
An Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for Prisoners Serving 12 Months or More

A joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons

June 2017



Thematic Inspection

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This inspection was led by HM Inspector Liz Smith, supported by a team of inspectors, as well as staff from our operations and research teams. The Assistant Chief Inspector responsible for this inspection is Helen Davies.

We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

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Foreword

Through the Gate resettlement services were introduced in 2015, to bridge the gap between prison and community. The government hoped that the newly formed Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) would use their freedoms and flexibility to resettle prisoners well, and so reduce reoffending. We reported in October 2016 on the poor quality of resettlement services for prisoners serving short sentences. We report now on services for those serving longer sentences.

Clearly there is more time for resettlement work with these prisoners, but CRCs are making little difference to their prospects on release. We found them no better served than their more transient fellow prisoners were some eight months ago. The overall picture was bleak. If Through the Gate services were removed tomorrow, in our view the impact on the resettlement of prisoners would be negligible.

There is much more CRCs should be doing to make a difference to the lives of those they are meant to be helping, but we found them focusing most of their efforts on meeting their contractual targets, to produce written resettlement plans. Responding to the needs of prisoners received much less attention, but meaningful expectations are not specified clearly in CRC contracts, and good, persistent work is not incentivised or rewarded sufficiently.

Through the Gate services are not well enough integrated into prisons. Alone, CRCs cannot reduce reoffending to any worthwhile extent. There is more that prisons should do to support resettlement, including properly screening for prisoners' needs, assessing risks of harm, and planning and delivering rehabilitative work where needed. Wider problems within the prison system mean prisoners rarely receive effective rehabilitation while detained.

Many have enduring problems including mental illness and addiction, and yet links between treatment in custody and in the community were not always easy. Indeed the whole transition is often fraught. Affordable accommodation is hard to source, and claims to state benefits take time to process so some prisoners are released with nowhere to live, and like others may face weeks without any income.

None of the early hopes for Through the Gate have been realised. The gap between aspiration and reality is so great, that we wonder whether there is any prospect that these services will deliver the desired impact on rates of reoffending. To succeed, the government and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) must review and develop the contractual arrangements with CRCs, improve IT systems materially and align systems, processes and resettlement targets for prisons, CRCs and the National Probation Service (NPS) to both incentivise and enable effective work.



Dame Glenys Stacey

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

June 2017



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Key facts

41%	Proportion of prisoners starting a custodial sentence between July 2015 and June 2016 serving a determinate sentence of 12 months or more ¹ .
14 months	The average time served in prison for those prisoners released between July 2015 and June 2016 serving determinate sentences of between 12 months and 4 years ² .
44 months	The average time served in prison for those prisoners released between July 2015 and June 2016 serving determinate sentences of four years or more ² .
32%	Proportion of prisoners on custodial sentences over 12 months, who reoffend within a 12 month period after release (April 2014 – March 2015) ³ .
01 May 2015	Date that CRCs began provision of Through the Gate services.
12 months	The minimum amount of time spent on statutory supervision after release from custody.
21.5	Average number of previous offences committed by the offenders in the inspected sample.
1,145 days	The average length of prison sentence of cases in the inspected sample.
10%	Proportion of prisoners in our case sample who were homeless on the night of release.
18%	Proportion of prisoners in our case sample who were released with employment or training in place.

1 Prison receptions: July to September 2016, Ministry of Justice, January 2017.
2 Prison Releases: July to September 2016, Ministry of Justice, January 2017.
3 Proven Reoffending Statistics, Ministry of Justice, January 2017.

Through the Gate explained

The introduction of Through the Gate services

Until 2014, probation services in England and Wales were delivered by local Probation Trusts. Reoffending rates for released prisoners were high. It was recognised that issues including homelessness, unemployment, mental health and substance misuse contributed to reoffending.

The government's *Transforming Rehabilitation* strategy aimed to reduce reoffending rates by opening up the probation market to new providers, encouraging innovation and creativity. A new National Probation Service and 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies were set up on 01 June 2014. Cases allocated to the NPS included high risk of serious harm offenders and those subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. CRCs were to manage most other medium and low risk of serious harm offenders, and were to be given: 'flexibility to do what works and freedom from bureaucracy' (Ministry of Justice, 2013).

The *Transforming Rehabilitation* programme introduced Through the Gate resettlement services into prisons in England and Wales. Through the Gate services were intended to be delivered by the local CRC to help prisoners maintain or find accommodation; provide assistance with finance, benefits and debt; and to support them to enter education, training and employment. Additional support was to be provided for those prisoners who had been sex workers or had experienced domestic abuse. These services had existed in prisons previously, but in a more fragmented way. The aim of Through the Gate was to provide a seamless transition between prison and the community.

Through the Gate arrangements

The prison estate was reorganised in November 2014, with 89 of the 120 prisons in England and Wales designated as resettlement prisons. All female prisons were so designated. The aim is for 80% of prisoners to be moved to a resettlement prison local to their home area at least three months before release⁴.

Prison staff screen all new prisoners to discover what needs they have, and CRCs are expected to plan to meet any immediate resettlement needs at the start of sentence, and then to review the plan 12 weeks before release putting in place assistance required at that point. CRCs have Through the Gate resettlement teams located within all designated resettlement prisons, consisting either of direct CRC employees or staff working for organisations in a contractual arrangement with the CRC.

CRCs receive a 'fee for service' for providing core Through the Gate services, which should include assistance to maintain or find accommodation; assistance with finance, benefits and debt; education, training and employment; release coordination; and support for those who have been sex workers or have experienced domestic abuse.

4 A Guide to 'Through the Gate' (TTG) Resettlement Services, National Offender Management Service, November 2015

When CRCs bid for the contracts, they set out their broad intentions about how they would deliver Through the Gate services, but the detailed content is not specified. Through the Gate services are available to all prisoners, irrespective of whether their cases are to be managed upon release by a CRC or the NPS. The CRC contracts are managed by HMPPS, and the only performance target for CRCs relating to Through the Gate is to complete resettlement plans in the prescribed timescale. There is no contractual obligation to address the needs that have been identified.

It is anticipated that CRCs will be rewarded in addition with a payment by results – that is, reduced reoffending rates. The first reoffending data will be available in October 2017.

Executive summary

We visited nine prisons, where Through the Gate services were being delivered by eight different CRCs with seven different corporate owners. We looked at the cases of 98 prisoners, before and after release.

What prisoners need to help them resettle

We found, as anticipated, that many prisoners needed substantial help before they were released. Finding somewhere to live was a common problem, along with finding work or making a benefits claim, and getting assistance with substance misuse or mental health problems. We found that many of these needs were not recognised when prisoners first went into custody. Problems that should have been obvious to prison staff were not identified.

Where problems were picked up, they were not well-recorded, so that Through the Gate staff did not have enough information to make a good plan about what help was needed. If urgent issues were identified at the start of a sentence, the speed with which prisoners were transferred to other prisons meant that they were unlikely to receive early help, for example to sort out debts or maintain accommodation. There was then a time delay until they could access Through the Gate services, 12 weeks before release.

Most prisoners did have plans drawn up for them before release, though not always in the required timescale. The quality of the plans was variable. Necessary actions were not always identified. Moreover, many of the actions in plans consisted of no more than referring the prisoner on to other services, with little or no follow-up. The delays in completing plans sometimes meant there was not enough time left to deal with issues that arose.

Outcomes for prisoners receiving Through the Gate services

Too many prisoners (more than one in seven) were released not knowing where they would sleep that night. Only two prisoners were found accommodation via Through the Gate arrangements. Three more were placed in short-term accommodation provided by HMPPS for home detention curfew. Work that could and should have been done by Through the Gate services in prison was left for responsible officers to pick up after release. Five prisoners only found accommodation on their day of release. This increased the anxiety of those prisoners and placed a heavy burden on staff in the community trying to make arrangements for housing on the day of release. The rate of homelessness varied from prison to prison, but ten of the cases we looked at started off their licence period with no fixed address.

The impact of Through the Gate services on education, training and employment was minimal. No prisoners were helped by Through the Gate services to enter education, training or employment after release. All except one of the prisons we visited were able to set bank accounts up for prisoners, but even where this service was available, some prisoners were still released without bank accounts. Other work on finance, benefits and debt was not being delivered to any great extent.

When Through the Gate was introduced there was much talk about the use of mentors to provide intensive support to prisoners around the time of release. The use of mentors had not been developed as anticipated, and only one prisoner had received support through a mentor scheme introduced under Through the Gate.

After release, all of the prisoners in our sample would be supervised for at least 12 months. We thought it was important that their responsible officers in the community received full information at the point of release, about the prisoner's behaviour and experience in prison. Ideally this would include details of all handover arrangements, including appointments made at Jobcentre Plus, and with drug treatment and mental health services. This could be done either by prison staff or Through the Gate workers, but in many prisons communication and information sharing was poor.

Public protection

Public protection is the business of everyone working with the prisoner. Most of the Through the Gate staff we met were ill-informed about public protection issues in the cases they were working with. We observed shortcomings in the work of prison staff, and of responsible officers in the CRCs and in the NPS. Too many prisoners had inadequate assessment of their potential to cause harm, and too little was done to mitigate these risks. Poor communication was often a factor, and there was not enough evidence of a 'whole system' approach to managing risk of harm.

Design and evaluation of Through the Gate services

Prison places are not evenly distributed across the country, so layering Through the Gate onto the prison footprint was never going to be straightforward. Other pressures in the prison system mean that the catchment areas for some resettlement prisons are very wide. We only saw a few prisons where there was a clear benefit from having the 'local' CRC delivering Through the Gate services.

No clear guidance has been given on how Through the Gate services should align with sentence planning arrangements. For many prisoners, no sentence planning takes place at all because of operational difficulties within prisons, while others only receive a risk assessment due to the current Offender Assessment System prioritisation policy. The Through the Gate resettlement plan may be the only record of work that needs to be done with them, and it is not sufficient for that purpose.

The complexity and incompatibility of the IT systems used by staff in preparing prisoners for release were major obstacles to effective working. Either staff waste time entering the same information in multiple places, or they just record in one or two places, with the consequence that others are not able to find out about relevant work.

While many CRCs have contracted well-respected voluntary organisations to deliver Through the Gate services, the focus has been on completion of resettlement plans and so the potential for these more diverse providers to improve the overall quality of resettlement work is not being realised. The few examples of innovation we saw were on a very small scale, so are likely to have no more than a negligible impact on reducing reoffending.

The CRC contracts incentivise the completion of resettlement plans, not the improvement of prisoners' situations. CRCs are generally struggling financially and it is not surprising, then, that most have invested little in services beyond the minimum contractual expectation. Those that are doing more – Durham Tees Valley CRC for example – told us that they are doing so at a loss. It is hard to see any impact of the prospect of future payment by results for reducing reoffending rates. The consequence is that Through the Gate services as delivered now are not likely to reduce rates of reoffending.

For technical and legal reasons it is impossible for CRCs to track any difference Through the Gate has made for the prisoners they have worked with, such as finding accommodation or work. This makes it hard for them to evaluate the impact of their work. The staff we met in prisons working for Through the Gate were keen and committed, and were clearly very busy writing resettlement plans to meet contractual targets. Many of them, and some of their managers, were unaware that the work they were doing was having little or no impact on the eventual resettlement of prisoners.

Recommendations

The recommendations made in our 2016 report on Through the Gate services⁵ still stand and can be found on our website:

Further recommendations are set out below.

The Ministry of Justice and Department for Communities and Local Government in England should work together to:

- recognise homeless released prisoners as a priority need for housing and make sure that supported accommodation for released prisoners is not impacted by the proposed Local Housing Allowance cap.

The Ministry of Justice and Welsh Government Department for Communities and Children should work together to:

- recognise homeless released prisoners as a priority need for housing and make sure that supported accommodation for released prisoners is not impacted by the proposed Local Housing Allowance cap.

The Ministry of Justice and Department for Work and Pensions should work together to:

- allow prisoners to submit their claim for benefit prior to release in order that payments can commence promptly once in the community.

The Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service should:

- consider whether CRC contracts are the best way to deliver effective resettlement services
- consider making the relevant local NPS and CRC responsible for securing accommodation for prisoners being released under their supervision
- make sure every prison provides services to meet the needs of their prisoners in respect of education, training and employment, finance, benefit and debt, and support for victims of domestic abuse and sex workers.

HM Prison and Probation Service should:

- provide guidance to prisons, CRCs and the NPS about how sentence planning and release preparation processes should integrate with Through the Gate arrangements.

HM Prison Service should:

- make sure that arrangements for substance misuse and mental health treatment enable a smooth transition to community services at the point of release.

5 HMI Probation (2016) *An Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for short-term Prisoners*

1. Introduction

1.1. Why this thematic?

In October 2016, HMI Probation published *A Joint Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for Short-Term Prisoners*. This report focused on services being delivered to prisoners serving sentences of less than 12 months, who for the first time were subject to statutory supervision on release. We found that Through the Gate services were having little or no impact on the resettlement of the majority of short-term prisoners. Through the Gate services were intended to be delivered to all prisoners, so we chose to conduct a second inspection, looking at Through the Gate work with prisoners who were serving sentences of 12 months or more. We wanted to examine whether the impact of Through the Gate services was more positive for prisoners who had spent longer in prison. We now intend to incorporate inspection of Through the Gate services into our adult inspection programme from 2018.

1.2. Background - what works to reduce reoffending?

The process by which people with long criminal histories reduce or stop offending is commonly understood as a journey. Motivation to make necessary life changes can ebb and flow, but expectations of change have to be set over the long-term. People who have committed offences often need to create new lives, and need to find a way of integrating into communities that may have previously been hostile to them. It is unrealistic to expect this to be easy to do.

Those supporting them need to be persistent, hopeful, flexible, and realistic (McNeill and Weaver, 2010). Many factors in the lives of individuals who have committed offences can influence their progress. Established, static factors such as the number and type of previous offences, and previous life experiences can predict how likely an individual is to offend again. Those with high numbers of previous convictions, a long period of offending, a history of acquisitive offending (burglary and theft), and poor childhood experiences (including having been in care) are generally more likely to reoffend. Other factors (such as substance misuse, poor educational attainment, unemployment and homelessness) that correlate with a raised likelihood of reoffending can be influenced (MoJ, 2014) and can change over time.

Being released is a very vulnerable time for many prisoners. Despite how much they have looked forward to their release date, they can face immediate and practical challenges to settling back into the community. Having somewhere to live is the biggest priority, followed by getting an income, either from employment or state benefits. They need to make contact with agencies which will assist with other problems such as mental health or substance misuse. Only when the basic necessities of life are in place, will people start to make some of the behavioural changes that will support a life without further offending.

In this thematic inspection, we recognise that for prisoners to move away from offending, they first have to resettle in the community. Once they have settled, they are more likely to take the next steps to change their long-term behaviour. We see resettlement as the process of managing the transition between prison and

the community; from a life in prison with a bed, and regular meals, to something similar or better in the community. We consider that the minimum requirements for resettlement are:

- a safe place to sleep, from the day of release
- access to enough money to meet basic needs including food, clothing, and transport
- a sense of hope for the future
- active links into services that can assist with other needs, for example substance misuse and mental health services.

1.3. Aims and objectives

The aim of this inspection was to examine how Through the Gate resettlement services were being delivered to longer-term prisoners, and whether they were making a positive difference to resettlement. Specifically we wanted to know:

1. What were the main resettlement needs of this group of prisoners?
2. Were prisoners' needs being recognised and planned for?
3. Were prisoners' needs being met, either by Through the Gate services, or by other services available in prisons or the community?
4. How well did Through the Gate services coordinate with other arrangements in prison, such as sentence planning and offender management?
5. How much did prisoners, other prison staff, and responsible officers in the community know about the Through the Gate services available in individual prisons?
6. How thoroughly did Through the Gate services prepare prisoners for release?
7. Was sufficient attention paid to public protection issues by all staff working with prisoners?
8. Did CRC staff working in prisons pay sufficient attention to diversity issues and barriers to engagement with services?
9. To what extent did recording and communication of work, within the prison and with the responsible officers in the community, support resettlement?
10. Did strategic management promote and support effective resettlement and desistance?

1.4. Report outline

No	Chapter	Content
2	What do prisoners need to help them resettle?	The needs of this group of prisoners, how well these needs were recognised and planned for, and what help they actually received to prepare them for release. How much attention was paid to diversity issues and barriers to engagement with services.
3	What are the outcomes for prisoners on release?	Where prisoners go to live on release, and whether they go into employment, training, or claim benefits. The numbers who had been recalled or reoffended.
4	Keeping the public and victims safe.	Whether sufficient attention is being paid to public protection, by Through the Gate staff and others working with the prisoner to prepare for release.
5	The strategic vision – how are TTG services designed and evaluated?	The impact of national and local design on the delivery of Through the Gate services. Alignment of Through the Gate with other prison arrangements. The impact of contract management and evaluation of outcomes on the activity of CRCs.

2. What do prisoners need to help them resettle?

We looked at the needs of prisoners serving sentences of a year or more, and how well those needs were recognised and planned for. We examined how much information is available to prisoners and others about Through the Gate services, and how well the services are coordinated with other prison arrangements.

We considered the extent to which Through the Gate services take into account diversity issues and other possible barriers that might prevent prisoners accessing services they needed. We looked at what help the prisoners in our sample actually received to prepare them for release.

2.1. How well were the needs of prisoners recognised and planned for?

All new prisoners should receive a screening of their resettlement needs. This screening is completed by prison staff within 72 hours of the prisoner first entering custody. For most of our sample, this had been done in a different prison to the ones we visited. Some prisoners had been sentenced before the screening requirement was introduced, and some had been received into prisons where these screenings were not currently being completed due to operational difficulties.

Overall, 79% of the cases we looked at had a screening completed. As we found in our earlier inspection, these screenings were rudimentary, and were based purely on what the prisoner had said. When we looked at the screenings in detail, we found:

15% of prisoners had all their needs recognised and described

27% had some of their needs recognised

58% had none of their needs recognised.

The screenings either failed to note needs that were obvious from interviewing the prisoner or from other available records, or gave insufficient explanation of the needs. Few of the screenings we saw formed an adequate basis upon which Through the Gate staff could create a robust resettlement plan.

Twelve weeks before release, Through the Gate staff are required to prepare a resettlement plan to record what action should be taken to meet identified needs. Most of the cases we saw had a resettlement plan. These plans should identify what resettlement services are required. They should also identify referrals that need to be made to other providers in the prison or community, for example, substance misuse or education, training and employment (ETE) services. The resettlement plan is completed on the final page of the screening document.

If Through the Gate staff identify any issues that have not already been picked up by the screening, they can add lines to the resettlement plan to describe and address them. There is no facility, however, to update the content of the screening at the point release planning commences, and in some cases the screenings were up to 18 months old. Any changes in circumstances that have happened in the meantime, can only be recorded as part of the updated resettlement plan, and any irrelevant data from previous plans cannot be deleted. This makes the screenings and plans very difficult to read, to obtain clear information about the current needs of a prisoner and what is going to be done to assist them.

We expected the resettlement plan to set out clearly any actions to deal with the specific needs which had been recognised for a prisoner. We found:

40% of prisoners had all their recognised needs planned for

27% had some of their recognised needs planned for

33% had none of their recognised needs planned for.

As in our previous report, many of the resettlement plans we saw identified actions to be dealt with by referrals to other agencies, and were marked as completed once a referral or email had been sent. In around one-third of the cases, plans were not

updated as work was undertaken or when the situation of the prisoner changed. Few prisoners had received paper copies of their resettlement plans, and many told us they did not know who was doing what to help them.

Some prisoners are eligible to apply for early release on home detention curfew (HDC) up to 4.5 months before their automatic release date. In most prisons, eligibility for Through the Gate services commences 12 weeks before the automatic release date, so prisoners made their HDC applications before they were able to access Through the Gate services. For a few, help was offered in the last few days before their release, once HDC had been granted.

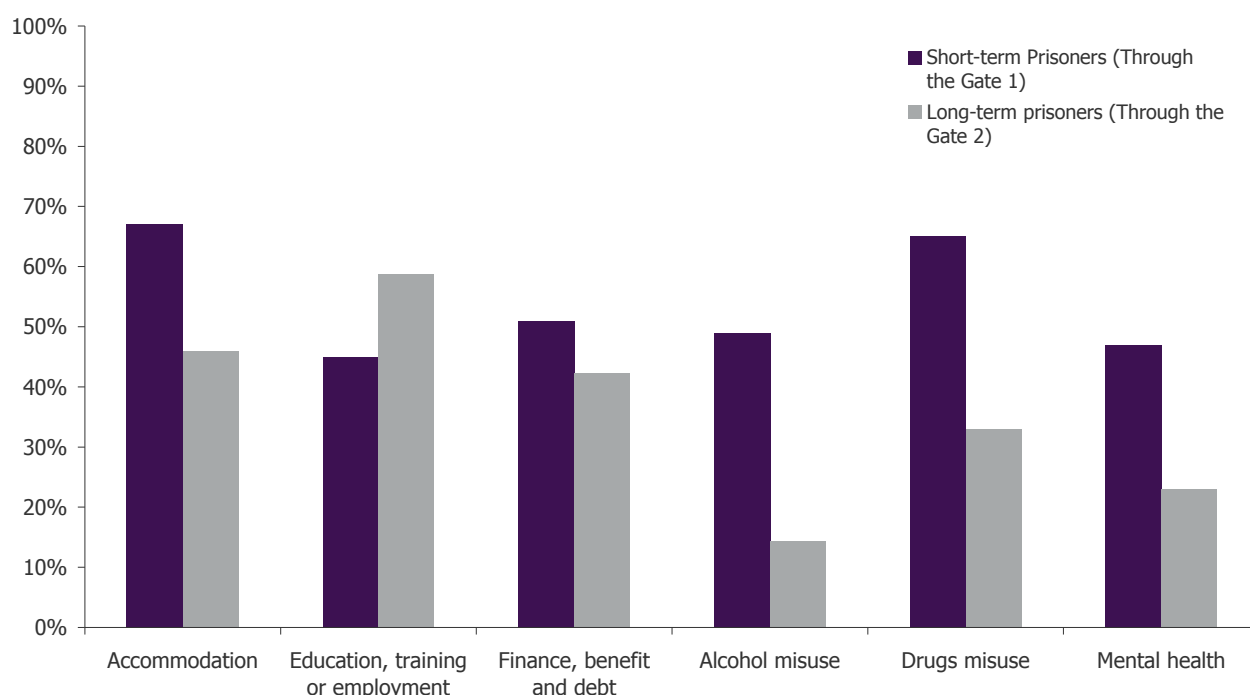
2.2. What did prisoners need help with?

What needs did the prisoners have?

To judge this, inspectors looked at all the information that was accessible to Through the Gate resettlement staff in the prison, including information available on the offender assessment system (OASys), and on the prison case record system (NOMIS). We found that more detailed information, including previous convictions, was difficult to access. We took into account the prisoner’s perspective as recorded on the screenings, and from our interviews with prisoners.

A greater proportion of both male and female prisoners needed help with ETE than in our previous inspection of short sentence prisoners. The proportions needing assistance with accommodation, mental health and substance misuse were slightly lower, while a much smaller proportion had alcohol problems.

Figure 1: Needs of prisoners (short and longer-term)



2.3. Information about available services

We asked to see any publicity material, leaflets or posters that CRCs had prepared to explain to prisoners and others what assistance Through the Gate would provide. We saw a few good examples, but most were not clear enough, and some were not specific to services in individual prisons. Printed material was not always readily available to prisoners or visible on the wings. Similarly, where information was produced for other prison or community staff it was not specific about exactly what help could be given. When we spoke to prisoners they were not at all clear about the detail of Through the Gate services.

2.4. Overcoming barriers to engagement

We would expect that providers of Through the Gate recognised barriers to engagement with their services, and had a plan to prevent prisoners from slipping through the net and failing to access services that might have assisted them. Where the barriers were issues such as age or disability, we saw some cases where reasonable steps were taken by Through the Gate staff to put the necessary assistance in place. In other cases, however, issues such as learning difficulties or mental health problems were not understood or incorporated into planning.

Worryingly, where the barrier was the prisoner's own reluctance to meet Through the Gate workers, some prisons offered no further resettlement assistance. We noted that this was less likely to happen where the Through the Gate workers were direct CRC employees, and wondered if this was because they had a greater understanding of working with people under statutory supervision.

***Poor practice example:** Chris, an 82 year old first offender had refused to see Through the Gate staff in prison and was due for release within a week. At the point of the inspection the case had been closed. It was only following our inspection that action was taken to try to identify accommodation. Our inspector wrote: "I cannot see any sign of Through the Gate staff or the responsible officer in the community planning for this vulnerable person's release. Chris may be uncooperative, but they seemed to have no idea what would happen after release the following week, until action was taken during the inspection."*

2.5. What help did prisoners actually receive?

Helping prisoners secure accommodation

Almost half of our sample of prisoners needed help with accommodation. While CRCs are not expected to provide accommodation themselves, we hoped they would have in place a range of advice and assistance to make sure that prisoners have somewhere to live when released. We found only two cases where Through the Gate services had identified and secured accommodation for prisoners. Both of these individuals were released from HMP Holme House, where Durham Tees Valley CRC had worked with housing associations in their supply chain to improve access

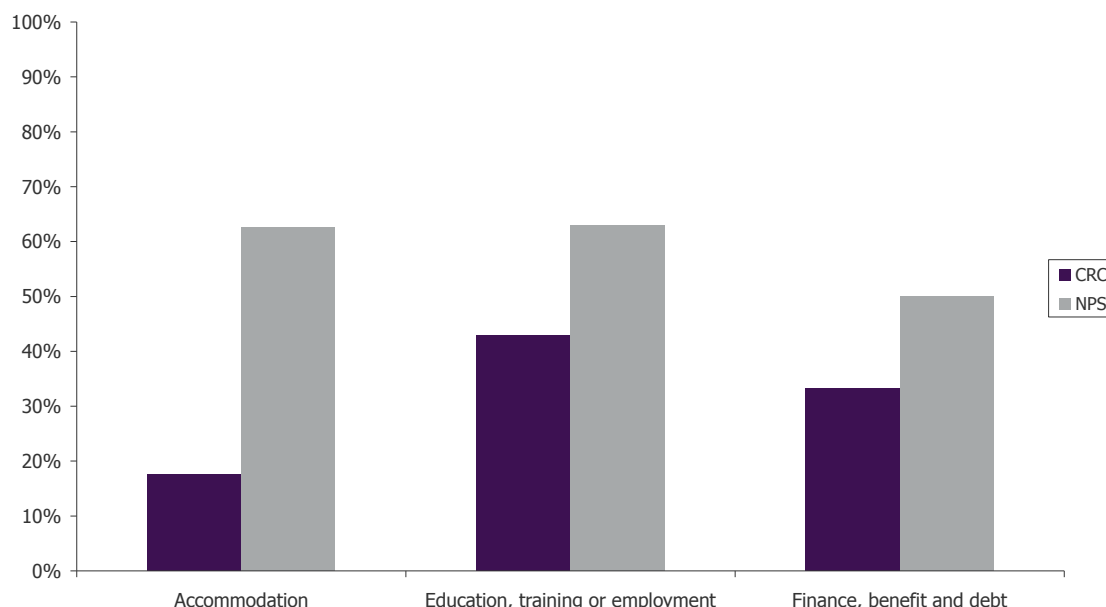
to accommodation for prisoners. In a further three cases, prison staff processing HDC applications recognised a need for accommodation to be found, and requested Through the Gate staff to refer the prisoners into BASS accommodation⁶.

We saw little effective work by CRCs to improve access to accommodation. In many cases the assistance given was no more than filling forms in to make homelessness applications to local authorities after release. Fifteen prisoners walked out of the prison gates not knowing where they were going to sleep that night, and only five of those found suitable accommodation on the day of release. Most of the prisoners needing assistance were helped by their responsible officers in the community, or by family and friends. We found that prisoners managed in the community by the NPS were more likely to receive help than those managed by CRCs, and that most of that help came from their responsible officers. Family and friends also played a part in helping both groups of prisoners.

Recent legislation in Wales⁷ removed offenders from the priority need group for local authority housing provision, and local authorities now have a 'duty to prevent homelessness' rather than a 'duty to house'. Now, as in England, offenders do not qualify for assistance from the local authority unless they are identified as particularly vulnerable.

Responsible officers told us that the availability of hostel-type accommodation had been reducing, and most hostels would not process applications before a prisoner was released. They believed that this was due to the impact of proposed changes in Housing Benefit⁸ for people living in supported accommodation. While we accepted these real difficulties, we found not enough was done to address accommodation needs. Prisoners did not know who would help them, what that help would consist of, and when they would know what had been done.

Figure 2: Was enough work done prior to release to address needs?



6 Short-term accommodation provided by Stonham Housing Association under contract to HMPPS.

7 *Housing (Wales) Act 2014*.

8 www.housing.org.uk/topics/supported-housing/local-housing-allowance-cap-and-supported-housing/

***Good practice example:** Terry had been a long-term heroin user with multiple problems. Durham Tees Valley CRC Through the Gate staff arranged for him to be released to supported accommodation with a housing association. He went there on release and is still there. He was also getting practical help from '13' (a CRC supply chain organisation) including food parcels and help claiming benefits.*

Education, training and employment

CRCs in prison are contracted to deliver employment resettlement services, although there is no clear definition of what this should include or how it should be integrated with other services, including education and training departments, the National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus. We saw examples of positive work being undertaken in some prisons, such as holding employment workshops, and assisting prisoners to produce CVs. Not all of this work, however, was initiated by Through the Gate and not all prisons had such services in place.

We hoped that prisoners serving longer sentences had been able to access appropriate training or employment in prison, to support their re-entry into the employment market on release. In HMP Hatfield, an open prison, we found this to be the case, with many prisoners already working in the community (the norm for open prisons). In the other prisons, we met many prisoners who were not yet ready to enter employment. They had a range of other problems that needed to be dealt with first, such as substance misuse, behaviour or mental health problems. In many cases they had been receiving Employment and Support Allowance before they came into prison, so were unlikely to be classed as available for work upon release.

Almost half of the prisoners who were ready to engage with employment, however, did not receive enough help. This was not purely a failing of Through the Gate; in some cases, this was due to wider prison issues, such as the lack of training courses that prisoners wanted to do. A number of prisoners expressed their frustration that they had not been able to gain a Construction Skills Certification Scheme card in prison. They felt with some justification that this was the qualification that would best improve their prospect of work on release.

We did not see any cases where Through the Gate services had assisted a prisoner to get employment after release. We did not find CRCs promoting links to local colleges or education providers for the prisoners where this would have been appropriate. There were some examples, however, of handover to specialist ETE staff in the CRC in the community for them to make onward referrals.

Many prisoners are working in jobs in prison which could give them useful transferrable skills on release, but in many cases responsible officers in the community did not receive any information about those jobs.

Finance, benefit and debt

Many of the prisoners we met had arrived in prison with financial problems. They should have been the most straightforward issues for Through the Gate staff to identify and to resolve more readily at the very beginning of the sentence. In reality this rarely happened as prisoners spent little time in local prisons.

As CRCs are only contracted to provide Through the Gate services at the beginning and end of sentences, there was a long period for most prisoners when they could not get assistance to resolve debts or fines. The consequence of this was that by the time pre-release involvement commenced, there was no time left to contact creditors or courts. Some prisons told us that they had previously had debt counselling available to all prisoners under a contract funded by HMPPS, which had been removed once Through the Gate was introduced.

In some prisons, booklets were given to prisoners to help them resolve debts themselves, but in most cases we thought this was too little too late, even where the prisoner had enough motivation and the ability to write letters without assistance. We saw too many cases where it was apparent from the start of sentence that there were outstanding fines, rent or mobile phone contracts, and no action was taken before release. This added to the number of problems prisoners had to face in the early days after release.

Some prisoners do not have their own bank accounts, and this can cause lengthy delays in claiming benefits. We expected that all the prisons we visited would be able to arrange bank accounts where needed. We saw some cases where this was recognised and assistance was given, but in others this need was recognised too late or overlooked completely.

The majority of prisoners would be making claims for benefits after their release from prison. Jobcentre Plus staff are available in prisons to start this process off, and to make sure that prisoners who will be unemployed on release are enabled to enter the 'Work Programme' immediately on release. Claims for Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit cannot be started while in custody, however. The consequence was that some of the most vulnerable prisoners knew they would face a delay before receiving benefits following release, and would be dependent upon family and friends, or charity, in the interim, as recognised recently by the House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee⁹.

Victims of domestic abuse

Five of the twelve women in our sample had been victims of domestic abuse from partners. In none of these cases had this been recognised in the screening and reflected in the resettlement plan. One woman was referred to an organisation in the community for support over her experience of domestic abuse. The contribution of Through the Gate services to addressing the needs of women who had been victims of abuse was minimal. The move of this work from the responsibility of the prison to CRCs meant there was a risk that the wider prison would no longer pay it sufficient attention.

9 House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee (2016) *Support for ex-offenders* London: House of Commons.

Services for sex workers

There was just one woman in our sample who was known to have been a sex worker, and her offending was linked to this. This had been recognised when she was screened on arrival in prison, though the resettlement plan did not set out any actions to address it. Good use was made of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) to manage her release, and nothing additional was needed from Through the Gate.

Summary – how many prisoners received sufficient help

Figure 3: How well were the overall needs of prisoners met? - CRC cases

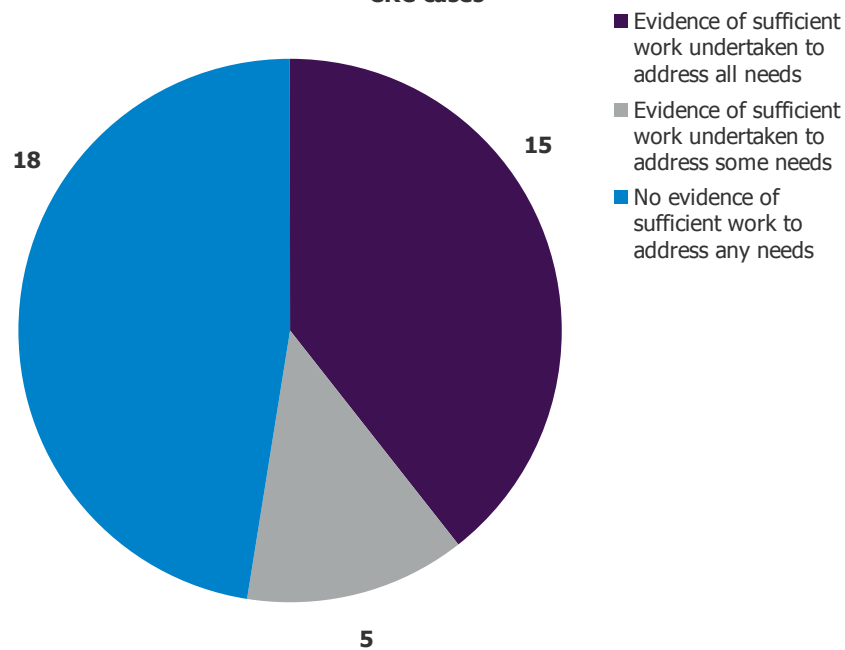
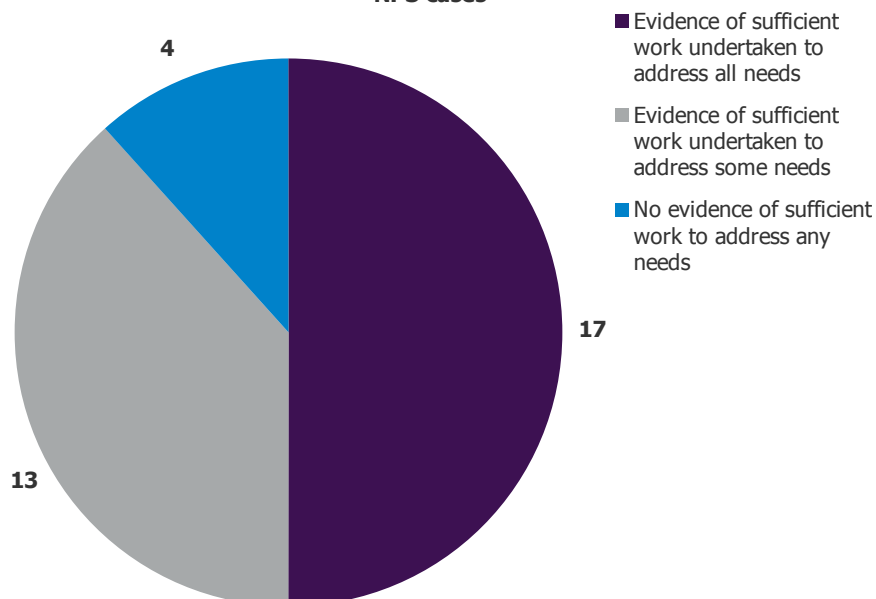


Figure 4: How well were the overall needs of prisoners met? - NPS cases



2.6. Conclusions and implications

The screening of needs when a prisoner first goes into custody is inadequate for the purpose of resettlement, and very few issues are dealt with at the start of sentence. The time delay until resettlement planning starts makes the earlier screening irrelevant in most cases.

We saw very little purposeful work before release to secure accommodation, or to address financial difficulties. Many prisoners had other issues which would need attention on release before it would be realistic for them to enter employment or training. For prisoners ready for work, the lack of training opportunities in prison hindered their prospects on release. Little new provision was offered by Through the Gate in terms of support for sex workers and victims of domestic abuse (male or female) – instead, there were existing services available in both of the women’s prisons.

Staff working for Through the Gate services in prisons appeared keen and committed. They were clearly busy writing large numbers of resettlement plans, to meet contractual targets. Many seemed unaware that the work they were doing was having little or no impact on the resettlement of prisoners. We found that for most prisoners, Through the Gate services added little value to other services available in the prison or community, and were failing to make useful connections at the point of release.

3. What were the outcomes for prisoners at the point of release?

We followed-up prisoners after release to see where they went to live. We looked at whether they went into work or training, or needed to start off a benefits claim. We found out whether prisoners had been introduced to a mentor to support them, and asked how 'seamless' the release arrangements were. We also checked whether any had been recalled or reoffended.

3.1. Where prisoners live on release

Knowing where they were going to live was the greatest concern of the prisoners we spoke to. Some prisoners had no address and needed to find one. Others had an address they wanted to go to but were not sure that would be allowed. Responsible officers in the community have to approve any address, to make sure that any risks of harm presented by the prisoners are manageable. We found too many decisions made at the last minute, and prisoners were rarely kept informed of work that was being done on their behalf in the community.

There were significant differences between cases managed by CRCs and those managed by the NPS on release. The most frequent destination for NPS cases was release to approved premises hostels, used to help manage risk of harm. Others went back to previous addresses with families, or made other arrangements with family and friends. For CRC cases the majority went to live with family and friends. Despite this, 10% across both groups were homeless at the point of release.

Figure 5: Where CRC prisoners live on release

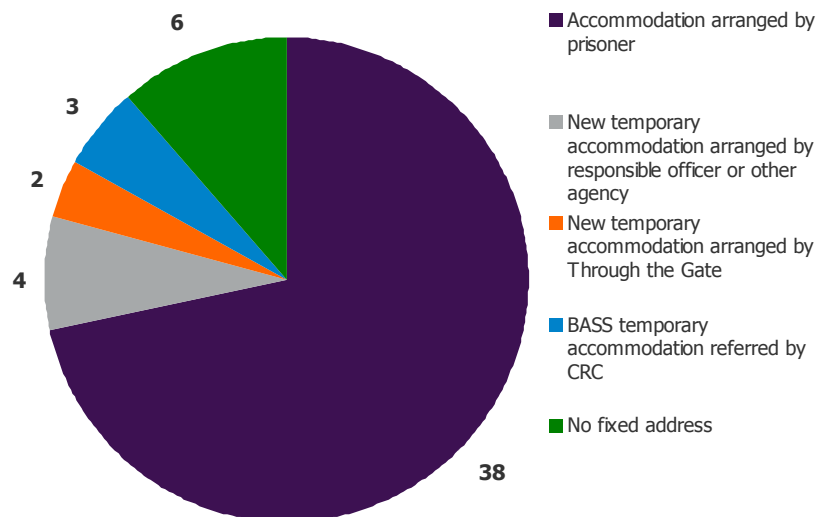
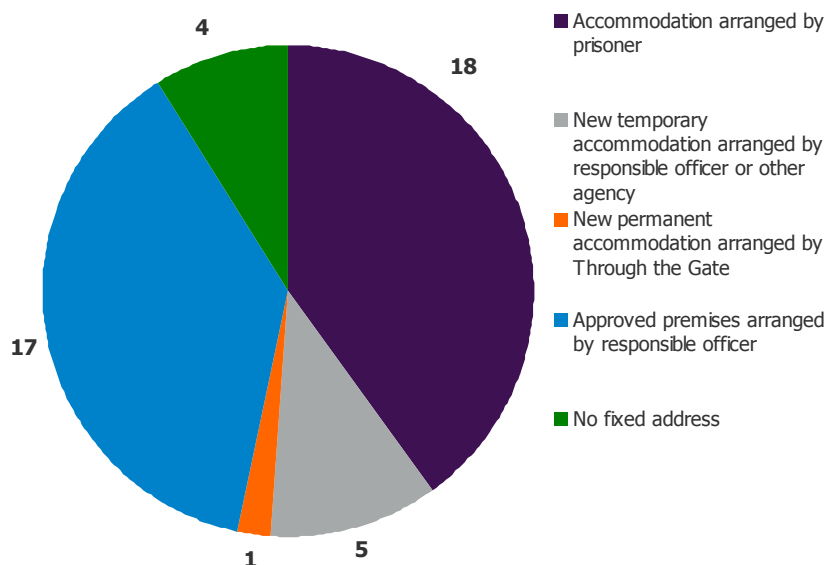


Figure 6: Where NPS prisoners live on release

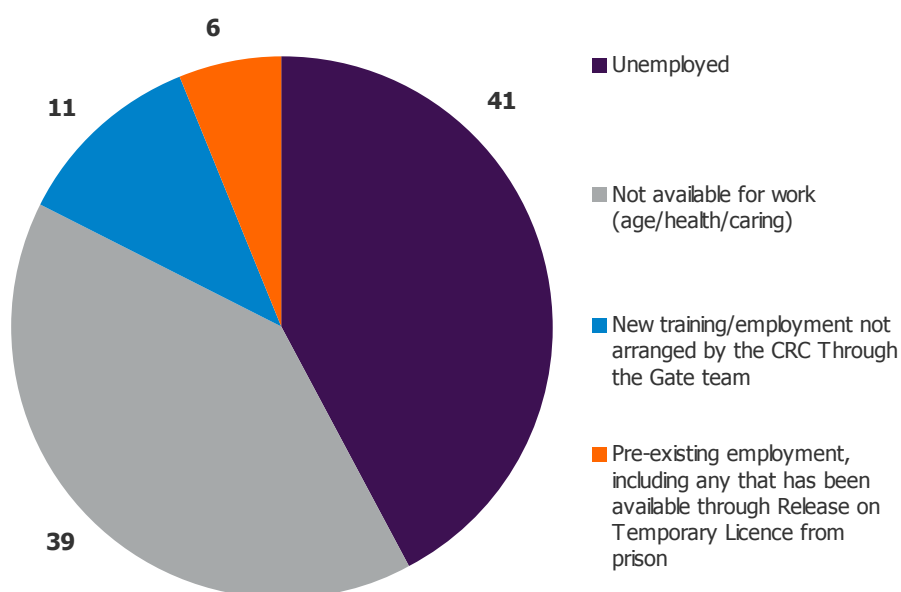


Where no accommodation had been found before release, the responsible officer is under significant pressure to find accommodation when the prisoner reports to them. This can take up a disproportionate amount of time, and there is no guarantee of success. In one case, the responsible officer made over 40 phone calls or emails to a range of agencies in the days before release, to try to identify accommodation. Through the Gate staff in the prison had offered no service as the prisoner had declined to be interviewed by them. Eventually a hostel was found. In the case described earlier, and others, Through the Gate workers in prison should have done more work before release to make the necessary applications.

3.2. The employment situation for released prisoners

As explained in section 2.5, none of the prisoners in our sample were assisted into employment by Through the Gate services.

Figure 7: Employment situation for released prisoners



Those who did obtain employment quickly had either started work while in an open prison, or had made their own arrangements following release. One prisoner reflected:

“I got construction work quite quickly. I was a bit sceptical about whether I could get work. Eight agencies turned me down because I had been in prison, but two were ok and one found me work straight away. It would have been useful to know that before or I could have been put off by the knockbacks.”

In other cases, practical issues after release made it difficult for individuals to maintain employment. One prisoner told us that he was only earning £100 a week, but the rent for his BASS accommodation was £194 a week. He was told that he has to pay this in full, and also knows if he gives up employment he will incur a benefits sanction. In another case a prisoner returned to previous work in the building trade but after three weeks of living in the cheapest bed and breakfast accommodation he could find, some distance from the site he was working, he lost the job for poor timekeeping.

3.3. Claiming benefits

For those prisoners without employment, establishing a claim for benefits was a major hurdle after their release. As one prisoner told an inspector:

“I will leave prison with £46 and a travel warrant. How am I expected to feed myself until I can get a job?”

We saw a number of cases where there seemed to be significant delays to benefit claims, and where no benefits had been received a month or more after release. There was overreliance on family or friends to provide financial support or loans, or else charities or food banks to tide them over. In one case, we found that a man was not allowed to move on from approved premises until he paid off his outstanding rent of over £100. He had to ask for help from relatives to do this, as his benefit payments had not come through six weeks after release.

3.4. Mentors

The use of mentors was much talked about prior to *Transforming Rehabilitation*, and many CRCs made mention of them in their bids for the contracts. As in our earlier inspection, we saw fewer mentors than we had hoped for; three cases in our sample had mentors provided by the CRC supply chain, and two had mentors from other organisations.

Good practice example: Joe was linked to a mentor with the New Leaf project, working under contract to Thames Valley CRC. The mentor had visited before release, knew he was going to be homeless, and in a compassionate action gave him a tent and sleeping bag on the day of release. The mentor supported him through the process of making a homelessness application, and attending meetings with him to help him make his case for access to accommodation.

In three cases where use of mentors had been considered, this seems to have happened post-release, and two of these had yet to meet their mentor at the point of our follow-up.

3.5. Is there a seamless transition into the community?

We thought it would be impractical in most cases for the same CRC staff members to be working with a prisoner before and after release. Instead, 'seamlessness' could best be achieved by full communication between all those working with the prisoner before release and all those working after release. We hoped to see the prisoner at the heart of communication. The HMPPS *Guide to 'Through the Gate' Resettlement Services* does not explain how integration between the work of the responsible officer, the prison offender management unit (OMU), and Through the Gate services should be achieved.

The role of the responsible officer

All prisoners are allocated a responsible officer in the community. At the start of the sentence a decision is made, based on risk of harm and other factors, about whether the case should be assigned to a CRC or the NPS. The level and nature of contact we would expect to see between the responsible officer, the prisoner and prison staff depends on the nature of the case. We would always expect to see the responsible officer getting involved with planning for release. They should be checking the suitability of the proposed release address, identifying any additional licence conditions, and starting to plan for work that needs to be undertaken during the licence period.

For cases allocated to the NPS in the community, we found that most responsible officers were clear about their roles before release, and in nearly three-quarters of cases had undertaken the tasks we would have expected. The same was true in nearly half of cases allocated to CRCs.

The role of the offender management unit

Prisoners serving sentences of 12 months or more come under specific sentence planning arrangements, so should have a nominated offender supervisor in the OMU to oversee their sentence. In some cases the offender supervisor will also complete assessments and sentence plans, while for other prisoners that role is undertaken by the NPS. As the release date approaches, a final review of the sentence plan should be completed. In our sample, 17 prisoners had no current assessments or sentence plans at all; while for some of the others, current prison policy meant that only a risk assessment had been completed. The OMU is also responsible for tasks such as processing HDC applications and agreeing licence conditions with responsible officers. There should be liaison between the offender supervisor and the responsible officer in the community about these tasks.

How good is communication inside the prison?

The main electronic information system inside prisons is NOMIS, and this is accessible to most prison based staff. We expected that Through the Gate staff would use NOMIS for their day-to-day recording of work undertaken with prisoners, so that everyone else in the prison would know what was happening, and the prisoner could

be kept informed, but found that this was not the case. Many Through the Gate staff (including those working for supply chain organisations) kept their own records which were not accessible to others. This meant that queries raised by prisoners or other prison staff could not be answered easily.

Staff in the community use nDelius as their case recording system, and few Through the Gate staff were able to access this to enter information directly. Resettlement screenings and plans are created on a third system, OASys, which is accessible both in prisons and the community, but not to all staff. As an example, in HMP Rochester, workers have to record in six different places after interviewing a prisoner for their resettlement plan: NOMIS, OASys, nDelius, the CRC 'front sheet', the Through the Gate tracker, and an email to the responsible officer in the community. While this showed a commitment to full information sharing, it is clearly burdensome. We found many gaps in recording of the work that was being done.

Through the Gate staff do not often have access to communication between the OMU and responsible officers. This could lead to confusion where an address might have been given for HDC purposes but that was not known to Through the Gate staff. Inconsistent use of shared information systems was a hindrance.

How good is communication between prison and community?

Most NPS responsible officers communicated when necessary with OMU and Through the Gate staff in prisons, but we saw fewer CRC responsible officers doing the same. Responsible officers in the community were not clear about the range of services that should be provided under Through the Gate arrangements, so did not make requests for services to be delivered, for example in setting up bank accounts. They also found it confusing that in different prisons the services were different, even if they were provided by the same CRC.

The respective roles of Through the Gate and OMU staff in release coordination for this group of prisoners are not clear. It would assist greatly if all relevant information from the prison was passed to the responsible officer. This should include information about work or training undertaken, behaviour in prison, and engagement with other agencies such as substance misuse services. We saw one case where a responsible officer was not aware of drug use in prison that had paralleled previous behaviour in the community. If that had been known before release, a referral to approved premises would have been considered to put monitoring in place. It also helps continuity for the responsible officer to receive information about appointments arranged in the community to follow drug treatment or start benefits claims. Reviews of sentence plans and resettlement plans did not always contain enough detail. Guidance issued before Through the Gate was introduced sets such communication as a task for the OMU¹⁰, though we did not often see OMU staff doing it, so responsible officers were not always receiving the information they needed to start off supervision after release. In some cases Through the Gate staff were making good efforts to share this information, but in many prisons it was not happening at all, and we thought that was a missed opportunity. The lack of clarity about whether it should be prison or Through the Gate staff sharing this information compounded this.

10 NOMS (2014) Targeting and delivering Offender Management in Custody, London: NOMS

One responsible officer described an example of good work from a prison OMU:

“His offender supervisor was a substance misuse specialist, and there was good liaison with the staff in HMP Parc. I was notified when he started a groupwork programme, and I took part in the end of programme review. A meeting in the prison a week before release updated me with everything I needed to know about what he had been doing in prison.”

For the prisoners who would have substantial outstanding issues on release, including those with substance misuse and mental health problems, there was little information available in prisons about treatment that had been delivered. We were sometimes told that arrangements were in place to hand cases on to services in the community, but it was rare to see effective communication about this with responsible officers. So a responsible officer might not know when follow-up appointments or Jobcentre Plus appointments had been made and could not support attendance at those appointments.

3.6. Reoffending and recall

As well as our initial follow-up a few weeks after release, we looked at the cases again at the point when most of them had been released for at least 12 weeks, to see whether any had been recalled, or charged with new offences. We found that 26% of the NPS cases had been recalled to prison. Two of these had also been charged with new offences. The others had breached licence conditions, including absconding from approved premises, or contacting victims. A lower proportion of CRC cases had been recalled (16%), but all except one of the recalled cases had also been charged with new offences.

3.7. Conclusions and implications

Most of the effective work to help secure accommodation was done by responsible officers in the community, or by prisoners calling on their relatives and friends for help. The impact of Through the Gate services on ETE was minimal, and added little to the range of existing services in prisons. Except for some prisons setting up bank accounts for offenders, work on finance, benefit and debt was not being delivered to any great extent. The use of mentors had not been developed as anticipated. Responsible officers were not receiving sufficient information at the point of release, from OMUs or Through the Gate services. For many prisoners, the amount of information shared with their responsible officers in the community was insufficient.

4. Keeping the public and victims safe

We examined whether sufficient attention is being paid to public protection, by Through the Gate staff and others working with the prisoner to prepare for release. Through the Gate services are provided by CRCs to all prisoners, irrespective of whether they are managed by a CRC in the community or the NPS. We expected staff delivering Through the Gate services to understand the risk of harm posed to others by the prisoners they were working with.

4.1. Public protection - expectations and findings

Prisons should make sure that risk assessments are in place for all prisoners and should flag any risk of harm on NOMIS so that everyone in the prison is aware of it. Cases where there are restraining orders or concerns about child safeguarding, and those who are to be released under MAPPA, should be identified and managed. Any issues about risk of harm should be fully communicated within the prison and to responsible officers in the community. We also expect responsible officers in the community to be aware of the potential to cause harm, and to take an active role to provide that information to prison staff and to set up release arrangements that minimised risk of harm to others.

Many Through the Gate staff told us they did not routinely look at previous risk assessments or other information about the prisoner, and that they did not have routine access to previous convictions. In several prisons they told us:

“We don’t do public protection, that is the job of the responsible officer.”

Lessons learned from failings in public protection often reflect the need for full information sharing and remind us that public protection is the responsibility of all agencies working with an individual. While we would agree that the primary responsibility for public protection does not lie with Through the Gate staff, we thought that they should at least be aware of the nature of a prisoner’s offending, and know who a prisoner might present a risk of harm to. This is so that, for example, if a prisoner told them they were going back to live with a partner, they would be alert to whether that had implications of risk of harm to the partner or any children. Through the Gate staff also need to make sure that information about risk of harm is passed on to other organisations prisoners have been referred to. We saw two cases where we were not assured this had happened as promptly as it should have.

In our case sample, 66 cases had public protection issues, such as a history of sexual offending, domestic abuse, child safeguarding issues, or violence. The NPS would be managing 39 of these cases in the community while 27 were managed by CRCs. The largest risk of harm factor was around domestic abuse, where 49% of the male prisoners and 36% of the female prisoners (four cases) had been identified as presenting a risk of harm to previous or current partners, or other family members. Three of these four women identified had also been recorded as victims of domestic abuse, illustrating how complex their lives and relationships were. None of the male perpetrators had also been identified as victims.

As in our previous inspection, we saw weaknesses in public protection in both NPS and CRC cases. In 17 of the NPS cases (40%), we thought that all reasonable steps had been taken by the prison, Through the Gate, and the responsible officer, to address public protection issues before release. The same was true for just 8 CRC cases (29%). Public protection work was slightly stronger in the NPS than in CRC cases, but this was still not good enough.

We cannot be certain why public protection in CRC cases was relatively poor. NPS cases are more likely to have qualified probation officers working as their offender

supervisor while in custody, and this may have provided a higher quality of work than for cases with prison staff as offender supervisors. It is also possible that NPS responsible officers had more time allocated to work with prisoners and were clearer about their roles before release. Although most of the shortcomings were not the direct responsibility of Through the Gate services, we thought the overall lack of attention to public protection was notable.

We found:

- thirteen cases where not enough attention had been paid to offending behaviour
- ten cases where the risk assessments which had been completed failed to note significant risks, including domestic abuse and risks to children
- ten cases, including one sex offender, where no risk assessment had been completed during the custodial sentence
- six cases where MAPPA arrangements were unclear
- five cases where not enough work had been done to protect partners and other family members from domestic abuse
- four cases where not enough work had been done to safeguard children.

Figure 8: Was public protection done well enough for CRC prisoners

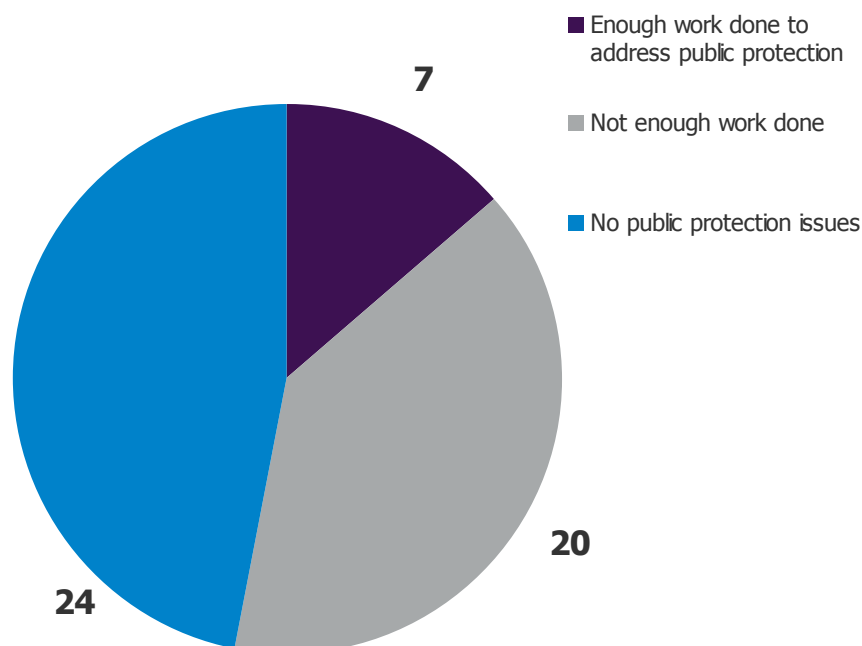
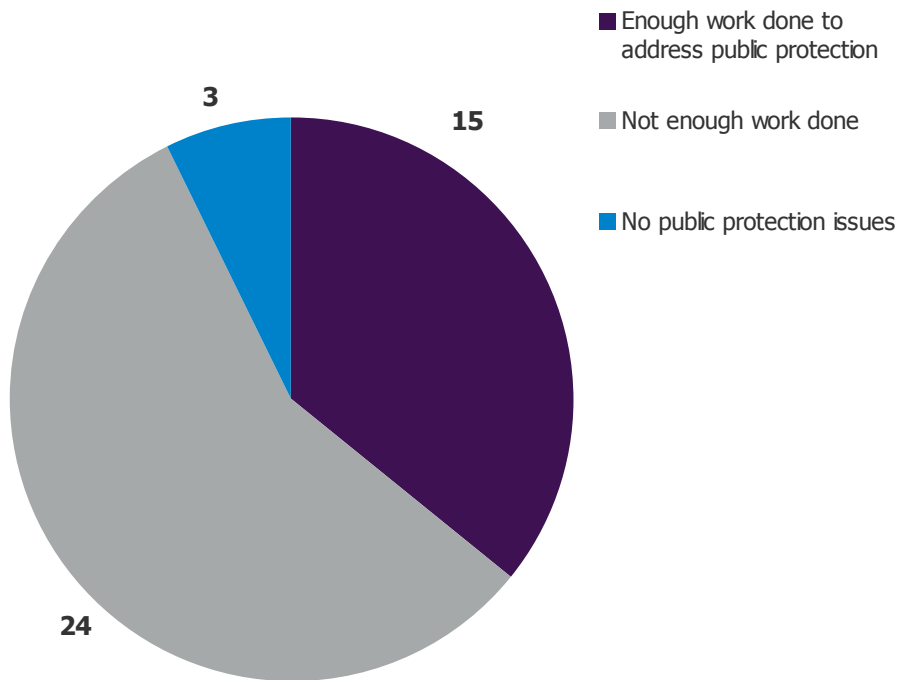


Figure 9: Was public protection done well enough for NPS prisoners



***Poor practice example:** Wayne received an 18 month sentence for offences where a child was a victim, and drugs and weapons involved. This appeared to be gang activity, though no-one in the prison had explored this or recognised the potential risk of harm to children. Two weeks before release there had been no involvement by the responsible officer, and no consideration of MAPPAs. He went to live with relatives after release. There were children living at that address, and it was only after release that the responsible officer made contact with children's services to check their safety.*

4.2. Conclusions and implications

Most of the Through the Gate staff we spoke to were ill-informed about public protection issues in the cases they were working with, and did not recognise this as a difficulty in their work. We observed shortcomings in the work of prison staff, and of responsible officers in the NPS and CRCs. Too many prisoners had inadequate assessment of their potential to cause harm, and too little was done to mitigate against these risks. There was not enough evidence of a 'whole system' approach to managing risk of harm. While this was not a direct consequence of Through the Gate, it was notable.

5. The strategic vision – design and evaluation of Through the Gate

We looked at the effect of national and local design, and geographical considerations on the delivery of Through the Gate services. We observed the extent of alignment of Through the Gate with other prison arrangements, and the impact of current pressures in the prison system.

We looked at Through the Gate arrangements in different CRCs, and asked how CRCs were evaluating the outcomes of their own work. We looked for examples of innovative practice, to consider the potential for them to be scaled up. We reviewed the impact of contract management on the activity of CRCs. We wanted to judge whether the strategic management of CRCs promoted and supported effective resettlement and desistance.

5.1. National design and geographical considerations

The identification of prisons to have a resettlement function was meant to make sure that prisoners received resettlement services from an organisation linked to their home area; save in three prisons (HMP Holme House, HMP Rochester and HMP Parc) there was no obvious advantage from the 'local' CRC delivering Through the Gate services.

Prisoners from HMP Holme House, HMP Rochester and HMP Parc were going to be released to the area covered by the CRC providing Through the Gate services. We saw evidence that in these prisons the resettlement staff had good local knowledge of probation staff and community services, and this gave a better service to prisoners. It was possible, however, that this was due to the staff having previously worked for the CRC in the community, rather than anything else.

Two men's prisons (HMYOI Glen Parva and HMP Hatfield) are described as 'national resources', taking young offenders and prisoners suitable for open conditions respectively. These prisoners came from a wide geographical area with few or any from the contract package area of the CRC working in those prisons. Women's prisons are also effectively national resources. Where the 'local' CRC was delivering additional services to their own cases, there was little or no take-up of these services from other CRCs or the NPS, which led to differential services for prisoners.

In some prisons more than one CRC was meant to be responsible for delivering services – this applied to HMP Bullingdon, HMYOI Glen Parva and HMP Bronzefield. In practice, in two of those prisons the second CRC had contracted with the 'main host' CRC to deliver Through the Gate services on their behalf. While this seemed a pragmatic solution, there was minimal oversight by the second CRC of the services that were actually being provided.

In HMP Bronzefield services were being delivered by Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS) CRC to women from their area, and by London CRC to all other women. KSS CRC had implemented their Through the Gate model from the start in May 2015 and were established and settled in the prison. London CRC had reconfigured their contracts and replaced the original provider with a team of CRC staff to prepare resettlement plans and a charity to work on accommodation issues. They had many problems establishing themselves, and within the prison were unhelpfully compared to the other CRC.

At the point our inspector arrived, staff from one CRC had to share a single telephone, one set of prison keys, and had limited IT access. This severely impacted their ability to interview prisoners and complete resettlement plans. While not all these problems were directly attributable to having two CRCs in the prison, it certainly exacerbated them. We thought senior managers in the prison and in the CRC should have taken action earlier to resolve this.

All open prisons are designated as resettlement prisons. For a prisoner to be placed in an open prison, they have to have shown good behaviour and be of a lower risk of harm. On arrival at an open prison, there is a period of further assessment and planning, before they start being allowed to travel out into the community for work and family visits. Before the resettlement plan is due, almost all of their needs will have been identified and addressed, to enable these releases on temporary licence to start. Through the Gate staff are still expected to complete resettlement plans, and we thought this was a waste of resources.

There are quirks in how the catchment areas for resettlement prisons align with the contract package areas for CRCs. HMP Rochester is a designated resettlement prison for Kent, **Essex** and Sussex and, while the CRC delivering services there is Kent, **Surrey** and Sussex. In HMP Eastwood Park, which is situated in Gloucestershire, Wales CRC were delivering Through the Gate services, via a supply chain organisation, Safer Wales. Very few of the prisoners there, and none in our sample, were actually from Wales; and the geographical spread of prisoners in Eastwood Park covered the whole of the south of England.

The impact of overcrowding in the prison system in London and south east England, and the uneven spread of prisons across England and Wales, meant that prisoners were often some way from home during their resettlement period. We were told that some prisons in the south east of England had been exempted from completing prisoner screenings due to staff shortages. They were producing blank screening documents, which provided no information for Through the Gate staff when they came to complete resettlement plans. CRC contracts cannot easily be varied to take into account regular changes in the nature of prison populations.

5.2. Integration with prison systems

The fragmentation inherent in the national design of Through the Gate is a hindrance to planning to address resettlement needs. No service is offered to prisoners between the initial screening and the last 12 weeks before release. We found no evidence of needs identified early being met following the screening. By the time release is approaching, most prisoners have been moved to different prisons, so the impact of this early failing falls on the prison preparing for release. The design of the screenings and IT restrictions mean they cannot be updated to reflect changes in circumstances as release approaches.

Instructions given to prisons and community probation staff do not set out how Through the Gate services should align with pre-existing OMU arrangements¹¹. Recent HMI Prisons inspections¹² of seven of the prisons we visited commented that sentence plans were not always completed, and our findings mirrored that.

In some prisons there were practical barriers to Through the Gate staff interviewing prisoners. In HMP Rochester, prisoners were given appointments for interviews in a distant part of a large site and many did not attend. This was wasteful of time but CRC managers had not been able to negotiate interview space on wings. In other prisons where restricted regimes were in place due to staff shortages, there were restrictions on the times when Through the Gate staff could visit prisoners on the wings.

In many prisons we saw a lack of integration and understanding between the work of the OMU and the work of the CRC. In HMP Holme House, we found a real lack of integration between the offender supervisors and the CRC staff. Neither knew what the other was doing.

In HMP Parc, however, we were pleased to see a thought out approach, whereby

11 NOMS (2015) *A Guide to 'Through the Gate' Resettlement Services*.

12 HMI Prisons (2015-2016) Inspections of HMYOI Glen Parva, HMP Parc, HMP Bullingdon, HMP Rochester, HMP Northumberland, HMP Bronzefield, HMP Hatfield For full references see Appendix 1.

sentence plans were reviewed four months before release, so that resettlement workers could see what work had been undertaken and what needed to be done at that point, prior to release. Cases put forward to the HDC board here were also referred for early commencement of Through the Gate, whereas in most other prisons they were excluded from Through the Gate services or were offered help in the last few days before their release.

5.3. Individual CRC service design

One of the anticipated advantages of *Transforming Rehabilitation* was to allow CRCs to design their own services in a way they thought would be most effective at reducing reoffending. The Through the Gate services we saw fell into two groups – those where experienced CRC employees delivered services in prisons, and those where supply chain organisations were commissioned to take on this task.

In HMP Rochester, the CRC had staff working part of the week in prison and part in the community. It was unlikely that the prisoners they were working with would be supervised by them after release, but we still thought they had a more holistic view of the whole sentence.

In HMP Holme House and HMP Parc, experienced staff already working for the CRC had been moved into the prisons to deliver resettlement services. We thought this brought advantages, including an understanding of the need to be persistent with cases where the prisoner was difficult to engage.

In the other prisons, all the Through the Gate work was done by staff working for one or more supply chain organisations in the prison. Where CRCs had decided to set up a supply chain to deliver their Through the Gate work, a range of external organisations were brought in. In the prisons we visited these included Milton Keynes College, Shelter, Nacro, St Giles Trust, Safer Wales, and St Mungos, all well respected in their own fields.

In most cases, workers for these organisations were focusing the majority of their time on producing resettlement plans. They told us they had little or no time to deliver in line with the ethos and values of their parent organisations. They were less likely than direct CRC staff to 'case manage' their work and often saw their work as something to be offered to prisoners on a voluntary basis.

The impact of having more than one organisation was hard to quantify. Where there were multiple organisations in the supply chain managers told us the intention was to bring in expertise such as specialist housing experience, but the outcomes for prisoners did not show any advantages. In Bronzefield there was a hybrid model, with direct CRC employees preparing resettlement plans and supply chain organisations doing specific work on accommodation, but the inexperience of the CRC staff undermined the benefits seen elsewhere.

5.4. Innovation

CRCs are free to design their own services, with an intention that innovation would maximise their impact on reoffending. We saw a few examples of innovation, and services being introduced by CRCs in prisons:

- In HMP Eastwood Park groups had been set up to support women with debt problems and who had been victims of domestic abuse, but these were for women to refer themselves and there was no targeting of prisoners where these were known issues.
- In HMYOI Glen Parva the CRC had wanted to introduce peer advisers but were finding that there were very few prisoners who spent long enough there to complete the necessary training, and there was competition for those prisoners from other established programmes such as The Listeners¹³.
- At HMP Holme House the CRC had set up a 'departure lounge' just outside the prison gates, where prisoners being released to the local CRC had their first appointment and could receive a range of practical support.

The majority of these innovative services were on a small scale and would only ever impact on a small number of the prisoners being released. Most were seen as additional to the core services, so would only be available automatically to cases from the local CRC. For NPS cases and those from other CRCs, services could notionally be accessed on the payment of a fee, set out on rate cards. We saw no cases where the rate card was used to purchase additional services, and staff in the community told us they were not allowed to make such purchases.

5.5. The impact of contract management

The main contractual target for CRCs when delivering Through the Gate services in prisons, is to complete resettlement plans. The staff we met were clearly working very hard to meet these targets, and were proud of their achievements. The focus on the numbers of plans, however, rather than their quality diverted attention from making sure that any needs raised by prisoners were actually met.

Most of the prisoners in our inspected cases had resettlement plans in place, belying the fact that not all had been interviewed. Where the prisoner refused to be interviewed, or where operational difficulties made it difficult to access the prisoner, we saw blank plans, or actions in plans which were marked as 'completed' when actually no work had been done. This was apparently so that the CRC minimised the chances of being in breach of the contract due to circumstances beyond their control. Prisoners with blank plans, however, would still be released, and no one was looking at their needs. We found that this was less likely to be the case in prisons where experienced CRC staff had been brought in from the community for Through the Gate work. They were more likely to recognise the need to take action before release whatever the circumstances.

13 A service run under the auspices of Samaritans where prisoners are trained to support others thought to be vulnerable to suicide or self-harm.

This case example illustrates best practice:

Good practice example: Barry has a significant disability, and lost his accommodation when he started his sentence. The Through the Gate worker for Wales CRC was persistent in making arrangements for him to be released at his earliest HDC date. She convened a multi-agency meeting in the prison to work out a plan. This resulted in him being released to a relative's address in a different area on a temporary basis. Social workers in two different areas and in the prison were involved in agreeing the release plan and also negotiation with the housing authority in the area he came from to make sure that he would be able to move to more suitable accommodation when that became available.

5.6. Evaluation of outcomes

CRCs' monitoring of outcomes of their work is fraught with difficulty, most especially in relation to accommodation or ETE provision.

There is no accurate baseline to measure accommodation or employment status when prisoners start their sentences. After release, responsible officers are expected to record on nDelius the accommodation and employment status of released prisoners, but we found this record often inaccurate or out of date.

Where the situation of the prisoner has improved, it is not easy to work out whether any change is attributable to the work of Through the Gate services or not. Additionally, data protection rules mean that CRCs can only access information about cases they are supervising themselves after release, so they are not able to track the impact of their Through the Gate services on cases managed by the NPS or other CRCs. nDelius does not record the prison from which someone is released, so there is no national solution to tracking outcomes at present. In Wales, we found that the CRC were tracking housing outcomes for prisoners released to Wales CRC, but they were not able to access information on NPS cases.

In some prisons, governors told us they thought there had been a deterioration in services since *Transforming Rehabilitation* was introduced. This was hard to quantify, but when they described good work that was available previously to assist with financial problems or accommodation, we could understand why they considered services had deteriorated.

5.7. Conclusions and implications

Flaws in the original design, and the difficulty of responding to the impact of ongoing pressures in the prison system, mean that the original aspirations of Through the Gate have not been realised. The few examples of innovation we found were limited and difficult to scale up, so are unlikely to have a noticeable impact on reducing reoffending overall.

Through the Gate services are poorly integrated into mainstream prison systems and no clear guidance has been given on how greater integration should be achieved. It is impossible for CRCs to track the outcomes for all of the prisoners they have worked with, so it is hard for them to evaluate the impact of their work. The use of voluntary organisations in the supply chain has not improved the overall quality of resettlement work.

Contract management is incentivising the production of resettlement plans rather than improving outcomes for prisoners at the point of release. It is hard to see any impact of the Payment by Results mechanism. The services we saw could not reasonably be expected to impact on levels of reoffending.

Appendices

Appendix 1: References

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Appendix 2: Glossary

BASS	Housing provided by Stonham Housing Association under a HMPPS contract to accommodate people on bail before sentence and also those suitable for early release from prison on home detention curfew
Contract package area	The geographical area within which each of the 21 CRCs manages low and medium risk of harm offenders subject to a community order, suspended sentence order or licence
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company: Twenty one such companies were set up in June 2014, to manage most offenders who present low or medium risk of serious harm
CRC staff	Includes staff directly employed by the CRC and also those working for organisations in the supply chain
ETE	Education, training and employment: work to improve an individual's learning, and to increase their employment prospects
HMI Prisons	HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service: From 01 April 2017 HMPPS became the single agency responsible for delivering prison and probation services across England and Wales. At the same time, the Ministry of Justice took on the responsibility of overall policy direction, setting standards, scrutinising prison performance and commissioning services which used to fall under the remit of the National Offender Management Service (the agency that has been replaced by HMPPS)
HMI Probation	HM Inspectorate of Probation
Host CRC	A CRC, which is not the lead host of Through the Gate services, that provides services to some but not all prisoners in a particular prison. They are likely to deliver services exclusively to prisoners who will be released within their contract package area
Lead Host	The CRC delivering the main Through the Gate services in a prison, to all prisoners except those who are the responsibility of another host CRC

Licence	This is a period of supervision immediately following release from custody, and is typically implemented after an offender has served half of their sentence. Any breaches to the conditions of the licence can lead to a recall to prison where the offender will remain in custody for the duration of their original sentence
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements: where probation, police, prison and other agencies work together locally to manage offenders who pose a higher risk of harm to others. Level 1 is ordinary agency management where the risks posed by the offender can be managed by the agency responsible for the supervision or case management of the offender. This compares with Levels 2 and 3, which require active multi-agency management
MoJ	Ministry of Justice: the government department with responsibility for the criminal justice system in the United Kingdom
nDelius	National Delius: the approved case management system used by the NPS and CRCs in England and Wales
NOMIS	National Offender Management Information System: a case management system used in prisons to record information about prisoners
NOMS	National Offender Management Service: the single agency responsible for both prisons and probation services in England and Wales until 31 March 2017. Since 01 April 2017 this service has been superseded by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
NPS	National Probation Service: a single national service which came into being in June 2014. Its role is to deliver services to courts and to manage specific groups of offenders, including those presenting a high or very high risk of serious harm and those subject to MAPPA in England and Wales
OASys	Offender assessment system currently used in England and Wales by the NPS and CRCs to measure the risks and needs of offenders under supervision
Post-sentence supervision	A period of supervision following the end of a licence, any breaches are enforced by the magistrates court. Introduced as part of the <i>Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014</i>

Probation officer	This is the term for a 'qualified' responsible officer who has undertaken a higher education-based course for two years. The name of the qualification and content of the training varies depending on when it was undertaken. They manage more complex cases
PSO	Probation services officer: this is the term for a responsible officer who was originally recruited with no qualification. They may access locally determined training to 'qualify' as a probation services officer or to build on this to qualify as a probation officer. They may manage all but the most complex cases depending on their level of training and experience. Some PSOs work within the court setting, where their duties include the writing of pre-sentence reports
<i>Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014</i>	Implemented in February 2015, applying to offences committed on or after that date, the <i>Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014</i> (ORA) is the Act of Parliament that accompanies the <i>Transforming Rehabilitation</i> programme
Rate card	A directory of services offered by the CRC for use by the NPS with their service users, which also details the price
Risk of harm to others	This is the term generally used by HMI Probation to describe work to protect the public, primarily using restrictive interventions, to keep to a minimum the individual's opportunity to behave in a way that is a risk of harm to others
Responsible officer	The term used for the officer (previously entitled 'offender manager') who holds lead responsibility for managing a case
<i>Transforming Rehabilitation</i>	The government's programme for how offenders are managed in England and Wales from June 2014

Appendix 3: Methodology

Part one: Prison fieldwork

The fieldwork included visits to nine prisons in October and November 2016, covering a mix of male and female establishments, and including one open prison and one young offender institution. Eight different CRCs were involved in delivering services in these prisons, representing six of the eight CRC owners nationally.

Prison	Lead Host CRC delivering Through the Gate services	Other host CRC in the prison	CRC Owner
Holme House	Durham Tees Valley	none	ARCC
Hatfield	South Yorkshire	none	Sodexo
Rochester	KSS	none	Seetec
Bullingdon	Thames Valley	Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Through the Gate sub-contracted to Thames Valley	MCT Novo
Parc	Wales	none	Working Links/Aurelius
Glen Parva	Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Rutland (DNLR)	Warwickshire and West Mercia (WWM), Through the Gate sub-contracted to DNLR	DNLR owned by Reducing Reoffending Partnership WWM owned by EOS
Northumberland	Northumbria	none	Sodexo
Bronzefield	London	KSS	London owned by MCT Novo KSS owned by Seetec
Eastwood Park	Wales	Dorset, Devon & Cornwall and Bristol Gloucestershire Swindon & Wiltshire Wales provide Through the Gate services for both	All three CRCs owned by Working Links/Aurelius

Fieldwork for the inspection took place between October and December 2016 and comprised:

1. interviews with CRC and prison senior managers
2. meetings with Through the Gate managers, including those in supply chain organisations
3. meetings with operational Through the Gate staff and OMU staff
4. interviews with 56 prisoners, where this was possible within the constraints of time and the prison regime, and where the prisoners agreed to meet an inspector
5. reviews of 109 cases, looking at the work of Through the Gate workers as well as other prison records
6. interviews with 74 responsible officers.

Part two: Post-release follow-up

Of the 109 cases we looked at in prison, 98 had been released by the time of our follow-up. Those not released were due to refusal of HDC, detention on new matters or immigration detention. We did not follow-up those cases that had not been released, as we would not have been able to judge the impact of Through the Gate.

The follow-up consisted of reading nDelius and OASys records approximately one month after the prisoners had been released, and speaking to the responsible officer by telephone. Where we had met the prisoner and they had consented, we tried to make contact with them by telephone.

A further brief follow-up by remote access to nDelius and OASys was conducted during February 2017, to see whether they had been recalled or charged with further offences.

Case profile

- 12 (12%) were female.
- 84 (86%) were white.
- 38 (39%) were of no religion; 35 (36%) were Christian; and 7 (7%) were Muslim.
- 45 were heterosexual; in 18 cases sexual orientation was not clearly recorded on the case file; and 1 preferred not to say.
- 53 (54%) were being managed by a CRC and 45 (46%) were being managed by the NPS.
- 29% of the prisoners had committed a violent offence, 7% had committed a sexual offence, 22% burglary, and 20% drug offences.
- In relation to risk of serious harm to others 22 had been classified as high risk; 45 medium; and 24 low risk.
- 37 cases were MAPPA eligible; 5 cases were managed at level 2, 14 at level 1, and in 12 the MAPPA level was not clear before release.

- 56 prisoners were interviewed before release, 41 agreed we could speak to them after release, but we were actually only able to speak to 15 after release. In some cases they did not have a phone, or numbers were unavailable or unanswered.

This was not a statistically representative sample; our case inspection is intended to generate illustrative findings.

NB: Throughout this report all names referred to in practice examples have been amended to protect the individual's identity.



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