

The challenges and opportunities of moving to strengths-based working to prevent emergency homelessness from custody in England – early lessons from Greater Manchester Community Accommodation Service Tier 3

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General context

- Entitlement to statutory interim accommodation has always been conditional - Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- The 'intractable problem' of re-settlement - a space of repeat policy failure
- Housing insecurity and an increased risk of recidivism
- Short sentence cohort and repeat homelessness
- 11,435 people were released from prison homeless 2018-2019 (HMIP 2020)
- Strength based working in homelessness prevention

Local context

- Adopting a homelessness prevention typology
- Increasing joint accountability in Greater Manchester as part of GM integrated public service reform agenda
- Covid-19 as disruption and innovation
- A Bed Every Night trailblazer
- Limited and inaccurate data
- Those supporting people leaving prison feel a sense of hopelessness
- Limited understanding of respective legislation across disciplines

Community Accommodation Service Tier 3

Ministry of Justice grant funding provides temporary accommodation for people leaving Prison/ moving on from Approved Premises

Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Greater Manchester Probation Service commission temporary accommodation with support

Ensuring that people on probation are entering into a 'single system' of existing homelessness support with an integrated public service offer

Working collaboratively with authorities and services locally, an opportunity to strengthen relationships and improve outcomes

Justice devolution reinforces that those with multiple and complex needs within Criminal Justice System are a shared responsibility

Opportunity to focus on how constituent parts of the pathway interrelate, better understand unmet need and communicate shared insights

The need for shared definitions

Resettlement

- To not only have somewhere safe to live, but to acquire the means to be part of the community (Crow, 2006)
- To address offending-related and associated factors, that might act as barriers to reintegration within the community by those leaving custody and by doing so reduce reoffending and promote desistance (HMIP 2021).

Rehabilitation

- Restoring the prison leavers status as a citizen and renegotiating his or her access to it's privileges and responsibilities (Crow 2001)
- Forsberg & Douglas (2020) identify 5 Conceptions,
 - (1) anti-recidivism
 - (2) harm reduction,
 - (3) therapy,
 - (4) moral improvement,
 - (5) restoration

The need for shared definitions

Homelessness prevention

- 5 stage typology (Fitzpatrick et al. 2019) Universal, Targeted, Crisis, Emergency, Recovery
- Emergency: preventing experiences of homelessness where someone is without safe accommodation (even if it is temporary) and that this is a short term and transitional experience before a settled home is secured

Strengths based

- Adopt an individualised approach, recognising each journey is different
- Recognise and build on people's strengths:
 - personal assets; relationships, experiences, skills, aspirations
 - community assets; knowledge, people, networks, services
- Meaningful consideration of protective factors
- Developing positive relationships, procedural justice

CAS3 Early Adopter Year July 2021 - July 2022

Commissioning partnership:

Greater Manchester Combined Authority & Greater Manchester Probation Service

Delivery Partnership: GM Prisons, GM Probation, GM Local Housing Authorities, Accommodation Providers, Support Providers, VCSE Assurance Provider

Governance spaces; operational, practise development, whole system accountability and problem solving, national decision making.

138 units
across 10 local
authorities

10% female
provision

50% self
contained

Cumulative
referrals:
964

CAS3 offers
made:
588

People placed
in CAS3:
533

Average stay in
CAS3:
43 nights

Positive move
on from CAS3:
248

54% Very High/
High Risk

Incidents
reported: 12

CAS3 residents
recalled:
27%

Serious Further
Offences:
0

Cracknell (2021) provides a description of the ‘essence of re-settlement’ that we are using as a typology for strengths based working in this particular context of emergency homelessness prevention from custody:

- 1) Bridging and bonding to community capital
- 2) Holistic support that is both practical and motivational/therapeutic
- 3) Relationship building that is collaborative and consistent

How far did CAS3 enable these ways of working to be realised?

Bridging and bonding

Practitioners work to bridge the gap between the individual's set of resources and their ability to access and use them.

Key Evidence:

Immediate basic needs are met

Promotion of new services & shared briefings

CAS3 service demonstrates systems bonding & bridging

- CAS-3 removed bridging pressure pre-release for people whose homelessness could not be resolved easily or via pre-assessed statutory duties
- Bridging and bonding took place in social welfare and community systems, as opposed to correctional world (Senior and Ward 2016)
- Support specification required bridging and bonding activity – although not standardised
- Limited family and partner network bonding
- Fronted by non-statutory support worker – not Community Probation Practitioner or Housing Officer
- Bridging and bonding of the system; integrated public service reform
- New governance; network of organisations and frequency of meetings
- Good cooperation and communication between various organisations and departments

Holistic support

This should combine practical help and support, alongside therapeutic and motivational work

Key Evidence:

% positive outcomes for this cohort
Qualitative Feedback (CAS3Residents and Probation Practitioners)
No Serious Further Offending
Lived experience impact (JustLife One Team Commission)

- Emphasis on physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both CAS3 providers and residents
- Accommodation of a good standard as a minimum – exceeded expectations and promoted engagement
- CAS-3 regional specification emphasised additional support
- Limited connection to specialist therapeutic support due to wider service delivery timeline
- CAS3 providers require understanding of biopsychosocial model takes into account the complexities of a person's life and their social context
- Housing and support separation tested - creates opportunities to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment
- 'Hard to reach groups', more focus should be on the underlying roots of the disengagement

Collaborative relationships

Fostering a genuinely collaborative approach between the individual and practitioner on resettlement plans, as well as building trust and consistency

Key Evidence:

Family re-settlement outcomes
Qualitative feedback on peer support worker relationship
Personalisation spends
Collaborative learning

- Strength of peer support relationships as motivational - individuals are influenced to change by those whose advice they respect and whose support they value
- Flexible resources supported collaborative approach by enabling choice and individualism
- Longer term relationship consistency not achieved due to service time pressure
- Impact on trust and positivity of professional to professional relationships
- Identify phased transitions: where we are at and where we want to be
- Collaborative learning and opportunity to adapt
- Demonstrate interdependence
- Autonomy and adaptation

CAS3 provides a rich opportunity to enable strengths based working to prevent emergency homelessness from custody

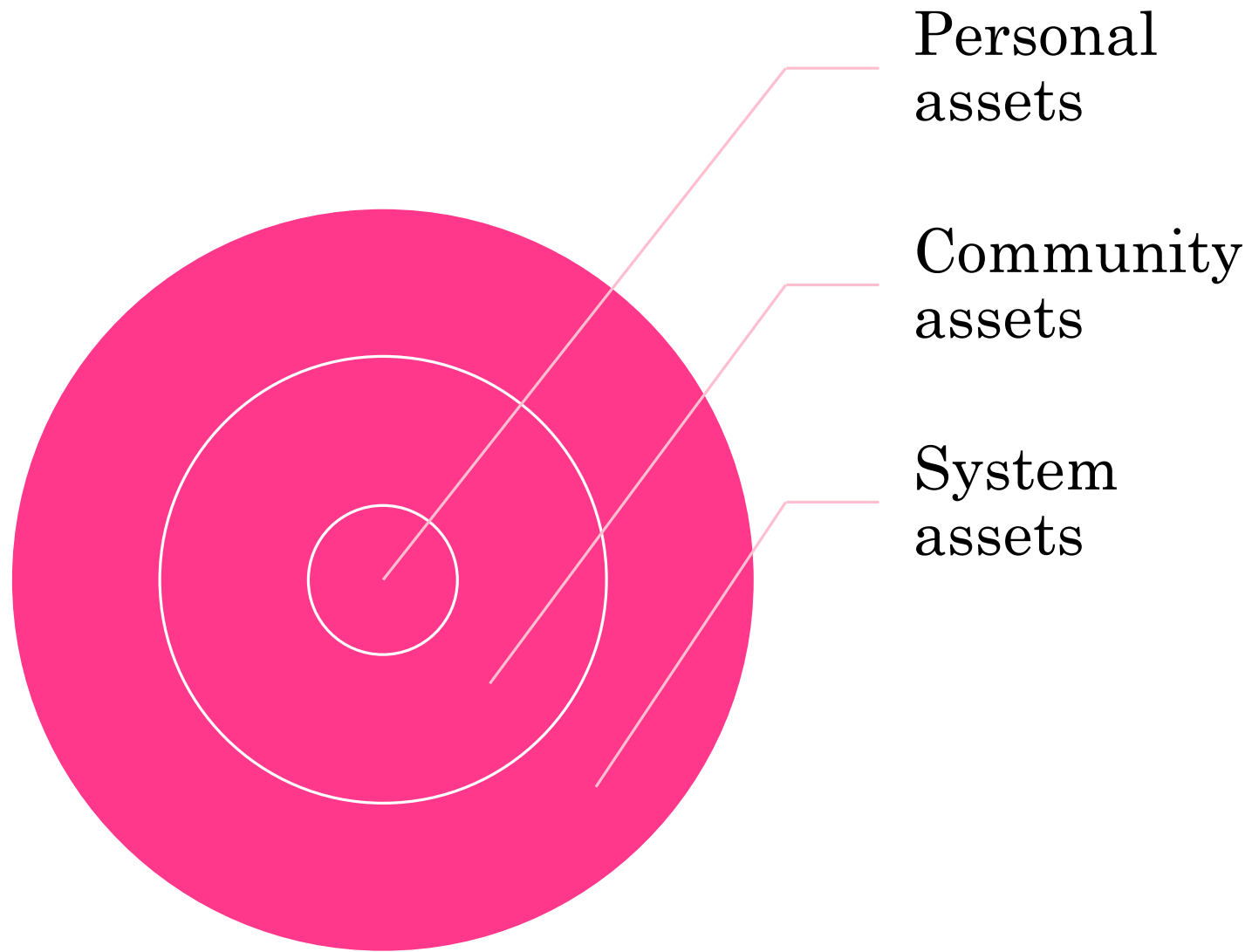
Key Opportunities

- Timely use of immediate post release environment (emergency homelessness) cohort to achieve bridging and bonding
- Mandated and resourced strengths based support practise
- Relationship opportunities beyond Probation Practitioner/Housing Officer structure and identity
- Joint accountability improves creativity and flexible approaches – space in-between for different practise to grow
- Ability of practitioners to function as a coherent system

Key Challenges

- Experience of custody & licence restrictions create a disconnect between aspirations and reality
- Without being able to identify & minimise the barriers those leaving prison and those supporting them can feel a sense of hopelessness
- Perceived conflict between strength based approaches and public protection
- Lack of confidence in promoting safe family and partner network bonding
- Desistance is a lengthy process and relapses are common
- Various iterations of policy initiatives and lack of resources and time

Opportunity to highlight what works, evidence and identify barriers, and address within policy iterations for re-settlement and homelessness prevention at a regional and national level



Policy recommendations

National:

- Apply resource to whole at risk cohort inclusive of those owed a statutory duty of interim accommodation to avoid perverse outcomes and incentives
- Extend flexibility of support timeline to enable consistency and sustainability
- Continue to reflect on the use of short sentences

Regional:

- Invest in peer support infrastructure to unlock motivational relationships
- Extend ambition from Emergency Prevention to include Recovery Prevention (repeat homelessness)
- Develop Integrated Re-settlement Services towards strengths based practise
- More emphasis and resources need to be placed on homelessness prevention within Custody
- Continue to improve permeability of prison walls

How do we continue to use this naturally occurring case study to further the evidence base and support policy maturity for strengths based practise?

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