you think there are for ex-prisoners in moving into work?

Partnership Working

Partnership working with progress2work-LinkUP

Ask if p2w-LUP contractor was not mentioned above:

Do you work with [name of contractor] who run progress2work-LUP?

– probe for nature, extent of contact/links, frequency

Ask if p2w-LPU contractor was mentioned above:

You mentioned earlier [name of contractor] who run progress2work-LUP, how closely do you work with p2w-LUP?

– probe for nature, frequency of contact/links

Ask all:

Have you ever referred any clients to progress2work-LinkUP?

– under what circumstances?

– what factors are taken into consideration?

Have you ever had any clients referred to you by progress2work-LinkUP?

– under what circumstances?

Partnership working with Jobcentre Plus

To what extent do you work in partnership with Jobcentre Plus?

Explore nature of partnership:

– probe for nature, frequency of contact/links

Have you ever directed any clients to Jobcentre Plus for help and support?

e.g. New Deal programmes, p2w

Under what circumstances would you direct a client to Jobcentre Plus?

– what factors are taken into consideration?

– what kinds of issues or problems arise when making these decisions?

Have you ever had any clients referred to you by Jobcentre Plus?

– under what circumstances?

Partnership working with other agencies/organisations

Which other organisations do you work closely with?

Regarding ex-prisoners

Does a multi-agency approach e.g. Probation Service, p2w-LUP, Drug Action Teams and others, make provision and co-ordination of support for ex-prisoners easier or more difficult – why?

What do you consider to be the advantages of a multi-agency approach?

What do you consider to be the disadvantages?

What hinders partnership working?

To what extent does the Data Protection Act impact on partnership working and the provision of a 'joined-up' service?

– *suggestions for overcoming any difficulties mentioned*

How 'joined-up' would you say current arrangements are for supporting ex-prisoners into work?

Which organisations are recognised as having good reputations for helping ex-prisoners into work?

Concluding questions

What do you consider to be the main limitations of your organisation's work in relation to assisting ex-prisoners?

What improvements do you feel could be made?

– *within organisation*

– *more generally for supporting ex-prisoners*

To what extent do you think helping ex-prisoners into work reduces re-offending rates – and why?

Revolving door/recidivism

Thank and close.

Appendix D

Group discussion topic guide

D1 Ex-prisoners: group discussion with p2w-LinkUP clients

Discussion aims

- To understand the general difficulties and barriers to work faced by ex-prisoners
- To explore views and experiences of employment initiatives/support including Jobcentre Plus and p2w-LinkUP
- Collect suggestions for improving services and support for ex-prisoners

Introduction

Introduce self and CRSP

Outline the aims and scope of the research project

Explain purpose of discussion group

Explain about confidentiality and ask permission to record the discussion

Ask participants to complete the consent form

PART 1: OPENING QUESTIONS

Opening Introductions by participants:

- name
- age
- how long been with p2w-LUP for
- aims and ambitions in relation to work, education or training

What are the difficulties that people leaving prison face?

e.g. housing, family/relationships, access to drugs and alcohol, finances

– how do they manage/overcome these difficulties?

How easy is it to get a job when you leave prison?

- probe for barriers to work

Generally, from your experience, how would you describe the help and support available to people with offending backgrounds?

- what's available?
- good/bad views and experiences

PART 2: EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

progress2work-LinkUP

How did you first hear out about p2w-LUP?

- in prison, via Jobcentre, via other organisation, via friend

Where did you first meet with a p2w-LUP Dviser?

- in prison, via Jobcentre, via other organisation

What made you decide to sign up to p2w-LUP?

- distinguish between reasons related to programme attributes and personal reasons e.g. they were ready to join any programme offered to them
- what attracted you most/sold it to you?
- how did p2w-LUP differ from other programmes/support on offer?

From our research talking to prisoners who were about to be released we didn't meet many who had signed up to p2w-LUP prior to their release. Why do you think this is?

- Did anyone tell you about p2w-LUP when you were in prison?

If heard about or signed up to p2w-LUP whilst in prison:

- Why do you think your experience was different?
- In what ways could the prisoners we've met be different to you?

What is progress2work-LinkUP like?

- what kinds of help and support do you get?
- what do you like best about it?
- what aspects are not so good?

Were you aware when you signed up that p2w-LUP was targeted at ex-offenders?

How do you feel about this?

- advantages
- disadvantages e.g. stigma

To whom would you recommend it – is it right for all ex-offenders?

Jobcentre Plus

[Include experience of claiming benefits and employment support]

Who hasn't been to a Jobcentre in the last 12 months?

What do you think about the **benefit claim service** provided by Jobcentres?

- what is the service like when you leave prison and make a new benefit claim?
- what kinds of help and support do you get?
- what are the best aspects of the service ?
- what aspects are not so good?

What do you think about the **employment service** provided by Jobcentres?

- what kinds of help and support do you get? e.g. job search, New Deals, any referrals to other agencies
- what are the best aspects of the service?
- what aspects are not so good?

How do you feel about using the Jobcentre as a source of help and support for finding work?

Other employment support

Is anyone **currently** receiving employment support from any other organisations?

What other agencies or programmes have you tried in the **past** that aim to help people into employment, education or training?

For each mentioned ask:

How did you find out about them?

- in prison, via Jobcentre, via other organisation, via friend

What made you decide to join them?

Was the service targeted specifically at ex-offenders?

- if so, how did they feel about this? probe for any issues re stigma

What kinds of help and support did you get?

- what did you like best about it?
- what aspects were not so good?

Would you recommend them - why, to whom?

PART 3: OTHER (NON-EMPLOYMENT) SUPPORT SERVICES

[Relate back to any issues raised at the start of the discussion]

Is anyone **currently** receiving support from any other organisations, for example, in relation to housing, substance misuse, health problems, family and relationships?

Has anyone in the **past** received support from any other organisations, for example, in relation to housing, substance misuse, health problems, family and relationships?

For each mentioned ask:

How did you find out about them?

– in prison, via Jobcentre, via other organisation, via friend

What made you decide to join them?

Was the service targeted specifically at ex-offenders?

– if so, how did they feel about this? probe for any issues re stigma

What kinds of help and support did you get?

– what did you like best about it?

– what aspects were not so good?

Would you recommend them – why, to whom?

PART 4: CLOSING QUESTIONS

If you were Tony Blair what would you do to help people stop re-offending?

Do you think that improving the skills and qualifications of offenders and helping them into employment would help to stop them re-offending?

Provide an oral summary of the key discussion points.

Is this an adequate summary?

Are there any other issues that we haven't talked about or anything you want to add?

END

Thank.

Give out incentive payments and collect incentive receipts.

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