

Research Paper

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A sense of place: A study of accessing housing for women exiting prison – housing first not housing last

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Abstract

This study was carried out under the guidance of The Griffins Society as part of their “New Thinking About Women and Criminal Justice” objective. The aim of The Griffins Society is to examine and support a fair and just criminal justice response for women affected by the Criminal Justice System.

This study focused on twelve women who received a direct pathway for housing following their release from prison. Using data collated through semi-structured interviews gathered over a 12-month period, the study followed the lives of the women as they settled in to their homes after varying terms in prison. The findings revealed that some of the women had little or no support for a need for housing previously and that a direct *through the gate* pathway to housing evidenced in this report produced positive outcomes that benefitted the participants and in some cases, their children. The findings revealed, that long-term housing needs were not part of resettlement planning – instead inappropriate assessments and placements into temporary accommodation were consistent avenues that addressed a short-term response for the providers of services and did not reflect or accept the complexities of women’s lives. Furthermore, the study evidenced the use of the “Housing First” model and the benefits this brought for the women in that they were able to flourish and readily adapt to life as women in the community and begin to leave their time in prison, behind them.

The study concludes with recommendations that the Ministry of Justice should consider to address the deficits in current provision that the research identified.

Chapter 1: Introduction

BARONESS CORSTON: *“I looked closely at the pathway on accommodation because that is women’s greatest resettlement concern on release and it seems to me to be the pathway most in need of speedy, fundamental gender specific reform.”* (Corston, 2007, p. 7)

In her 2007 influential report, which obtained cross-party support, Baroness Corston highlighted the need for a *“fundamental rethink”* in the provision of community services for women in prison, previously called for and consistently researched for over three decades (Carlen, 1985; Gelsthorpe & Morris, 2002; Hedderman & Gelsthorpe, 1997; McIvor, 2004; Worrall, 1990). Within community provisions, I felt in rethinking ways of what community provision entailed, housing pathways for women, as Corston noted, were indeed in need of speedy reform.

My work as a practitioner within a housing project and Through the Gate services enabled me to examine the lack of a targeted housing response for women – the challenges the private community rehabilitation companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS) faced in accessing housing for women post-prison. My former work also led me to identify an alarming lack of housing support for women as recommended by Corston. While women in prison make up 5 per cent of the prison population in England and Wales, the impact of not addressing resettlement needs has had far-reaching consequences for women and their children. Research since Corston has focused on reducing the women’s prison population; however, there has been limited research on the impact of a lack of suitable housing for this client group when exiting custody. Housing legislation is vastly misunderstood by supporting organisations, thus further presenting barriers that are insurmountable. Furthermore, my own difficulties of accessing housing while serving a suspended sentence led me to my work as a practitioner and to this research (McMahon, 2013, pp. 159–163).

I wished to explore, through my experience of working with women leaving prison over three years and the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) reforms introduced by the Secretary of State in 2014, the barriers women experienced in accessing suitable housing. I felt it necessary to examine the impact these barriers had through the narratives of women and this supported the need for a women-only study. Changing landscapes in criminal justice, such as TR and the introduction of the benefit cap, had seen a

decline in responses to housing needs from statutory services for women leaving prison and this study evidenced this decline. Since the financial crash in 2008, austerity has had a major impact on housing for the general population on low incomes and this study demonstrated, through its findings, some of the barriers women faced on leaving prison due to rising rents, a lack of social housing and delays in benefit payments. The barriers faced, however, are not solely due to state actions. Research since Corston has conveyed consistent messages that women in prison have complex needs such as substance misuse, domestic abuse, poor budgeting skills and relationship problems. This study revealed gaps in research that I hoped to fill, to demonstrate and promote new ways of thinking to achieve positive outcomes. I sought information on housing as a social issue and the need for a more joined-up way of working with those responsible for supporting women back to communities. Finally, I hoped to add valuable insights to existing research and encourage discussion that will lead to future research in this under-researched and under-resourced area.

A Sense of Place was based on qualitative interviews with 12 women who had received direct housing support under a model known as 'Housing First' prior to leaving and post-prison. The women had served varied sentences – the shortest time served by the women was four weeks and the longest was ten years. Participants had extensive histories of substance misuse and domestic abuse. Their narratives were recorded through repeat interviews as their progress, and changes to their lives, were tracked over a 12-month period with a final interview at the end of the study. They were coming to terms with their experiences of prison and establishing themselves in homes – overcoming perceptions of them as offenders, as women who commit crime.

This research explored why women leaving prison faced particular barriers to housing options and factored in their housing circumstances prior to prison. During the research and in my former work as a practitioner, I found that women, in particular those with a primary caring role prior to prison, faced barriers that are largely ignored by local authorities – just by their being homeless – encountered barriers in accessing housing in resettlement planning and *non-priority* status that were insurmountable. Of the 12 women interviewed, all but two had received a separate and targeted response to their housing needs prior to leaving prison and were able to sustain post-prison community supervision requirements, receive treatment for substance misuse and build new lives with support from local services. It is for this reason I felt the need to not only explore the housing barriers women in prison faced but test the benefits of a targeted longer-term *housing/home* response for women leaving prison as opposed to the use of temporary accommodation as a solution. The impact of having a secure home post-prison reduced reoffending and produced positive, cost-effective outcomes for services and, more

importantly, stability for the women. A Sense of Place explored the emotional impact the participants experienced in their wish for a home balanced against the need for accommodation to meet their post-prison licence requirements (House of Commons Justice Select Committee, 2016). The emotional connotations around the concept of 'home' and the additional characteristics a home can bring are examined in the discussions chapter. Moreover, the study illustrated that temporary accommodation in some cases threw up further barriers for women in re-establishing relationships with their children and should not be relied upon as a suitable outcome to a housing need. Finally, I hoped to demonstrate that longer-term solutions to a housing need should be embedded in Through the Gate services.

SEU REPORT: *“Many experience real obstacles to re-engaging in learning or drug programmes on release; but these pale into insignificance compared with their difficulties in accessing housing and benefits”* (SEU, 2002, p. 5)

As identified in the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report, *Reducing Re-Offending by Ex-Prisoners* (2002), the lack of accommodation was one of nine key factors that contributed to stubbornly high reoffending figures. The report noted that suitable accommodation reduced the risk of reoffending by a fifth. The SEU report from 2002 remains significant 15 years later; however, responses to housing needs today remain as challenging as reported in the SEU. Accessing accommodation remains a stubborn issue for many women due to having no suitable identification and the demands of the welfare reforms. These barriers are discussed later. The introduction of TR reforms and Through the Gate (TTG) services announced in 2014 by the Coalition Government offered a promising rhetorical conceptualisation. It captured the discussion points made by the SEU report authors regarding the lack of robust policy mechanisms in where the responsibility of housing support lay. However, the 2015 implementation of TTG services revealed that accessing accommodation continued to prove challenging, as evidenced in a 2017 joint inspection report by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Probation & HMI Prisons, 2017).

A recent report, *Home Truths* (Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison, 2016), demonstrated that accommodation was lacking for women exiting prison. It explored the effect this lack of accommodation had on resettlement for women, and is nuanced and informative; however, research on the long-term solutions – a home, *a sense of place* – was non-existent for women. My research focused on 12 women who received a separate pathway into a home as a long-term solution and became the main focus of their resettlement planning. An undertaking of the resettlement planning in homes was the responsibility of the service provider and support ran concurrently with post-prison supervision by

probation. What this study demonstrated is that long-term suitable accommodation brought positive outcomes for the women and their children, and reduced reoffending.



Chapter 2: Literature review

Studies on housing and ex-offenders since the Social Exclusion Unit report *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-Prisoners* (SEU, 2002) evidenced the links between homelessness and offending. Academic research on the legislative aspects of accessing housing was hard to link to the focus of the study. Cowan explains that “the official and unofficial linkages between law and public policy to give a fuller picture of decision-making and housing regulation” (Cowan, 2011, p. 2). I therefore mainly drew upon reports and briefings from third sector organisations to demonstrate the focus of the study. This reinforced my view that a female-only study was required as a new way of thinking into how to address an under-researched issue. Recent research has primarily focused on the need for access to accommodation and its benefits. *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-Prisoners* was considered a landmark report in reflecting the importance of housing on recidivism and the barriers ex-offenders faced in accessing housing post-prison (Gojkovic, Mills & Meek, 2012).

Previous studies focused on prisoners being homeless prior to prison and the difficulties faced by single people leaving prison. A 2017 report by Clinks, *Are the Accommodation Needs Being Met for People in Contact with the Criminal Justice System?* (Clinks & Homeless Link, 2017), identified that additional barriers for people in prison accessing accommodation did exist. Additionally, the report evidenced that community rehabilitation companies (CRCs) did not throw enough weight behind housing as a resettlement pathway and, astonishingly, informs us that one prison issued tents to women exiting prison (Clinks & Homeless Link, 2017, p. 4). The report agreed that women exiting prison experienced additional barriers due to being primary carers of children, that lone women in hostels, often mixed sex establishments, faced risks, and that homelessness responses were inadequate in addressing the needs of women (Clinks & Homeless Link, 2017, p. 8). It further reported that data and information was hard to locate as it concentrated on CRCs and their performance as a service recently implemented. The report identified the need for further information and improved pathways between probation and local authority housing teams (Clinks & Homeless Link, 2017, p. 11). Due to the wealth of literature surrounding the issues of welfare reforms, it became paramount to limit this review of existing research into the barriers to accessing suitable accommodation faced by women exiting custody.

“Most housing cases have also been excluded from civil legal aid. There are some limited exceptions, including cases involving housing disrepair where there is a risk of serious harm, and cases where there is the risk of homelessness. In the Government’s own assessment of the likely equality impact of LASPO, limiting legal aid for housing was predicted to have a disproportionate impact on women given their overrepresentation among housing clients compared with the adult population as a whole.” (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016, p. 10)

Women in prison faced a different set of barriers in comparison to their male counterparts as noted by Corston. They experienced complex needs that are cumulative rather than a single number of issues. They are often the primary carer for children and since the introduction of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) in 2013, the reduction of legal aid has affected women separated from their children and their housing needs (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016). LASPO did have a knock-on effect on women with a primary caring role prior to prison as the removal of legal aid in care proceedings resulted in women accessing accommodation post-prison having no priority in housing assessments. Ultimately, LASPO changes did affect the type of accommodation women could access: accommodation for one person. Research on LASPO and the effect on women focused on domestic abuse and housing needs and not the effects LASPO had on mothers in prison and the barriers this group of women faced. I suggest the report failed to note that one of the most vulnerable groups – women exiting prison – faced these barriers.

2.1 Resettlement prisons and transforming rehabilitation

The locality of the women’s prison estate was relevant in discussing resettlement. Women are placed, on average, 60 miles from their home localities (Corston, 2007; Women in Prison, 2015; Prison Reform Trust, 2016). In 2015, all women’s prisons were designated as resettlement prisons as part of the implementation of Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) operations. In 2015, probation underwent significant changes in its operational capacity with 70 per cent of probation sold off to 21 contract package areas (CPAs) owned and managed by private companies known as community rehabilitation companies (CRCs). TR purported to offer resettlement services contracted by the CRCs and this would provide services to prisoners serving 12 months and under, with a post-prison supervision period of 12 months. In principle, TR was a concept designed to support pathways into communities under the banner of Through the Gate (TTG) services. Recent reports did identify that TR was still in its

development stages and that early interventions for women were slow to be implemented (Women in Prison, 2016; House of Commons Justice Select Committee, 2016). The impact on women accessing long-term housing post-prison remained as it was prior to the TR reforms and had barely moved forward since the SEU report in 2002. My research showed that housing pathways were largely as relevant today as Corston and the SEU unit noted in 2007 and 2002, respectively. Earlier studies examined in detail the barriers ex-offenders faced in accessing accommodation, as Grimshaw reported, and clearly confirmed gaps in research and policy: *“Recently, policy-related research on the causes and prevention of crime has given limited attention to residence and accommodation needs”* (Grimshaw, 2002, p. 4). Grimshaw explained this was not always the case and that earlier criminology viewed crime as *“a by-product of urbanisation”* (Grimshaw, 2002, p. 4)(Grimshaw R, 2002, p. 4) as espoused by Chicago School Criminologists Shaw and Mackay (1942). The TR reforms and Through the Gate service in place today face similar difficulties in accessing providers of housing for women leaving prison and often use temporary accommodation as an outcome. What this presents is a short-term solution without considering a long-term need. This may explain why the challenges faced by TTG services produced poor outcomes in terms of accessing accommodation and why these services opted for a short-term solution to achieve their outcomes.

One of the most recent briefings on women in prison and accessing accommodation is the 2016 report by the Prison Reform Trust and Women in Prison. *Home Truths* highlighted and identified the barriers women in prison faced in accessing accommodation. This report examined the lack of clarity on where or whom the responsibility for housing women in prison lay (Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison, 2016). Furthermore, the commissioning of TTG resettlement services did not focus on access to housing for women leaving prison despite the best efforts of TTG services (HMIP, 2016). Corston identified that the majority of women in prison served short-term sentences and that a third would likely lose their accommodation while in custody (Corston, 2007, p. 3). A 2017 report confirmed the accommodation needs of short-term offenders were, overall, unmet (HMI Probation & HMI Prisons, 2017, p. 6). This reinforced the point that little provision of the housing needs of women exiting prison was identifiable through the commissioning of TTG services. This report also identified that offender managers and responsible officers were faced with challenges in resettlement plans that TTG was designed to address. Some of these issues are discussed later.

Home Truths commented: *“The failure to solve a chronic shortage of suitable housing options for women who offend leads to more crime, more victims and more unnecessary and costly imprisonment. Safe, secure housing”* (Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison, 2016, p. 1) and argued that accommodation

was crucial in breaking the cycle of reoffending, for women and their families. Furthermore, the report discussed the issue of the housing benefit regulations (2006) 13-week rule and that there is a statutory provision for housing benefit claimants to continue to receive housing benefit when *away from home* (hospital or prison). There is a further 52-week statutory provision for housing benefit claimants on remand meaning that housing benefit can be paid for a maximum of 52 weeks for remand prisoners. The Prison Reform Trust and Soroptimist International discussed this earlier in a joint previous report, *Transforming Lives*. The authors identified the need for the increased use of the 13-week rule as a prevention tool to reduce losing existing homes with a recommendation that the 13-week rule be extended to six months (Prison Reform Trust & Soroptimist International, 2014, p. 9). It could be argued that the 13-week rule could be used for women sentenced to six months or less in custody as they are unlikely to be away from home for more than 13 weeks. On entry into custody, it was established during this research that a tenancy had been surrendered by a commissioned TTG provider for one woman who was released from prison at the 11th week of her sentence and her household goods and personal items had disappeared. This was a concern in that such incompetence by the service provider meant she was stripped of everything she had prior to prison, with no recourse later. The wider implementation of the 13-week rule would sustain tenancies and reduce the loss of possessions and homes while in prison. Arguably, advice on housing benefit entitlement while in custody does require attention to detail given the entitlement is a mandatory one and not a discretionary one made by housing benefit decision makers. This reaffirms recommendations in this report for a dedicated housing adviser for women. It is particularly relevant in the development of TR reforms and the resettlement of women serving short sentences of six months and under.

2.2 Housing provision – third sector

A combined report, *Accommodation for Ex-Offenders: Third Sector Housing Advice and Provision* (Gojkovic et al., 2012), identified the importance of the voluntary and charitable sector advisory services for ex-offenders. The report discussed the long distance to travel in establishing joined-up thinking in the area of third sector provision. Furthermore, it confirmed what previous studies evidenced, that suitable housing considerably reduced the risk of reoffending. More importantly “*many prisons now having a dedicated housing advisor and important links with TSOs [third sector organisations] and housing providers*” (Gojkovic et al., 2012, p. 2) showed progress, yet since TR, evidence suggests such progress was slow. This emphasises the need for this research. It is evident that women faced exclusion

from statutory homeless duties by local authorities if they did not have their children living with them: *“Mothers in prison are most likely to have lost the family home as they are more likely to have been the primary carer and more than half of women in prison have dependent children under the age of 18-years old”* (Gojkovic et al., 2012, p. 4). Priority status was denied by local authority housing needs departments due to a woman being without dependent children, yet she could not access adequate housing that would support a home placement of her child/children (Baldwin, 2015).

What Gojkovic and colleagues (2012) did highlight is that there were limitations in using the private rented sector, difficulties in partnership working and changes in the Localism Act that moved restrictions and barriers in the wrong direction. The report emphasised the need for transparency in housing need and provision, illustrating why some prisoners lost their existing homes. The authors detail emergent barriers, despite a considerable increase in partnerships with TSOs, such as prison and criminal conviction history. The importance of TSOs in supporting women to access suitable housing post-prison cannot be underestimated. *Home Truths* listed service providers of women-only accommodation services (Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison, 2016). Evaluations of targeted accommodation services had not yet been completed for women leaving prison at the time of this literature review, although one service in Greater Manchester has recently received an award and was known at the time of writing. It is hoped that, in the future, evaluations and studies of these services will be available in the public domain.

2.3 Private rented sector

The private rented sector (PRS) plays a significant role in the provision of housing. Despite negative media attention, such as often poor health and safety conditions, the PRS undoubtedly provides some solutions in the housing needs of people leaving prison. Despite the negativity surrounding the PRS, its role within the criminal justice sector is worth examining.

The PRS has grown significantly in the UK since the Right to Buy policy was introduced in the 1980s. Alan Murie examines the impact of the policy, the decision to end it in Scotland and Wales, and proposed extensions to the policy in England (Murie, 2016). Murie debates the transfer from social housing to private renting and the impact this has on the housing situation in that the lack of replacement of the rented stock that has been bought over the years has intensified problems of housing affordability. Murie recommends addressing new areas of legislation thus arguing the need for further studies and

discussions on the role of the PRS in providing housing for people exiting custody. While undertaking this research, local landlords were spoken with regarding housing of people post-prison and the responses were promising. With the decline in social housing provision, dependency on the PRS is increasing by TSOs and therefore opening up potential leads to developing partnerships with property owners will open up pathways for cohort groups excluded from mainstream housing options.

One of the largest barriers landlords in the PRS face is a restriction from their lenders in that they cannot rent to people in receipt of housing benefit, as noted by Ellson (2017). This highlights emergent financial barriers due to the majority of people leaving prison being likely to claim housing benefit. However, several landlords do have long histories of leasing properties to services such as Serco and G4S and operated housing provision for asylum seekers. Existing research offers a limited discussion about the provision of housing for vulnerable people in the PRS. However, in *Supporting People in Private Rented Sector Housing*, Foundations, The National Body for Home Improvement Agencies, provided a good practice guide for property owners (Williamson, n.d.). It offered extensive information concerning the practicalities of providing housing solutions for vulnerable people experiencing complex needs. Additionally, the PRS is afforded opportunities to offer homes on longer terms as commercial lending does not present the barriers that private buy-to-let lending terms and conditions do.

2.4 Challenges to the literature review

I found there was surprisingly little research about the significance of women having suitable and long-term housing on release from prison; somewhere to achieve a *sense of place*. Much of the literature addressed these issues indirectly, resulting in services for women leaving prison lacking a focused independent evaluation or study. It is questionable what exactly helps constitute a *sense of place* for women who have recently been in prison, whose needs may perhaps be inadequately documented. It is some of these gaps that I sought to fill through this research. A further challenge, in particular, was the lack of literature surrounding the housing needs of mothers with children in the care of the local authority and ongoing family law proceedings. It was very hard to locate literature regarding the limitations that mothers subject to family law proceedings experience in their housing needs. I concluded that it was necessary to pay attention to this cohort of women in custody, as while they are low in numbers, their overall post-prison lives impact not only on them, but also on their children.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study was based on a group of 12 women who participated in at least two interviews over a 12-month period. During this period, I also spent time with the women informally, in their homes and at the internet suite provided by the housing project. I had wanted to include an element of participant observation, which Kawulich reminds us “*provides ways to check for non-verbal expressions of feelings*” (Kawulich, 2005), but to keep the research manageable in scope, I decided that semi-structured interviews would be the main source of data. Some of the problems associated with formal interview methods with women are explored by Gelsthorpe (2009), who argues that interviewing can “*invalidate women’s subjective experiences as women and as people*”. She argues for methods that recognise “*the subjectivity of the researcher and the researched*” (p. 876). Getting to know the women helped achieve what Heidensohn and Gelsthorpe, drawing on the work of Hardy, describe as “*feminist standpointism*” – seeing the women’s worlds through the eyes of the women. They write that such an approach encourages “*both theoretical and personal reflexivity in relation to the process of knowledge production through research: this can help overcome some of the problems of conventional methodologies associated with mainstream criminology*” (Heidensohn & Gelsthorpe, 2007, p. 386). To avoid the drawbacks that Gelsthorpe describes, it became clear that I needed to spend time with the women outside the more formal interview setting, chatting with them, relaxing with them, observing and interacting. This process enriched the data from the semi-structured interviews by balancing the interviewee–interviewer relationship somewhat, and by helping me see things from the women’s point of view; and it helped me to capture the women’s *sense of place*.

The participants completed two or three in-depth semi-structured interviews spaced three months apart. These were dependent on the ability to connect with the participants. The interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes and occurred in private but community locations and in the homes of the participants. I transcribed each interview in its entirety and pseudonyms were selected by the participants for confidentiality and to protect anonymity. The interviews focused on any previous experiences of homelessness and resettlement planning, with the final interview outlining the women’s experiences of life in their homes. A total of 35 interviews were conducted over a period of one year. I recorded key themes and repeating ideas in a separate document to aid analysis and draw out findings that would strengthen the research.

My previous work as a practitioner in housing for women exiting prison had a direct influence on the study (Bartunek, 2007). With this in mind, I composed the interview questions to avoid a conflict of interest and to enable my impartiality, as far as possible. I was aware of the ethical issues this raised and carefully approached the interview questions I put together to reflect to the participants that I was conducting research as an independent researcher for The Griffins Society. At the beginning of this research, an internal decision was made by the management committee of the housing project that I would move from a front-line role to a strategic role in order to conduct this study. Prior to undertaking research, approval for the interview questions was sought from the ethics committee at The Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University and was granted (see Appendix 1). Lone worker arrangements and additional support arrangements were made through the housing project's compliance officer. All interviews were recorded and the information is stored in a locked filing cabinet in an administration office. Key workers from the project were asked to add additional comments at the wishes of the participants and these names have been changed for confidentiality. Consent was granted from participants in written form where they had requested support from their keyworkers and this is stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. (Updated in May 2018 – GDPR.)

The participants in this study were housed under a model known as Housing First whereby the only requirement of them was to receive support to sustain their tenancy. First models of Housing First pathways were developed in the United States of America in 1992 (Tsemberis, 2015). This *supportive* housing pathway has come to the attention of the UK Government in recent years and features in a number of initiatives across England and Wales (Bretherton & Pleace, 2015).

3.1 Strengths to the research

Participants ranged from 18 to 59 years old and had served a mixture of short- and long-term prison sentences. All but one of the participants were mothers, with five of the participants having children under the age of 18 at the time of their custodial sentence and one mother having a child in the care of the local authority. Extreme care was taken regarding the children as it was necessary to ensure data would not identify them. Of the women with dependent children, all but one child was living with family members at the time of the mother's custodial sentence. Because of the ongoing family court proceedings for one participant, the findings reflected additional barriers mothers in prison experience

and that where they lived was directed by local authority children's services that would best serve the interests of the child. The study was small as the lived experiences of the women were detailed and further illustrated the aim and need for the research. This was important in the call for respondents in order to explore the benefits of Housing First as a model to address the housing need and the lived experiences of the women.

The interviews did not focus on the nature of the participants' crime and therefore I was unable to establish demographics in this area. However, one participant's crime was a specific barrier to her future housing due to the nature of her offence.

This research was specific to Lancashire. The participants had served sentences at two female prisons and their home areas were based in the Lancashire region. I felt it beneficial for both the women and the focus of the study that it would offer the importance of 'place' and context to the women and their lives. Therefore, the findings may not be reflective of other parts of England and Wales, but can be used as a starting point to compare targeted practices in other geographical areas. The geographical strengths of the study reflects the distance of the two prisons from the home areas of the participants – an important factor of the locations of women's prisons in relation to their local area – approximately 60 miles away.

Chapter 4: Findings

The majority of the participants reported significant challenges present in their lives prior to serving custodial sentences. Key themes such as poverty, substance misuse, domestic abuse, mental health difficulties and negative experiences of hostels emerged as the interviews progressed. Additionally, self-identification was an emerging theme as the participants adapted to life in their homes. It was important to extrapolate the lived experiences of the women in the housing challenges they faced and fill the gaps in the existing research discussed in the introduction chapter. This illustrated the benefits of meeting a longer term need rather than the current often short-term solution. The findings revealed that a community service was flexible in its approach and adapted to the needs of the women, evidencing outcomes that were positive and influenced how the women viewed their futures and how they came to terms with their pasts. Extensive data was gathered and it was impossible to include all elements of the data in the findings.

4.1 Memories of home – hardship, poverty and the emotional connection to a home

Of the 12 women interviewed, all had vivid memories of childhood experiences of home in its varying constructs. Three quarters of the participants had experienced homelessness from the age of 16 yet none experienced homelessness as a child. Childhood experiences of home were mainly nostalgic accounts of chaos and laughter despite the common theme, hardship. This was a necessary part of the research to establish the women's interpretation of their understanding of a home to form a distinct pattern in how their experiences could be recorded.

“Mum ran her home with chaos and was always hiding behind the sofa from the rent man. We rarely had electricity as she never had money for the meter. At Christmas, I remember getting the fairy lights out and plugging them in and they wouldn't work... But it was a happy home filled with the laughter of children” (Sandy)

The women's narratives of their early memories of home enabled me to form snapshots of the women's identity with home as a place of settlement, despite the poverty-stricken theme, thus drawing out their *sense of place*. In transcribing experiences of their childhood memories of home, I was able to understand the emotional expectations and how identity as women drove their wishes for a home. The

majority of the initial interviews revealed that a home was important and that their main concern in prison was where they would live following release.

“Home is widely, and often unproblematically associated with female: both with the women who are expected to maintain hearth and home, and with the presumed feminine principles of boundedness, physicality and nurturance.”

(Wardhaugh, 1999, p. 97)

Poverty was discussed in a 2013 Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, *The Links between Housing and Poverty*. As the report identified, poverty is a multi-faceted experience, and in relation to housing, there is not a single cause of poverty. Causation and effect are multi-faceted but evidence suggests that suitable housing is a prerequisite to addressing some of the issues surrounding poverty (Tunstall et al., 2013). Poverty and hardship were key themes both in childhood memories of home and in relation to financial exclusions that prevent people exiting custody from setting up homes.

4.2 Mother without a hearth (Gonyea & Melekis, 2017)

In this section, I examine the barriers faced by two mothers exiting prison. The key findings in the forthcoming experiences evidenced some of the barriers to housing faced by mothers exiting prison as discussed previously. In considering the issues faced by mothers, Sophie and Gracie confided their experiences.

Sophie had served a sentence of two years, one of which was served in custody and the remainder in the community. Sophie was a mother with a dependent child in her full-time care at the time of her sentencing and had a home. Her child was taken into the care of the local authority at the time of her sentencing. Two months prior to release, Sophie’s probation officer referred her to the housing project. Following a number of applications previously for accommodation by probation, Sophie had been declined for all of the schemes as her conviction was a barrier to housing. The importance of Sophie’s case was that her child was under an interim care order and, during the course of the interviews, subject to ongoing proceedings in the family courts.

MOTHER’S DILEMMA: “Although priority need includes those with dependent children, women offenders with children may be ineligible for housing if they fall into the situation of not having their children with them when they apply for

housing (if, for example, they were being looked after by local authorities while the mother is in prison) and are not able to get them back unless they can demonstrate that they have appropriate accommodation. Women without children living with them are unlikely to be considered in priority need” (Gojkovic et al., 2012, p. 4)

Sophie had developed a trusting relationship with her assigned community offender manager. She reflected on her experiences of homes she had lived in before prison:

“I have never had my own tenancy but I have run a home since I was 16 years old – my mother’s, who was addicted to heroin. I then moved in with my boyfriend who also had an addiction – he was violent and used me to access his drugs and alcohol and if I did not, I was beaten. I asked for help as I was scared for our child, but did not receive any...”

Sophie’s narrative identified that the key theme in her experiences of home life from being a child to leaving home at 16 was substance misuse. Her identification with a home reminded her of substance misuse that featured in both her younger and early adult life. Sophie’s housing had unravelled due to substance misuse. Combined with a young child, Sophie’s life spiralled out of control. She was a victim, a survivor and a law breaker (Baldwin, Atherton & Thompson, 2015, p.89).

“I was there for a year [prison] and I felt I needed to get as much out of what was on offer to rethink my decision-making around relationships and my substance misuse. I worked really hard on myself while there.”

Sophie expressed her main concern was where she would live after prison:

“I was so worried where I would live and I did not want to go into a hostel – I know what happens in hostels and I needed to find somewhere that was close to a school and suitable for my child – I found it very hard to get people to listen to me about this worry in prison.”

Sophie’s fear of hostels was based on local knowledge. Additionally, her fear was further compounded by the fact that a hostel would prevent reunification with her child. On asking Sophie why she felt this way, she explained:

“I knew that the social worker would not recommend a home placement for my child if I was living in a hostel; it would not have met my obligation as a mother to find suitable and safe accommodation for my child.”

Sophie needed very little in terms of support as she was capable and independent and could manage a home financially. She was able to source a GP and had the tools to ensure she was able to adapt back to life in the community. During her second interview six months on, Sophie explained she wanted to add in what her home meant to her and the barriers her conviction presented when she applied to accommodation providers:

“My home is important to me so long as I can pay the rent and the council tax, I can work through the utilities – it was being able to provide a safe home for my child that worried me most while in there [prison] and my conviction would prevent me from getting a home.”

As this was Sophie’s first prison sentence, she was unable to compare previous experiences of housing support from prison, but she welcomed the benefit of Housing First and complimented her probation officer. Her final interview showed that Sophie was settled and had completed her sentence:

“The housing project is brilliant and between them and probation, I have been able to work with social workers to meet the needs of my child and successfully complete my sentence. I am able to really build from here – this is my home. I can move forward and place prison behind me. I think the most important part for me has always been the doorstep as a first step and my own front door key...”

Over a 12-month period, Sophie was able to define her life as a mother and a woman as opposed to an ex-prisoner. She articulated that the separation from her child caused her difficulties mentally, but that her support framework had enabled her to slowly come to terms with this. What Sophie’s narrative demonstrated is the benefits of a multi-agency approach in that the *family unit* was taken into consideration and that her needs as a mother were considered as her primary need:

“I feel now after a year since prison that I still struggle with being separated from my child while in there [prison], but with support I am able to care again for my child in our home. I have finished probation and appreciated the support I received from them. I guess I have had the right support around me and we have been

supported as a family unit. My time in prison has left me and I am a mother to my child.”

Sophie’s story represented a strong and practical multi-agency approach led by probation that met Sophie’s needs – Corston called for this approach in 2007. In turn, she was able to meet the needs of her child and she felt in control of her life after prison. At the end of the 12-month period, Sophie’s child was in her full-time care and she was working part-time. Her child was still under a local authority care order; however, legal proceedings were commencing to discharge her child from this. Access to suitable and secure housing played an integral part in having the space and time to build a home for her and her child. She had identity as a working mother, which – as Gonyea and Melekis pointed out – is of central importance to many mothers’ ‘sense of self’ (Gonyea & Melekis, 2017). Had Sophie not been supported as she was in her housing, we could well have been reading a different narrative.

THE EX-PRISONER’S DILEMMA: *“When a woman leaves prison, she enters a world of competing messages and conflicting advice. Staff from prison, friends, family members, workers at halfway houses and treatment programs all have something to say about who she is, who she should be, and what she should do.”*
(Leverentz, 2014, back cover)

Gracie was a similar age to Sophie and a mother. Having spent a number of short periods in prison for substance misuse-related offences, Gracie faced barriers associated with women serving frequent short-term sentences and was subject to supervision by a CRC following a four-month prison sentence. She had received many pathways of support previously, all of which she struggled to engage with because she felt they expected too much of her.

The longest period in prison for Gracie was a four-month period and she had a sustained approach to addressing her substance misuse in the community following this. Gracie’s maternal influences were from her grandmother who was actively involved in her life. She had accessed a number of community services in comparison to Sophie and had previously exhausted every accommodation service available in her local area:

“I have been through most of the services available [locally] and they all say the same about me. I am not able to get off drugs and stick to a script [methadone]. Nobody would house me because I have been in trouble and he [on-off partner] always finds me.”

The immediate response to Gracie's narrative above might be to place her in safety such as a refuge. As Gracie settled into her interview, she revealed she had failed to meet certain thresholds set in place by previous support providers including a women's refuge. Comments in her history were telling: "*Poor engager*", "*failed to maintain appointments*". Gracie's view of her experiences of former services was not a positive one and highlights what many experience from support providers – inappropriate judgement:

"None of the workers could handle me and, if I was late, it was like.... We will not see you and will close your file if you continue in this manner. In the end, rather than face the constant telling offs, I just dosed at me mate's and did drugs and ended up back [in prison]."

Gracie was of the mind that any service would not be able to assist her and she just wanted to be "*given a house*". In a life marked with substance misuse, repeat short prison sentences and sofa surfing, Gracie launched from sofa to sofa to prison and back again. As her interview progressed, she explained that her benefit had been sanctioned (stopped) as she had failed to attend appointments at the local job centre. Gracie disclosed that she wanted a home – but she didn't want intrusions from services as she felt they were "*too nose*". As part of her housing placement, she was required to accept support to meet her commitments as a tenant:

"I am supposed to see a gradual improvement in some of the areas and I find this easier to manage rather than the [support] worker giving me a list of things I should be doing to improve my life. The worker does not ask me if I have used drugs or if I have committed crime and I am able to take time to see things daily."

Gracie was a woman with complex needs (Corston, 2007) and had suffered as a result of a lack of previous support during her transient lifestyle. She had experienced barriers to both the private rented and social housing sectors as a result of prison, thus financial and social barriers emerged. She had previously received inadequate responses to her needs (Clicks & Homeless Link, 2017). Gracie was *mobile* but services were unable to be flexible enough due to possible constraints within and did not allow for Gracie's varying needs. She viewed this as the drug trap in that she had been prevented from moving forward because she was unable to remain clean from drugs and previous accommodation services had ended her stay with them. She resided in a shared property as Gracie noted she responded well to support from peers. The housing project operated a harm-reduction philosophy (NTA, 2006) and

Gracie did not incur penalties such as losing her home if she was unable to remain drug-free. She also felt that the informal peer-mentoring from residents helped in her difficulties with substance misuse, as she illustrated:

“I am not told off if I am not clean and my worker is kind. But because I am not scripted at the moment, I am unable to stop as I was removed from my script because I did not want to go to a group session. I am using less now as the women in the house are really helpful and have been where I have.”

On being a mother, Gracie explained she did not have a relationship with her child as she felt she did not want her child to see her as she was and had constructed a self-identity outside of being a mother. Throughout her interview, Gracie did not identify as a mother as Sophie did and it was evident that she struggled with the estrangement from her child (Gonyea & Melekis, 2018, p. 76). Gracie stated she was certain she would form a relationship with her child in the future and she felt her future was brighter although she was consciously aware of her struggles with drugs:

“My child lives with a family member and I am not able to see them until I am stable. I will get clean and I have a nice place to live that I can call home and I am working on small crafty things that I can do to keep my mind from drugs.”

Gracie said her home was important in her day-to-day living and, while she struggled to manage her money, throughout the study she showed interest in being more responsible. Her third interview 12 months later showed some positive progress with responsibility and, while she admitted the use of drugs, there were signs of decreasing use. Her overall presentation had improved, she had made significant progress in her budgeting skills and had maintained her tenancy commitments. I concluded this improvement was because Gracie had the time to plan her choices and had a suitable foundation from where she could build her future. Previously, she had been unable to sustain herself long enough in the community to receive support that would have had a lasting impact on her life, and a series of short sentences in prison meant support in custody was short-lived and did not prepare her for life in the community. Furthermore, previous housing had been an automatic response of intermittent stays in hostels, further increasing her vulnerability and propensity to act outside the law. Gracie’s story illustrated that the Housing First response over a 12-month period had given her some stability and removed the barriers she had previously experienced in accessing accommodation. Because she was ‘housed’ Gracie was not on the radar of statutory services and she had experienced fewer benefit sanctions as she was able to make a concerted effort to meet her entitlement obligations. At the time of

writing, Gracie had spent 12 months in the community, which is the longest period since her late teens. Her story reflects what many women with chaotic and transient lifestyles experience and questions the issues recurring short-term sentences present.

4.3 Housing First not Housing Last

Michelle and Sam were mothers of non-dependent children during this study and had spent time in prison when their children were of dependent age. These participants were of a similar age demographic to each other and a decade older than Gracie and Sophie. They required housing following prison sentences of 12 months and over. Both women were supervised by NPS and both had a housing need prior to leaving prison.

In the journal article, 'Criminogenic Need and Women Offenders', Hollin and Palmer considered that accommodation needs could be described as a criminogenic need for women. The authors further argued that there are *static needs* (e.g. childhood/domestic abuse) and *dynamic needs* (e.g. financial needs). The former needs do not change whereas the latter do. As Hollin and Palmer identified, the need for housing following release from prison could be a *dynamic* need. In short, as with the general population, housing needs can alter over life spans. However, what my research evidenced is that the need for housing is a criminogenic need as noted by Hollin and Palmer: *A result of being in prison* (Hollin & Palmer, 2006, p. 184).

During the 12-month period of the study, all of the women's needs changed dramatically. The first three months of support was demanding and chaotic as each woman settled into her environment. Overall, from their point of view, the women's day-to-day needs lessened as the follow-up interviews illustrated. Michelle's journey into Housing First demonstrated that, in some cases, accommodation can be achieved, but it is not always one that meets the needs of the woman at that time in her life. Michelle had lived in a 24-hour supported environment immediately following prison and prior to undertaking this study. This was not a temporary model of accommodation as the offer was open-ended; however, Michelle felt the support was too intrusive and she was unable to settle because the facility was staffed:

"It was very hard as the workers were there all the time. I could have stayed there forever but it was more for people with learning disabilities, which was brilliant for people that could not live alone. I felt that I was being stripped of my skills as I was unable to build from living in a room with a sink and a microwave and there

was always someone signing you in and out. I had no freedom and I was the only woman out of 24 men. We were not allowed to claim any benefits and were given an allowance daily. We all had to go shopping to the same supermarket and on the same day. I felt this was too controlling for me. I needed my own place.”

As Michelle conveyed, she was offered accommodation that could provide a long-term solution, yet she felt her needs went largely unmet. Furthermore, the service provided for needs that she did not have. She felt the accommodation offered did not address other needs such as independence (no personal income) and she was a lone woman in a male environment. Michelle was referred to the Housing First project by her probation officer following reports from the facility that Michelle was not compliant with the rules. Michelle had been out of prison nine months at the time of participation in this study.

“It was like coming out of prison all over again. I felt a strange sense of loss but I was excited I was able to have my own flat. I had to apply for benefits which was strange after all the time without any of my own money.”

As Michelle reflected above, she felt she was starting at the gate again. On asking Michelle why she felt this way, she explained:

“I felt as though when I was offered the first place it was because it was the only available place that would accept me so I felt as though I was dumped for nine months.”

Michelle’s narrative, like others, showed that many of the women were offered unsuitable temporary accommodation. It failed to meet the underlying need for suitable housing as part of a long-term resettlement plan, leaving them unsupported once their period on licence had expired. This was a common theme for the participants that had stayed in hostels previously, and a high staff turnover in temporary accommodation models meant that fractured responses were experienced.

“I have worked in this project for two years and am able to watch as the women are enabled to look to the future with their basic needs fulfilled. We have women who require different levels of supportive handholding, some are capable and manage their lives with very little support as they are able to run a home just as I can. Just assisting women to ensure their basic needs are met is part of the supportive framework offered. (Max, Keyworker)

Sam was referred for housing two months after release from prison. Immediately following release, she had returned to a previous abusive environment which exacerbated her substance misuse. She had served a number of short periods in prison and discussed her experiences of accessing housing from resettlement in prison:

“What is the point of asking for help from OMU [Offender Management Unit] as they did nothing for me? All I was given was a piece of paper to take to the council and ask them for help. I will not live in a hostel. I want somewhere of my own so I can be on my own and deal with what I have to deal with but finding a home without money is impossible.”

Sam’s narrative illustrated what many women experience in accessing housing or accommodation through OMU within prison. Like many women, Sam had had previous experiences of hostels and these mirrored previous accounts. She had a solid family network locally and a child that was living independently. Her interviews depicted long periods of time without money post-prison and this proved previously to be a barrier to accessing housing.

Sam’s narrative reflected on the housing project’s objectives of providing homes for women exiting prison:

“So here I was, in a nice little flat that I could call home. There should be one of these in each town for women leaving prison. I cannot believe this scheme was available to me. They had even put food in the cupboards to keep me going until my benefits came through. I have a year’s tenancy and am able to walk to my mum’s and have family come for tea.”

Sam stayed in her flat for a year then moved on and was unable to complete her final interview but her experience strengthens the need for locally delivered housing projects for women.

“Rather than a discrete life event, incarceration emerged as an extension of an institutional circuit that served to exacerbate their marginalisation and diminish their prospects of securing stable housing.” (Maycock & Sheridan, 2013, p. Abstract)

4.4 Women serving longer sentences – do they require a different approach?

One woman had experienced repeated homelessness and prison terms over a two-decade period. She had drifted from city to city, making what she described as ‘acquaintances’ who offered her a sofa in exchange for drugs. More than half of the women who had experienced repeated substance dependency had used drugs as currency for a place to stay (Sandwith, 2011).

“Never once leaving prison have I been offered a home – I came back in last time as I threw a brick through a police station window so I could go back to prison and get off the streets. Prison was my home although I knew it wasn’t, like, right...”

(Betty)

What Betty described is a transient lifestyle over the majority of her adult life and that her relationship with a home was closely linked to prison. Her historical lack of housing was due to financial and social exclusions coupled with long periods of time in custody. Betty’s experiences were consistent with Maycock and Sheridan’s work from the Abstract of their 2013 paper. Betty expressed the last time she had a home was “like 25 years ago”. Her social networks were other female prisoners and of all the participants; she had collectively served the longest period in prison throughout her adult life. From prison, Betty did seek support for resettlement planning and was keen to move to a new area. On her initial assessment, the housing project risk assessor determined Betty at risk because of her age (mid-50s) and that she may experience social isolation due to her settling in a new area. However, Betty said she was keen to make a fresh start and wanted to settle in her chosen community. To do this, she needed a home where she could settle. During her first interview, Betty described her understanding of a home:

“I used to dream of having a home... umm roast dinners and being able to sew and make curtains. Inside [prison] I learned how to cook a roast dinner as I worked the kitchens. There’s a lot of buttons to press on and flashing lights on washing machines and like, tellies, remote controls are a mystery to me...”

Betty expressed her thoughts on her ideal home and her amazement at the wonders of modern technology indicated her age. We can assume this was due to long periods in prison and the lack of access to up-to-date technology. On asking Betty about her experiences surrounding her previous homelessness, Betty described a transient lifestyle and periods of substance misuse:

“...Umm, I have never been homeless, I have mostly been in prison. Before my last time in prison, I dosed on a mate’s sofa but there was always drugs and I have dipped in and out of drugs, but I was using more and more...”

Betty had lived in large cities but as she had had a mate’s sofa to reside on, she did not see herself as homeless. What was difficult to establish was Betty’s local area and where she felt that her roots were. While *accommodated*, Betty was *rootless* but not *roofless*, prison was her local connection and, during brief spells in the community between prison, Betty remained unhoused and of no fixed abode – *the unaccommodated woman* (Wardhaugh, 1999).

Betty’s story highlighted that for women with difficult lifestyles, prison is their place of safety (Maycock & Sheridan, 2013). In Betty’s case, prison was her shelter as her experiences in the community were desperate because she had no home. The prison environment met Betty’s needs and her experiences reflected a need for supportive housing without constraint that affords women the opportunity to address, safely, the complexities of their lives. During her last interview, Betty was settled and had found hobbies to fill her time and, despite health issues, she was content.

“For women that have served long periods in prison, where they will live post-prison is vital. The support we offer involves patience yet firm boundaries. Just giving them a house would not work, everything is new and moving into a new home challenges even the hardest of people, expecting someone to ‘just get it’ is damaging. We have to remember and be aware women who have spent long periods in prison are used to a lot of people surrounding them. They are like a child, leaving home for the first time” (Jenny, Support Worker)

Sandy, like Betty, had served many years in prison. Sandy was offered, through her offender manager (OM), an opportunity to resettle close to her local connection (home area). Sandy requested a single occupancy home as she felt that her time in prison surrounded by *“hundreds of other women”* was at an end. This was interesting in that she saw prison as a domestic setting as opposed to a collective engendered one. Sandy’s experience of resettlement planning was positive despite her worries surrounding where she would be living:

“My OM was so helpful and although I was really worried about where I would be living, I felt better once the housing project came to see me and showed me pictures of my new home. It was easier to picture where I would put my nice ornaments and I was looking forward to not having to share a TV.”

Sandy's journey from prison to her home was one of the smoothest transitions among the participants in this study. The housing project arranged her gate pick up and supported her into her new home. Sandy's emotional connection to her prison friends is evident:

"I miss the noise. Everything is so quiet here and I keep waiting for a screw to come and bang on my door. I do miss my friends though. But the housing project have helped me with email. I have never sent an email before so I am able to write to them through email so they know I am thinking of them."

Was Sandy's sense of place prison? Her life in the community was alien to her as she went on to say:

"I have never seen so many flavours of yoghurts in the supermarket aisle. I used yogurts in prison as currency. There were hard to come by. I also struggle with all the telephone calls to the DSS I have to make. I worry about how I will manage to pay my electricity bill as there are no longer showrooms where you pay your bills."

Of all the women interviewed, Sandy had spent the longest single period without a break in prison and her resettlement period required regular and sustained support from probation. Sandy struggled with living alone and experienced loss due to spending a long period of time in prison. Many women feel a sense of isolation following release as O'Neill (2015) pointed out. Would Sandy have felt more settled in a hostel surrounded by other people? Alternatively, would this have delayed the inevitable that she would have to live alone at some point? Sandy's story offered opportunities to discuss what sort of accommodation or housing is required for women who have served long sentences.

Sandy's participation over the 12-month period examined a supportive environment where she was able to adapt to life in the community at her pace. Her outcome was positive and she had re-established family relationships despite her struggles at the commencement of the study.

"I feel settled and have made friends, I volunteer at a small organisation and am in touch with my adult children. Because I am busy in the day, I look forward to going home for some peace and quiet and watching TV."

As Sandy said during her final interview, she had settled well and had found her *sense of place*. Had Sandy been in a temporary accommodation model (hostel) a year ago, would that have been damaging

for her and women like her? Or is investing in a choice-based supportive Housing First model, so women can find a *sense of place* and negotiate their lives into positive outcomes, worth examining further?

Sharon's story was a cycle of temporary accommodation following previous periods in prison. She had previously spent time in a hostel local to her family networks and, like Sam before her, felt that resettlement surrounding her need for a home was overlooked in previous resettlement planning.

"My first experience of homelessness was when I left prison in 2005. We had no hostels in my home town so I was sent to the next town and this was an awful place. Full of men and drugs, there were over 100 rooms and the few women in there were terrified. I left and refused to sign the housing benefit form and got back into drugs with a man who sent me out to graft [shoplift] to pay for his drugs. I lived at his house which had no hot water, as he refused to pay for the gas meter but I had to find money for the electricity meter so he could watch telly."

Reflecting on her narrative, the temporary hostel presented Sharon with temptation to use drugs but she extracted herself from this by leaving. However, the outcome from the choice she ultimately made saw her back in prison and, this time, she was sentenced to four years. Using prison time as a way of addressing her substance misuse, Sharon stated she *"was done with prison"* and wanted to find a place to live. She recapped on her previous experiences between prison sentences:

"I needed a home, it was important for me to have control over my offending behaviours. All the time, from probation to the women's centre, thinking skills programme, were too focused on my behaviours. Of course, without a home or only being offered a hostel, I would revert to my former behaviours. I just needed a home, to assert a base, so I had like some control..."

Sharon's narrative highlighted there was very little previous research that identified the long-term needs of a woman in regards to a home post-prison. As a woman under a long licence, Sharon's home had to be approved by her offender manager. What is relevant in OM supervision requirements is that *"an address has to be approved by the supervising officer"* and, in some cases, there are exclusion zones in place. This in particular posed challenges for her OM as choices of housing/accommodation faced further restrictions. If there is truly to be change in the resettlement of women, then long-term housing does offer opportunities for women to address their complex needs, as Corston (2007) observed and noted. However, the limitations within licence conditions where an exclusion zone is in place are unaddressed in the research located during this study, and remain so.

Sharon is a mother and had spent the majority of her children's childhood in prison, and parallels could be drawn with previous research on the separation of mothers from their children in the anxiety and guilt they feel. Baldwin calls for understanding by professionals for mothers who have experienced maternal separation as a result of incarceration. She states: *"Mothers in the CJS and related settings, particularly custody are often dealing with issues and anxiety related to offending behaviours 'on top' of the emotional fallout of pain-filled lives"* (Baldwin, 2015, p. 36). Sharon explained some of her feelings:

"I was rubbish at being a mother. I could run a home easily, but drugs were my constant daily intake. I had no emotional space to give to my children. I preferred drugs to my children. There I have said it. Prison was my excuse for not being there for my children. It was safer me being in there as I did not have to face their pain. The pain was excruciating but placing this into words would have done me no favours. I was a bad mother, end..."

Like Sophie, Sharon struggled to deal with her emotions surrounding her children – this was a key theme throughout her interviews and I was conscious of the enormity of her emotions in making the admission she had. Her children becoming adults throughout her time in prison did nothing for the sense of loss present in her narratives. Her guilt underpinned her narratives and it was not that she couldn't run a home – she wasn't afforded one:

"If only I was able to have a secure home where I know I could have pulled this back. I am not scared of prison, I have been there so many times I have lost count. I was not able to provide a home for them..."

Sharon spoke of the contact with her family during prison visits but that seeing her children while serving a prison sentence became difficult for her. As O'Neill illustrated, *"visits can compound the women's feelings of lack of control over their children's lives and their powerlessness to intervene in relation to presenting problems"* (O'Neill, 2015, p. 41).

Sharon is one of many mothers in prison who hide their feelings of guilt and anguish at separation from their children as Baldwin and her co-authors discuss (Baldwin, 2015). Sharon had spent the majority of her children's childhood in prison and was offered nothing more than a hostel on release. During her second interview, Sharon reported hearing about the project in her area:

"I am older now. I needed a different support network. I heard about a local project in prison that offered women a home after release from prison. I have been through every support system imaginable. I was attracted to this housing scheme as it was about a home, not fluffed out with bollocksy programmes."

The period of leaving prison is one of trepidation felt by women and rarely understood by statutory services tasked with the management of women who have experienced loss. In *Score, Smoke, Back on the Beat*, Sandwith discusses women's experiences of staying in a hostel – staff are judgemental and there are long waiting lists (2011, p. 36). Here Sharon explained her experiences of hostel staff:

"In the hostel out of town I stayed in the staff were young and I felt patronised by some of them. Some of the activities were like for young people and when you have someone who is two decades younger than you clapping their hands and calling us 'peeps' it makes me cross and I hate that. I am nearly 50, I do not appreciate someone in a pencil skirt and stilettos clapping her hands and telling me what I need to do. I have been in prison and have knickers older than she was. What I like about this housing project is that my support worker is the same age as me, she gets it and she gets me. I trust her and she is not in my face, fucking clapping..."

As an older woman in prison, Sharon's experience of hostels was not positive and she felt that hostel staff were too young to support her. Hostels in her local area did not fit her needs nor her age demographic. The hostels local to Sharon were used by a younger demographic and the housing project had carefully considered that Sharon's needs would be better met by a key worker closer in age to her.

During her final interview at the end of the 12-month study Sharon had become a grandmother and was involved with the care of her grandchild. She had become a pet owner and felt settled in her home, which she had taken on herself from the project.

"What I thought was really good, is the housing project supports you at the start and helps gets you settled. After six months, I met the owner of the property and she was happy to have me as a tenant so the housing project was no longer my landlord and I am able to remain here for as long as I need to and I can have support if I need it."

As Sandwith (2011, p. 38) illustrated in her report, “*there are serious gaps in resettlement provision from the prison service*”. Additionally, in 2017, there were serious gaps in housing support for women regardless of a long- or short-term sentence as my research showed. Sharon’s experience evidenced that her housing need this time was met and Housing First was a suitable response to her need.

4.5 The findings – negative impacts

Of all the participants, the majority felt that they were not supported in finding suitable housing while in prison previously. Only two participants had received direct support prior to leaving prison previously; however, these were temporary models of accommodation and the insecurity, combined with exposure to substance misuse, had resulted in their ultimately ending up back in prison. Of the majority that felt unsupported, the emerging theme was the barriers they faced from local authorities in that they were not offered a duty to house and that, while they were encouraged to register as homeless, they were not prioritised as *in need* thus feeling exposed and unsupported in their search for a home. Therefore, as research has consistently told us, the housing needs of women remain unmet post-prison.

The majority of participants reported negative input from resettlement teams in prison and were unaware of the changes to probation as a result of the TR reforms introduced in 2015. In summarising the responses in the study, I concluded this was as a result of the reforms and the transferring of case loads from the former probation trusts to the newly formed CRCs. The study was undertaken at the same time and therefore, on reflection, this could not have been avoided due to the changes in the services and contractual arrangements, which meant that disruption to services were to be expected. However, the true victims of the TR reforms were the women who experienced a lack of direct action from those tasked with their resettlement.

During the course of this research, it was identified that a registered social landlord (RSL) placed significant restrictions on people with convictions. Some providers offered housing services under the umbrella of the RSL. However, on closer inspection, these services were linked to larger services such as substance misuse treatment. While seen as a positive step forward, it was identified that the services researched were mixed shared accommodation and caveats such as abstinence were required, and the levels of risk aversion due to the type of convictions the women had proved to be further barriers for women seeking to re-establish contact with children. Of all of the accommodation providers researched,

responses to accommodation needs were of a temporary nature thus, again, not addressing a long-term resettlement need.

4.6 The findings – positive impacts

Several positive impacts were identified through participants' testimonies. Sophie's story illustrated a joined-up approach from a multi-agency team responding to her needs prior to leaving prison and demonstrated a true *through the gate* support framework. Sophie's needs were addressed with her probation officer as the lead professional on her case, enabling Sophie to move forward in her life and restore her relationship with her child in suitable housing that met both her needs and her child's needs. Sophie was able to find her *sense of place* and her journey provided a useful mapping tool for successful multi-agency practice. There were significant lessons to be drawn from Sophie's experiences and the positive outcomes that followed as a result of both Sophie's enrolment with services and how the services offered a client-led approach to her needs and those of her child. By recognising Sophie's needs, and her willingness to accept support, her journey produced not only positive outcomes for mother and child, but a long-term solution that has had a lasting, positive and cost-effective impact for all parties. Sophie's needs were the centre of multi-agency outputs and it is not only to Sophie's credit but also that of the agencies involved that these positive outcomes were established.

In 2006, Padgett discussed Housing First as a way to end homelessness establishing that being stably housed without increasing substance use was a positive step. As shown in Gracie's account, her housing was suitable and, while she wasn't free from substance abuse, her use had reduced (Padgett, 2006).

Other positive outcomes were that none of the 12 participants within the housing project were subject to breaches of their post-prison licence conditions, as contact from their probation officers and responsible officers was consistent and home visits were undertaken. Two participants were unable to complete their final interviews, but this was because they had moved into their own homes and had re-established family relationships. As discussed earlier in this chapter, more than half the women had experienced long periods of substance misuse closely linked to their time in prison and relationships with former partners. Factoring in previous periods of homelessness and/or transient lifestyles, outcomes were positive for those that were accommodated under the Housing First model and engagement with services remained intact, thus improving their situation and the mental and physical health of the women overall. Emerging from the findings is that factoring in the long-term needs and

suitable housing for women exiting prison should be a key priority in resettlement. It produced outcomes that benefited women, their children and families while ensuring they could overcome their time in prison. Positives were also drawn from the participants in that they were able to identify as women and mothers and be stakeholders in society as opposed to being an ex-offender overcoming stigmas. In having a home, they were treated as civilians in society and in control of their lives.



Chapter 5: Discussion and recommendations

My research followed a group of 12 women over a period of time who received services from a project that used the Housing First model. This showed benefits for the women and a cost-effective way of reducing reoffending. The findings evidenced that a long-term approach was beneficial for the women and offered a solution to a social malaise experienced by service providers. All the women described previous experiences that did not benefit them and, in some narratives, a journey back to prison was inevitable because of the desperation they felt in the community and the lack of detail applied to their housing need. The literature showed that where housing needs are not competently addressed, women are likely to reoffend and, in some cases, be prevented from fulfilling their role as mothers because of a lack of appropriate assessments. Provision that is not geared to assessed need, such as hostels for women who require long-term housing, not only fails to meet needs but can exacerbate women's problems by requiring behaviour changes to retain their accommodation that might not be realistic, as in the case of complete abstinence from substance misuse or unnecessary restrictions on freedom of movement.

My findings support many of the arguments in the existing literature and, as the findings revealed, a targeted response benefited not only the women but their children, and enabled them to overcome perceptions of them as ex-offenders. They were able to lead lives where they were in control and adapt readily to life in the community. They were afforded their *sense of place*. Some recommendations follow that would help initiate tangible improvements in provision for this group of vulnerable women whose needs currently are all too often overlooked. In considering the recommendations, I discuss the findings and the relationship with existing literature and answer my research questions: How can resettlement frameworks overcome the barriers women face and reduce the use of short-term accommodation? and What were the benefits of a Housing First approach? I then consider implications for policy and practice to present my recommendations.

5.1 How can resettlement frameworks overcome the barriers women face and reduce the use of short-term accommodation?

As the literature review identified, the housing needs of women were under-represented in resettlement planning (Clicks and Homeless Link, 2017; Gojkovic et al., 2012; Grimshaw, 2002; Prison Reform Trust & Soroptimist International, 2014; SEU, 2002). My findings revealed that mothers with dependent children faced monumental barriers and the use of short-term accommodation was an inadequate response. My research evidenced a lack in provision within sentence planning, resettlement planning and housing allocation for primary carers of children in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS). Additionally, the children of mothers exiting custody could well be subject to care proceedings and, as such, those proceedings can last longer than the post-prison supervision orders in place since the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms were introduced in 2015. The intensity of the housing needs of these women had historically not been considered and the experiences of the participants in this study evidenced the concerns they shared while in custody. The use of hostel models of accommodation is an unsuitable response and, ultimately, delays women's reunification with their children due to safeguarding barriers. Accommodation of this nature is not suitable for children to reside in, as my findings revealed.

During the study, a key theme that emerged from the findings was concerns experienced by the study participants regarding the use of hostels. Hostels are often of mixed genders and the participants relayed previous experiences of hostels – high turnover of staff numbers, a distinct lack of understanding of the ages and experience of women and levels of support that were perhaps designed for a younger age demographic. The findings confirm the use of hostels as a response to housing requirements is a short-term solution that does not consider a longer-term need. These challenges were evident during the implementation of the TR reforms and identified a need for further research in this area. In light of the challenges, the findings showed the women's needs were inadequately and unskillfully assessed evidencing the lack of suitable provision for them. Hostels were resorted to despite their potential unsuitability, because they were the only option available to resettlement teams. Ultimately, for some of the women whose long-term needs were unmet previously, the outcome was that they were trapped in the cycle of reoffending and ended up back in prison (Sandwith, 2011).

Another emerging and significant theme within the findings was a service that, due to poor assessment, tried to meet a need the participant did not have. While the service was open-ended and was not a

temporary solution, it was the only bed space available at the time of her release from prison. While this solved her issue of being homeless on release, had it not been for the intervention of her probation officer in recognising the response was an unsuitable one, she could have been at risk of a licence breach as she withdrew from the service over a period of nine months.

I also wanted to explore how accommodation services, particularly hostels, had aspirations that were too high in terms of women with multiple needs. One participant provided a good example of how she had exhausted a range of services. During my research, I was able to explore the criteria for some of the services the women had previously experienced. Often, they were abstinence-based services and withdrawal from receiving support within the accommodation service resulted in rescindment of the bed at short notice. I was of the opinion that while such services provide vital lifelines for people in need, rescinding beds significantly contributes to homelessness social ills. This presents additional challenges for probation officers in sourcing alternative accommodation. Substance misuse is a complex addiction and the expectation that someone can simply desist from an addiction is perhaps unreasonable for people with multiple needs in this area. The majority of participants had experienced substance misuse in their lives and, for one participant, this resulting in her entering the revolving door of prison and serving a number of short-term sentences (Corston, 2007).

Challenges that were present at the time of the study were mainly due to the implementation of the TR reforms. The new services faced significant changes and repeated failures of systems as evidenced by the HMIP report in 2016. As the new services were implemented, I concluded the challenges that presented were to be expected, yet could be a starting assumption for expanding resources and research in this area. Resettlement of people exiting prison into suitable housing presented barriers for offender managers as the existing probation trusts were broken up into contract package areas and sold to private companies (CRCs). Locating suitable housing takes a significant amount of time and resettlement planning, in some cases, takes place just days before release from custody and therefore, in considering historical literature, I concluded this was not solely the fault of the newly formed CRCs – it is perhaps an ineffective method that has simply not been factored previously into the design of resettlement frameworks. While there have been significant improvements in signposting provisions, there has been some confusion about where the responsibility of housing of people exiting custody sits. Previous research (Grimshaw, 2002) discussed the lack of housing provision for people exiting custody and it remains alarming at the time of writing that this area has not improved (HMIP, 2016; Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison, 2016). There remains a propensity within services to opt for temporary accommodation because this is all that is readily available. This failed to meet the women's longer-term needs, which are pushed further down the line towards other as yet unidentified agencies.

Moreover, women were made responsible for meeting their own needs without the resources available to do that successfully – thus increasing their disadvantage, marginalisation and vulnerability. This identified the need for policy makers to rethink their approach in this area, although without the outward response available to services, it remains a block in resettlement planning that, seemingly, remained challenging to overcome and has been so since the Social Exclusion Report in 2002 (SEU, 2002). A striking fact remains: it is a failure on the behalf of society that the housing needs of women exiting prison remain, overall, unmet. As Renouf pointed out in 2017: *“Housing was also described as the foundation upon which access to other essential services could be based once women had returned to the community. Without housing, women were further isolated and experienced a rapid decline in their health and wellbeing”* (Renouf, 2007, p. 47).

5.2 What were the benefits of a Housing First approach?

The 12 participants in this study had previously experienced inadequate assessments of need leading, often, to the provision of unsuitable services that in some instances compounded their problems. My findings showed that poor provision in housing for women leaving prison is not inevitable. All the participants had recently experienced provision through the Housing First model and each described strong contrasts between their earlier experiences and the services they received through Housing First (Padgett, 2006; Tsemberis, 2015). The women were able to remain in their homes for a minimum of one year and able to access support at their pace. Additional needs such as accessing bank accounts were met and the women were able to access assistance from the welfare system and function within their communities. One participant was able to be reunited with her child and build a family home. All of the participants were able to access primary healthcare services, thus ensuring their overall general wellbeing was improved.

My research reinforced that meeting a long-term housing need does improve outcomes for reducing reoffending and that women need to be supported to explore the long-term value of their post-prison lives – *a sense of place*. For mothers with the responsibility of children on release, losing their home while in custody had previously presented further barriers as they had been recorded as in need of housing, yet offered single person temporary accommodation (Gojkovic et al., 2012). TR reforms have not yet identified nor researched the housing needs of mothers in the CJS (Baldwin et al., 2015). Of all the participants in this study, none of their roles as mothers were considered in previous resettlement work. Of value would be further studies for women leaving prison to identify and strengthen pathways

of support to achieve positive outcomes for mothers who have served custodial sentences and for women who have served differing lengths of prison sentences. Two participants who had served long prison sentences were afforded the time and space to adapt to their new surroundings at their pace through the Housing First model. They were able to readily adapt to technology and, following long periods of time in custody, were able to come to terms with and get used to, with support, the wonders of modern-day living.

What emerged during this study was that previous research identified *accommodation* needs as opposed to a need for a *home*, demonstrating a gap in research of support frameworks and identifying a longer-term need in housing that could add value to women's lives. My findings showed that the participants were supported in the need for a home and they were in receipt of other vital services. They were able to access women's centres and all of the participants (except one who was not subject to a licence) met the conditions of their post-prison licences. Professionals involved in their care were able to undertake home visits and all of the participants did not reoffend. While some substance misuse was identified, there were significant reductions in use as harm reduction techniques were used, and it remains a significant positive outcome that the women who had difficulties with substance misuse benefited from a Housing First home where there was no threat of being asked to leave.

The findings further revealed that suitable housing did break the cycle of trauma experienced by the women particularly where previous maternal deprivation had occurred due to prison. While it is prudent to admit this cannot be totally overcome by housing alone, it did help with one participant in that she was to go on to become a grandmother and was afforded the opportunities to overcome her feelings of failing as a mother – safely within the privacy of her family and her own home she was able to have her sense of place.

5.3 Recommendations

This was a small study based on 12 participants who had received a direct response to their housing need following release from prison. My findings highlighted the benefits of a Housing First approach and a designed framework of support that was within the scope of the housing project that formed part of this study. Housing First was transformative for the participants and produced positive outcomes that they had not experienced from previous providers.

Recommendation 1: A dedicated housing adviser at first point of entry into the criminal justice system. There is in place, at the time of writing, Liaison and Diversion (L&D) services. This service is required to record housing status as part of its assessment of people in police custody. A dedicated housing adviser as part of this service would be able to implement early interventions that would: a) identify existing housing that could be protected under the housing benefit 13-week rule if the person is likely to receive a custodial sentence of six months or under; b) identify and record if a person is homeless, enabling the prison to action resettlement planning at a much earlier stage. There is opportunity for L&D services to assist with probation pre-sentence reporting through dissemination of information to probation services.

Recommendation 2: Pre-sentence reports (PSRs) should identify and record the housing status of people. Recent reports have described the resource challenges faced by the NPS in this area and the use of L&D as in Recommendation 1 would be of value at this stage. Pre-sentence reports are vital to identify the challenges faced by women, such as being responsible for dependent children and who will be caring for the children. For women with children that could enter the care of a local authority it can be identified at this stage what housing may be required on the mother's release from prison.

Recommendation 3: Basic custody screening tools (BCSTs) – every person is subject to an assessment and screening within five days of entering custody. The BCST should identify any issues with housing and trigger action in this area that should be used at resettlement planning stage. Where a tenancy is unavoidably surrendered while a person is in custody, the final BCST should identify this and form part of the resettlement planning. Referrals for housing can then be made as soon as possible.

Recommendation 4: Further consideration should be made by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) working with trusts, charities and other providers in the sector to establish a fully evaluated pilot project using the Housing First model.

Recommendation 5: A national housing strategy led by the MoJ with cross-organisational responsibilities from the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, probation trusts, PRS-accredited associations and voluntary sector organisations. The designing of such a strategy should be afforded cross-organisational inputs that could form a national housing strategy for women but led at local levels. The MoJ should develop clearer expectations of CRCs and probation in regard to assessing housing need and taking responsibility for ensuring housing agencies meet those needs.

Recommendation 6: Funding to be ring-fenced for women-only housing provision. Supported living funds have been extended to 2022 by the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Recommendation 7: To improve knowledge of housing need and provision, and to clarify responsibilities, the NPS should commission training on the issue for all resettlement staff.

Recommendation 8: The routine use of expensive hostel accommodation to meet long-term housing need should be reduced by the provision of more suitable, economically viable housing provision. This would require cross-departmental engagement from the MoJ and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.



Chapter 6: Conclusion - A Sense of Place

“I was given an opportunity to make a life for my child, I grabbed this with both hands and the hands of my child. It was my window of opportunity to have a home that I grabbed. I was afforded the opportunity – that became my focus, rather than think about survival that ended up with me in a dock... and ultimately, in prison.” (Sophie)

A Sense of Place: I hope this study offered a unique understanding and recognition of what constituted a home for women affected by the criminal justice system. The expectations of women in prison and the services tasked with the supervision of women are often blurred and unclear. External pressures can be applied to services in terms of funding restrictions and new service implementation; however, those pressures are often unknowingly passed onto women already confined and represented as being multi-disadvantaged (Leverentz, 2014).

There are complexities and challenges at large; cost being the largest barrier to housing provision. Yet, there has to be a new focus on the benefits of supportive frameworks if we are to achieve the goals of resettlement as noted by researchers previously to see housing as a significant order to implement a holistic framework – a sense of place (Corston, 2007; Gojkovic et al., 2012; Grimshaw, 2002; McMahon, 2013; Sandwith, 2011; SEU, 2002; Wardhaugh, 1999)

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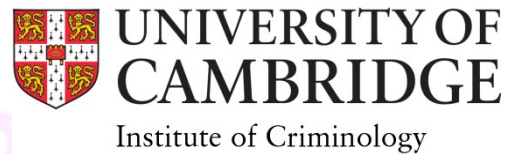
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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Ethical approval

*Professor Loraine R Gelsthorpe FRSA, FAcSS
Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Chair, Ethics Committee, Institute of Criminology*



7 March 2016

Dear Tracey

Re: *A Sense of Place* (project under the Griffins Society Fellowship Award 2015-16)

I write to confirm that your ethics research proposal has been considered by the Institute of Criminology's Research Ethics Committee. The Committee has approved the proposal following all due consideration of ethical matters.

Yours sincerely



Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe

Chair, Ethics Committee

Institute of Criminology

Appendix 2: Invitation to participate and consent form

Invitation to Participate in a Women and Homelessness Study and Consent Form

We would like to invite you to participate in a study being undertaken by Ms Tracey McMahon, under the academic supervision of Dr Julia Wardhaugh of Bangor University. The research is funded and supported by The Griffins Society in academic partnership with The Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University. The questions are ethically approved by:

Professor Loraine R Gelsthorpe FRSA, FAcSS

Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice

Chair, Ethics Committee, Institute of Criminology Cambridge University

Your voluntary participation is requested so we may learn more about homelessness and barriers to safe, affordable accommodation following a custodial sentence.

Our questionnaire will take place over three sessions over a 12-month period and will be approximately 60 minutes per session. Your name will not be recorded on the questionnaire and your responses will be anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. If you are willing to participate, please complete the enclosed consent form. All information will be maintained in a strictly confidential manner and any reporting which may arise as a result of the information obtained will not in any way be used to identify any participant. If you have any questions pertaining to this study, please contact Ms Tracey McMahon via email at tm564@cam.ac.uk.

Thank you for your assistance.

Tracey McMahon

Consent Form

- I understand that I have volunteered to participate in a research study to examine homelessness and the relationship to offending behaviours for women at risk of/offending in England and Wales.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to participate and do so of my own free will.
- I understand that there is no individual benefit to me personally as a result of participation, nor is there any adverse effect from my withdrawal.
- I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially and stored securely, such that only the researcher can trace this information back to me individually.
- I understand that I can ask for the information I provide to be deleted/destroyed at any time and, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, I can have access to the information at any time and that this consent form is the only time I will use my name or prisoner number with regards to this study.
- I understand that information provided by me for this study, including my own words, may be used in a research report, publications, or presentations, but that all such information will be anonymous.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Interview questions

Questions: A Sense of Place

1. **Are you:** British Asian Other Ethnic Minority
2. **Marital Status:** Married Divorced Single Civil Partnership Prefer not to say
3. **Place of Birth:** Britain Other
4. **Age:** 18–23 24–29 30–34 35–39 40–44 45–49 50+
5. **Do you have any dependent children:** 0 1 2 3 4+ Prefer not to say

6. Offence: (Tick more than one box if necessary)

Violence against the person Robbery Burglary

Theft and Handling Fraud and Forgery Drug Offences Motoring Offences Other

7. Sentence: Less than or equal to 6 months 6–12 months 1–2 years

2–4 years 4–6 years 6–8 years 8–10 years 10–15 years 15 +

8. Do you have previous convictions for: (Tick more than one box if necessary)

Violence against the person Sexual Offences Robbery Burglary Theft and Handling Fraud and Forgery Drug Offences Motoring Offences No Previous Convictions Other

EDUCATION

10. At what age did you leave school? 5–10 11–13 14–16 17+

11. What is your highest level of education: Primary school

GCSE O level A level University Diploma/Degree Professional qualification

HOUSING STATUS

12. Have you ever been homeless? (Homeless being defined as *no fixed abode*)

Yes No Prefer not to say

13. If you answered yes to Q.12, at what age were you first homeless?

14. Any other ages when you have experienced being homeless?

15. Have you ever presented as *in need of housing* at your Local Authority Housing Needs department? Yes No

16. What was your housing/accommodation status prior to entering prison?

Owned/mortgage Rent from Housing Association Rental from Private Landlord Temporary Accommodation (Hostel/bed & breakfast) Staying with friends/relatives Prefer not to say None of these

17. Have you discussed a resettlement plan for release? Yes No n/a

18. Do you have a home to return to on release from prison? Yes No Unsure

19. Would you like to return to your local area? Yes No

20. What does the word: "home" mean to you? Safe I can make a house a home

I am able to build a future in secure accommodation Hostel suit my needs

I worry about affording a home I worry about rogue landlords I would like a social housing home as I feel they are more secure I need support to manage my tenancy

I don't want a home – I can stay with friends/family

21. Do you understand the rights and responsibilities you have as a tenant? Yes No n/a

22. Do you understand the rights and responsibilities of a landlord? Yes No n/a

23. Do you identify between your housing situation and your offending behaviours? Do you feel there is any relation between the two? (please tick more than one box if required):

My housing status is the reason for my offending If I had secure accommodation I would not feel the need to offend I have moved many times & offending could be related to this Offending is unrelated to my housing status

24. If you have children, will you have your children live with you? (please tick more than one box if required): Yes No Temporary Foster Care Prefer not to answer

25. Will you be seeking employment on release? Yes No n/a

26. Do you intend to move into temporary accommodation and seek long-term housing once settled back in the community of your choosing?

Yes No Prefer not to say

27. Is there anything further in relation to housing you feel appropriate to this research study? (Please discuss.) This could be difficulties in accessing primary healthcare services such as GP/dentists due to being of No Fixed Abode.

ENDS