

Eastern Region Homes for Cathy

Seminar 17 November 2020

Speakers: Mary Scales & Katie Marsden

Senior Partnership Manager and Responsibility for Prison Delivery, DWP
Vicky Day, Head of Prevention & Rehabilitation, Office of Policy & Crime
Commissioner for Norfolk

Mary & Katie gave an overview of some of the barriers for people leaving prison, an overview of the Gateway to Employment project and recent case studies of people leaving prison and the challenges that they overcame.

Challenges that need to be overcome

- Disclosure – this is often one of the biggest barriers to gaining either employment or housing
- The Gateway project brings employers into the prison for the interview process
- Temporary accommodation is expensive for the prison leavers to maintain and is not a long term solution
- Current allocation process often means that a home can't be found in time and temporary accommodation is needed, often causing more uncertainty
- DWP can provide a grant to use as a deposit for a home, this doesn't have to be paid back
- Families are often distanced, being in a permanent job and home often helps reconciliation

How can the housing sector support prison leavers?

Prison leavers' project <https://www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk/news/project-supporting-prison-leavers-extended-thanks-to-partnership-backing/> has gone from supporting individuals towards purchasing 10 x 1-bedroom permanent homes. St Martin's provides person-centred support worker. Broadland Housing provides assured tenancy in all properties offered to people leaving prison.

The partnership work in this region is phenomenal – it's not through lack of will or trying, just tricky to get everything lined up at the time accommodation is needed.

There is a 'Somewhere safe to say' hub which is soon to be completed shortly. This is a 14 bedroom assessment station. Residents can only stay for 72 hours but it might be a good option for those just needing a bit more time.

<https://stmartinhousing.org.uk/new-norwich-service-gives-people-rough-sleeping-somewhere-safe-to-stay>

Bursaries are available from scheme set up by former Sheriff of Norwich

Review our allocation policies in partnership with local authorities or consider direct lettings. King's Lynn Borough Council are starting this process.

Only 400 employers registered on the MoJ's ex-offender-friendly list
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlock-opportunity-employer-information-pack-and-case-studies/employing-prisoners-and-ex-offenders> – how many are housing associations?

Employers report that former offenders are their most loyal and hardworking employees – former offenders don't want to go through difficulty of disclosure again. When organisations are recruiting consider positive discrimination or 'Ban the box' on job recruitment forms – wait until interview stage before asking about DBS <https://www.unlock.org.uk/projects/employment-discrimination/ban-the-box/>.

Younger people leaving prison are disproportionately affected in the current economic crisis because of their age and lack of experience. The Kickstart programme is a good way to support young people by offering work experience. – <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme>

Why is stable accommodation important?

30% of people leaving custody in Norwich have a job lined up (MoJ national figure is 17% get a job within a year) but struggle to find accommodation

70% have no employment when leaving prison.

86% of employers who employ ex-offenders say they are great at their jobs.

Of 78 people formerly in custody who were living on street in 2018-2020, 53 were in a revolving cycle of reoffending - important to understand what support individuals need to break this cycle.

Those leaving HMP Wayland, HMP Bure and HMP Peterborough who might want to relocate or return to Norwich. Average numbers of those leaving custody per month are:

HMP Wayland – 100

HMP Bure – 12

HMP Peterborough – 12

From December 2020-March 2021 Norwich City Council and St Martin's have block-funded a hotel in Norwich for people who are living on the streets.