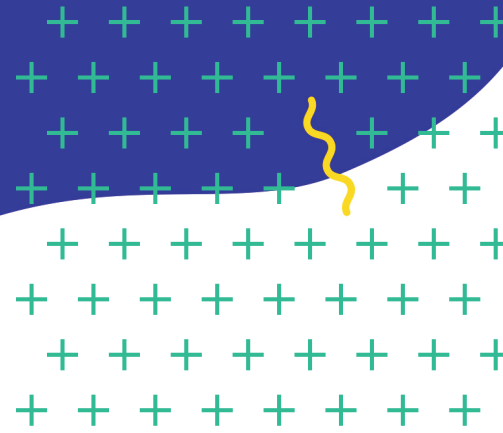
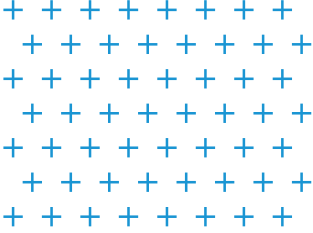


Moving 'home' after prison when you are a 'care leaver'





The Background

Children who grow up in care typically move home many times. The UK's Children's Commissioner Stability Index showed that in a recent two-year period a quarter of children in care moved to at least three different homes.

When people from Jersey describe how this experience leaves them feeling, they talk about loneliness, a lack of worth and a deep feeling that they do not matter.

Jersey children have often left care to move into homeless hostels.

The Promise

'Care Leavers' are supported under a banner of 'love that never leaves' by the Government of Jersey. Specific policy promises to realise this include safe, stable, loving homes, and the guarantee of a one bedroom or studio flat for those who wish to live on their own.

The Problem

A young person who grew up in care in Jersey is leaving HMP La Moye. They are told they cannot apply for housing until they leave. This means that when they leave prison, they may be forced to move into a homeless shelter.

The Personal Advisor tried to make an application to affordable Housing through Andium Homes. They were told that an application couldn't be submitted until after the release date.

They are applying for early release and this is contingent upon having an address. Their options were to say they do not have one and forfeit early release or, as others have done, try to find space in a homeless shelter.

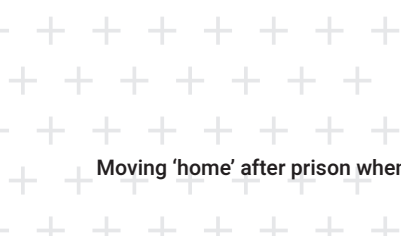
Research

Young people who are leaving prison and have been in care are much less likely to have a stable home to go to on their release. Leaving prison and moving to insecure accommodation such as homeless shelters has a range of detrimental consequences on the individual and on society.

A study undertaken by Prison Reform Trust shows that 25% of prisoners reported that they had been in care at one point. Reports from Scottish Prisons Trust recorded 31% of adult prisoners as having been in care. Yet less than 1% of the population ever enter the care system. When compared to the wider offender population, the needs of care leavers emerge as more pronounced, particularly in relation to accommodation.

There are several relevant factors that reduce re-offending. Most obviously, these include having a job, a home, and a stable family. Procedures that identify those at risk, provide advice at the point of sentence, and follow through with effective and sustained support to release can help to minimise the risk of re-offending (Report by Social Exclusion Unit).

An ex-prisoner's path back to prison not only has severe human costs to the individual but also economic costs to society. A reoffending ex-prisoner is likely to cost the criminal justice system an average of £65,000 and prolific re-offenders will cost even more (Report by Social Exclusion Unit).





How can prison and probation services help improve outcomes for care leavers?

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (2019) have made a series of recommendations.

A KEY RECOMMENDATION

Identify care leavers and ensure responsible Local Authorities engage in planning processes.

ADVOCACY STEP BY STEP

Advocacy issue. A young person with experience of care is applying for early release. To be successful, they need to demonstrate they have a home on their release from prison.

The advocacy step by step below shows where the opportunities and the gaps are in our local planning processes, and the impact on these on the lives of people who, the Care Inquiry found, have already been 'singularly failed'.

STEP 1

Young person's Personal Advisor supports by making an application to affordable housing with Andium Homes.

Information: A housing application cannot be submitted until after the day of release

Impact: Young person feels let down and is faced with the prospect of attending meetings with Probation and not being able to provide an address for early release. This could have a damaging impact on decisions made about whether this individual is considered for early release. Without an address, early release is not possible.

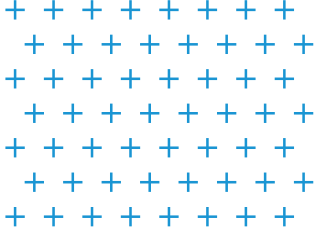
STEP 2

Contact Andium Homes to enquire about the process of applying for housing whilst residing at HMP La Moye.

Information: Andium are not able to place someone on the waiting list who is applying for early condition release from HMP La Moye. They can only apply for housing once they have been released.

Further Information: Andium have on occasion been able to place prisoners on the waiting list if there is a mechanism in place for the person to accept the property if accommodation becomes available. The following documents are essential to this; photo ID & registration card and confirmation that rent will be paid if accommodation is secured whilst still detained. There is also 'market place' – a procedure which allows individuals in La Moye to begin applying to Andium. This has not been taking place during Covid-19 and can only happen once a release date is approved. However, in order to secure such an early release, some form of accommodation needs to be already in place.

Impact: Feeling uncertain about whether or not it will be possible to be placed on the waiting list. However reason to feel optimistic if it has been possible on occasion.



STEP 3

Personal Advisor and young person can start collating documents for the application.

Information: Andium will also require confirmation from CLS (Community and Local Services) that rent payments will be made.

Impact: This is not guaranteed and introduces a new department to communicate with.

STEP 4

Meeting with CLS to ask whether rent will be paid if accommodation is secured through Andium.

Information: CLS employee informs Personal Advisor and advocate that individuals cannot start a claim for rent to be paid until after they have been released. This is to avoid rent payments being made for someone who is still residing in the prison.

Further Information: This scenario is escalated to see if anything else can be done to support this young person in their application to Andium.

Response after the escalation: It is built in law that an income support claim cannot commence until a release date is agreed the individual can accept available property.

Impact: Personal Advisor feels unable to challenge this system. The young person has meetings upcoming and is still unable to provide an address which will be detrimental to the outcome of the meeting.

STEP 5

Contact both Andium and CLS for further information around this process.

Information: CLS policy is the law and therefore a Ministerial issue. Andium are unable to continue with application for the affordable housing waiting list if rent payments cannot be guaranteed by CLS.

Impact: After deciphering a range of information both Personal Advisor and advocate must feedback information to individual which will be disadvantageous to their hopes of early release.

Young person expresses how let down they feel and believe that both the departments could have done more to make it possible for them to look for a suitable place to live after prison.

STEP 6

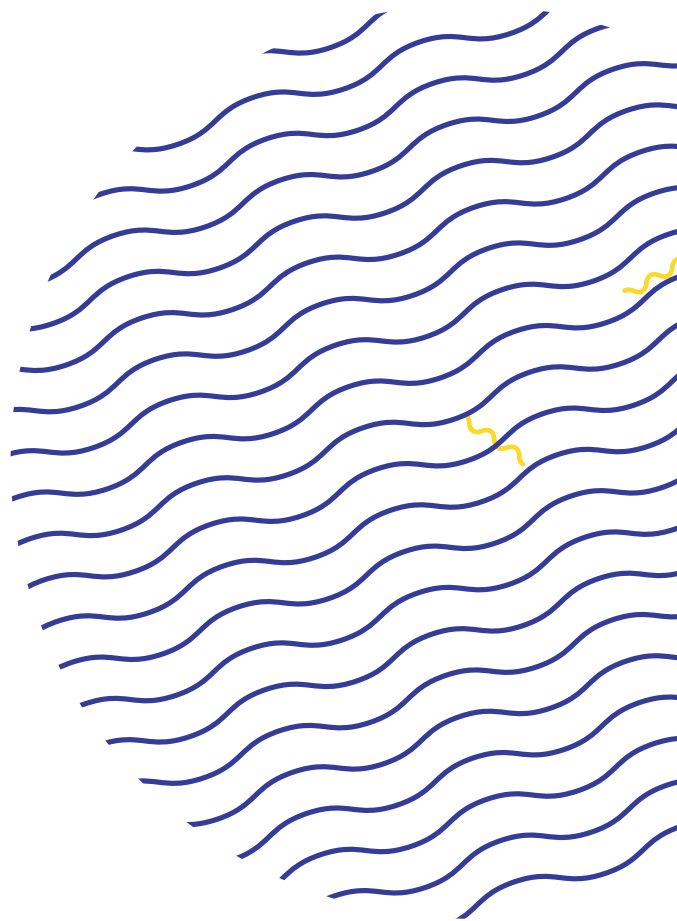
Contact Director of CYPES asking to intervene.

Information: This individual is now being supported by the Leaving Care Team and has been pledged a temporary flat to move into on release.

Impact: Positive impact on this individual who feels reassured knowing that they can provide an address, this contributes positively to their early release Panel and makes the young person feel more confident in the outcome.

Further Information: It is a temporary solution.

Impact: This does not resolve this dilemma for individuals who may find themselves in the same position in the future.





Views of the young person

The young person has stated that they felt let down when they found that they were not able to join the waiting list for Andium Homes.

They said that they have become used to expecting the worst and hoping for the best.

They thought that both Andium Homes and CLS could have done more to support them with finding a suitable place to live for after their release from prison.

* Young person gave consent for their views to be shared and before each person was contacted.

References

- **Children's Commissioner: Stability Index for Children in Care April 2017**
<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/28993/2/Children's%20Commissioner's%20Stability%20Index%20Phase%20One%20Technical%20Report%201.3.pdf>
- **Care Leavers' Offer**
<https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Caring%20and%20support/ID%20Guide%20for%20Young%20People%20Leaving%20Care%20JW.pdf>
- **Prison Service Journal**
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- **Gov.uk Guidance on Care Leavers in prison and probation**
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