

Evaluation of the Cork Prison In-Reach Pilot Project

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Executive Summary

Introduction and background

It is widely accepted that prisoners and ex-prisoners are at greater risk of homelessness than others in society, and can have additional complex needs that include mental and physical illness, drug and alcohol misuse and difficulties with inter-personal relationships, which can lead to a loss of social support and behavioural problems. As a result of these difficulties, ex-prisoners can struggle to secure private rented accommodation and local authority housing, resulting in short-term stays in emergency accommodation, 'shelters', or living rough. This in turn can promote a cycle of homelessness, reoffending, and imprisonment.

The services required to address the complex needs of this group are provided by a range of statutory and voluntary agencies that exist within a fragmented system. Identifying, contacting and accessing these multiple services poses a major challenge for ex-prisoners, who often lack the knowledge and skills to navigate this system, may be distrustful of the authorities, or can struggle to take control of their own lives having become 'institutionalised'.

Focus Ireland, a homeless and housing charity working with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Ireland, has witnessed the difficulties ex-prisoners experience upon release from prison and recognised the need for a collaborate approach to respond to these difficulties. This led to the establishment of a Prison In-Reach Project in Cloverhill Prison, Dublin, which was proposed by Focus Ireland and subsequently offered in partnership with the Irish Prison Service (IPS), the Probation Service (then Probation and Welfare Service) and the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU).

In 2008, the Prison In-Reach services were set up in Cork and Limerick Prison with funding secured by the IPS from the Dormant Accounts Funds and Pobal. This report provides an evaluation of the Cork Prison In-Reach Project. The evaluation covers the pilot period of the service, from July 2009 to July 2011.

The Cork Prison In-Reach Pilot Project

The Cork Prison In-Reach Project is delivered in partnership with Focus Ireland, the IPS, Probation Service, Post-Release Service and the HPU. It works with prisoners at risk of homelessness to ensure that there are accommodation options available to them upon their release. The In-Reach project worker engages with those at risk of homelessness pre-release, assesses their needs, develops a case plan, and implements the case plan post-release. The project aims to:

Provide a seamless transition from prison to the community, for offenders who have been previously homeless or may be at risk of homelessness on release from custody. The Service is set up to prevent the cycle of homelessness on release from prison and to ensure an easy transition from prison to emergency, transitional or more long term accommodation options in the community and to provide follow up supports using a case management model.

The project works in partnership with the Post-Release Service based in Cork Prison, which works with prisoners to prepare them for re-entry into the community. This service is staffed by a Post-Release Coordinator, funded by the Vocational and Educational Committee and Local Drugs Task Force.

The Cork Prison In-Reach Project has 8 stated aims, each of which is considered in detail in this evaluation:

- The service aims to work with offenders who have been previously homeless or are at risk of homelessness on release to ensure there are appropriate accommodation options in place.
- The service will work to liaise with accommodation providers in the community to ensure options exist on release.
- The service will ensure that the offender has been met in custody and that an assessment, service contract and case plan are in place prior to release.
- The service will aim to work with 7 service-users at any one time for a period of 6 months.
- The service will liaise with the Post-Release Service in relation to referrals made.
- The service will ensure that all relevant referral and service-user statistics are recorded.
- The service will work to a case management model.
- The service will have a representative on the Stakeholders Group and will report any blocks and gaps experienced by them or the wider group to management.

The Evaluation

A key objective of this evaluation is to assess the performance of the project against these eight stated goals. Some of the goals are quantifiable 'outputs' (e.g. to work with 7 service-users in 6 months), and others are not (e.g. to work to a case management model). This evaluation also considers the factors that facilitated or hindered the attainment of these goals (a 'process evaluation') and other benefits of the service for service-users ('outcomes').¹

¹ The term 'outcome' as used here refers to the benefits experienced by the service-users through participation in the project. These benefits were reported by the service-users during interviews, rather than measured through a formal intervention design (i.e. a randomised controlled trial (RCT)). Thus this evaluation does not provide a formal 'outcome evaluation'. See McHugh, P., Sarma, K. M., & Byrne, M. (2012, in press). Evaluating clinical services within the health system: An introduction. *The Irish Psychologist*.

The evaluation has 11 key objectives. These are to:

- Provide a profile and history of the In-Reach service, the rationale for establishment of the pilot project and its context within Focus Ireland.
- Provide a detailed review of the roles and functions pre- and post-release of each partner organisation involved in the service.
- Identify the views of service-users, staff, partner organisations and key stakeholders on the effectiveness of the project's pre- and post-release work.
- Assess the compatibility of the project with national strategic objectives (e.g. *Pathway to Home*), policies and practices in re-settling and integrating homeless offenders into the community.
- Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the project in meeting its original objectives.
- Discuss the role of the Stakeholders and Steering Groups in facilitating a co-ordinated multidisciplinary approach to the partnership project.
- Analyse the outputs and outcomes of the project against agreed targets, and outcome and performance indicators. Measure the extent to which the project currently delivers pathways to independent living based on service-user satisfaction and evidenced-based findings.
- Identify potential barriers/blockages (structural, service delivery, policy, resources) that may have inhibited service-users successfully accessing appropriate services and accommodation.
- Analyse added-value/need for projects in prison and homeless sectors. Identify the cost effectiveness/financial benefit of the service, comparing project costs with costs of homelessness, emergency accommodation, offending and custody.
- Highlight good practice (standards) and lessons learned from the pilot project.
- Make recommendations based on the evaluation's evidence and conclusions and identify future demand/need for the project.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation adopted the following methodological approach:

1. The evaluator reviewed the existing literature dealing with the needs of ex-prisoners, and in particular their risk of homelessness. A review of national policy in Ireland relevant to Prison In-Reach was also completed.
2. Interviews were conducted with project partners and other key stakeholders who were familiar with the project. Interviewees included representatives from the Irish Prison Service (IPS), the Post-Release Service, the Probation Service, the Homeless Persons Unit, other services working in Cork Prison and homeless agencies.
3. The evaluator interviewed two service-users. These individuals were approached by the project staff to see if they would be interested in participating in an interview for the evaluation. The interviews were

conducted in the offices of Focus Ireland in Cork. Informed consent was obtained prior to commencing each interview and interviewees received a voucher for giving their time. The interviews were subsequently used to create the case studies presented in this evaluation report.

4. The In-Reach Project maintains a local database that contains information on each service-user. This source of information was anonymised and made available to the evaluator, and was used to report on the activities of the project over the period July 2009 to July 2011.

Profile of Service-users

Between July 2009 and July 2011, the Cork In-Reach Project worked with 30 service-users. Referrals from prison came from the Post-Release Coordinator and Industrial Manager. Two prisoners were referred to the service from Limerick Prison. The average length of sentence that was served by the service-users was 20 months.

The average age of the 30 service-users on the date of their referral to the project was 28 years of age. The oldest service user was 48 and the youngest was 20. Forty-four percent were between the ages of 18 and 25, 49% were between 26 and 40, and 7% were over the age of 41.

The most prevalent types of offences committed in the past by service-users were robbery and theft (52%). Forty-one percent reported having histories of public order convictions or convictions for threatening behaviour. Seven of the service-users had been convicted of criminal damage. The project worker also worked with a small number of prisoners imprisoned in the past for assault (6) and manslaughter (1).

In terms of risk factors for homelessness, 87% of service-users were alcohol or drug dependent, 50% reported relationship difficulties, and 27% had a history of some form of mental health problem. This is based on self-reported mental health difficulties, and as these often go undiagnosed in prison population and among marginalised communities, this is likely to under-represent the full extent of mental illness among this cohort of service-users.

A core outcome of an intervention for prisoners and ex-prisoners is a reduction in levels of recidivism rates among those accessing the intervention, compared with a similar cohort who did not receive the intervention. While this form of outcome evaluation (which would require a randomised control group) was not possible within the scope of this evaluation, the IPS did examine levels of 'return to prison' among the service-users. 20 of the service-users returned to prison at some stage after accessing the In-Reach service, 6 of whom are currently in custody. A further 8 are no longer in custody, 2 are on Temporary Release, and 2 are Unlawfully At Large (UAL). 7 of the service-users have not returned to prison since accessing the In-Reach service.

Evaluation Findings

1. There is clear evidence that the project worked with offenders pre-release to identify their needs and to ensure that appropriate accommodation is in place for their release.

Table A: Accommodation on first night upon release from prison (n=24), and last known housing situation (n=27)

	1st Night n=24		Last Known n=27
Emergency accommodation	9	Emergency accommodation	1
Transitional accommodation	5	Transitional accommodation	2
Treatment centre	1	Treatment centre	0
Street/rough sleeping	1	Street/rough sleeping	0
Friend/partner	2	Friend/partner	1
Private Rented Accommodation	2	Private Rented Accommodation	9
Living at home	4	Living at home	3
		Returned to Prison	4
		Still in Prison*	3
		Other**	4

* 'Still in Prison' refers to service-users who were engaged in the pre-release service (i.e. had yet to be released) when the data was made available to the evaluator, and based on records held by the service.

**Deceased (1), Emigrated (1), Unknown (2)

Based on the 24 service-users for whom information was available, all had some form of accommodation on their first night out of prison except for one individual (see Table A). The exception was one service-user who had been the subject of an unplanned release (of which the project worker was unaware) and who 'slept rough'. As a result of the interventions, 9 had secured private rented accommodation with support and a further 3 were living at home as of February 2012. Four had returned to prison, and 3 were residing either in emergency accommodation (1) or transitional accommodation (2).

2. The project ensured that the prisoner was met in custody and, where possible, that an assessment, service contract and case plan were in place prior to release.

Of the 30 service-users who engaged with the service fully, 26 were met in prison pre-release, with each prisoner being met on average 4 times in prison. Two service-users were community referrals and two were referred from the In-Reach Project in Limerick and had been met pre-release by that service.

Assessments were completed with 25 service-users, either by the In-Reach project worker (9), Post-Release Coordinator (14), or the In-Reach Project in Limerick (2). Where the service-user has accessed homeless services in the past, the Post-Release Coordinator conducts the assessment and updates a local database available to homeless services in Cork. If the individual has not

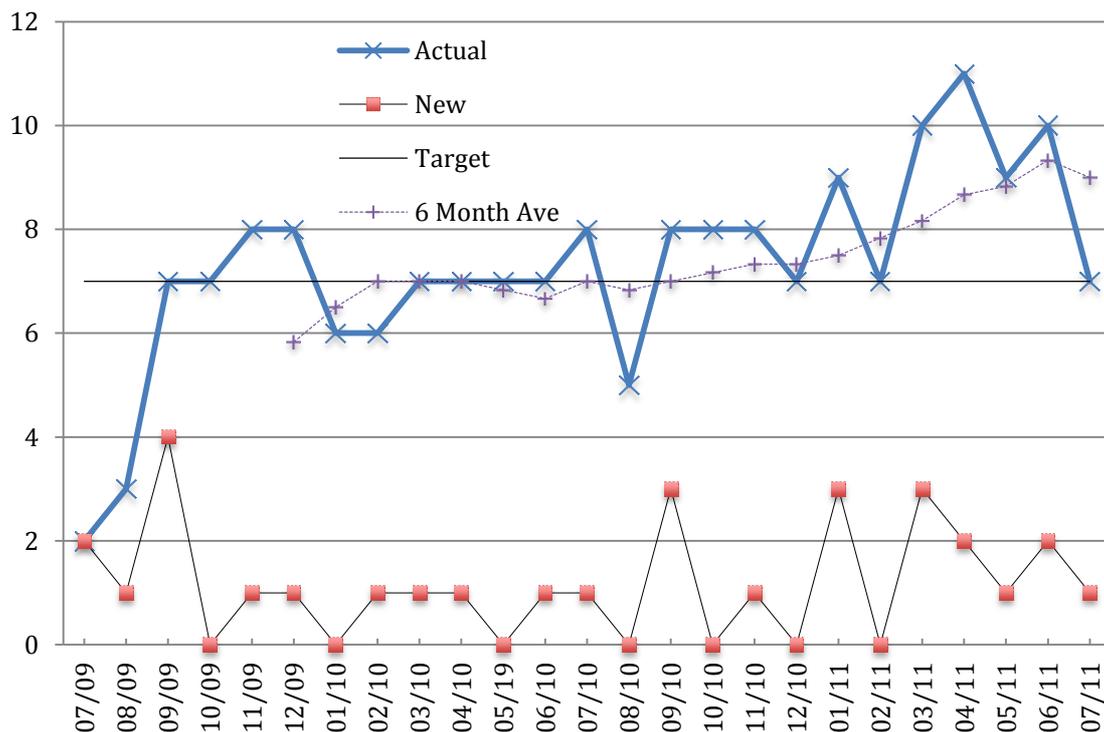
accessed these services in the past, the project worker completes the assessment. Three referrals disengaged from the service before their assessment could be completed and two were transferred to another prison.

Service contracts and case plans were in place for all service-users. Where prisoners were released before the case plan could be finalised, this occurred as soon as practically possible post-release.

3. The service met its target caseload of 7 service-users in any 6-month period.

Figure A (below) plots the numbers of service-users entering the service each month ('New'), the total number of service-users worked with each month ('Actual'), a six-month rolling average ('6 Month Ave') and the target case-load of 7 service-users ('Target'). As illustrated in the line-plots, the project was working with 7 service-users by the third month of the pilot. For the remaining period of the pilot there were just three months when her caseload fell below 7 service-users.

Figure A: Caseload of project worker from July 2009 to July 2011



4. The service liaised with accommodation providers in the community to ensure options exist on release.

The project worker and Post-Release Coordinator worked together to secure accommodation options for service-users, and this has taken the form of liaison work with the HPU and accommodation providers. During the 2-year pilot period, the service worked with St. Vincent's Hostel, Cork Simon Community, Cork Foyer, Sophia Housing, Bruree, and St. Helen's.

5. *The service worked to a case management model*

Case management involves a key worker working with a client to help address his needs; meeting frequently over a prolonged period of time; linking with other service providers; and who is available to the client.²

The In-Reach Project works to a case management model. The project worker is the key worker for service-users, assessing their needs and designing and implementing case management plans. Where the ex-prisoner has multiple needs, the project worker liaises with other services (e.g. addiction services, education providers) to put in place the supports that are required. The project worker works with service-users for as long as is necessary to meet their needs. Those with more complex needs receive a more intensive response, with more frequent meetings over a longer period of time, than those with less complex needs. Finally, the service is 'available' to service-users. The service-users interviewed reported that the project worker could be easily reached, either in person or on the telephone, and that they could 'drop in' at short notice if they felt they needed support.

6. *Because other opportunities for the stakeholders to meet already existed in the Cork, the Stakeholders Group was not convened in the way envisaged. . The Steering Group has met as necessary to discuss the progress of the project.*

The *Project Protocol* envisaged a two-tiered monitoring and reporting structure. On the first tier, the project would report to a Stakeholders Group comprised of representatives from the various project partner organisations. Members of this group would in turn report to a Steering Group comprising representatives from Focus Ireland and the IPS.

As there are already a number of fora where the homeless sector was meeting in Cork, it was agreed by the local stakeholders and partner representatives that the establishment of a Stakeholders Group was not required in the way initially envisaged, and that operational issues and information sharing could take place at one of the existing fora.

The Steering Group was established and has met as necessary to discuss the progress of the project. Regular progress reports were provided to the group by the service manager. Bilateral contact at a national and regional level has

² These process-based descriptors are based on Morse, G. (1999). A review of case management for people who are homeless: Implications for practice, policy and research. Chapter in Fosburg L. B. & Dennis D. (Eds). *Practical lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homelessness Research*, US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

continued between Focus Ireland and the IPS on matters arising of a strategic nature.

7. The Prison In-Reach Project and Post-Release Service have worked collaboratively over the 2-year period.

The project worker liaises with the Post-Release Coordinator through weekly meetings in the prison, and through more frequent telephone conversations to discuss new referrals or service-users currently engaged with the service. Most referrals from Cork Prison have come through the Post-Release Service, and as a result the Post-Release Coordinator is familiar with the service-users engaged with the project.

The Post-Release Coordinator reported that she valued the extent to which the project worker would keep her informed as to progress that was being made with the service-users following release from prison.

8. The service ensured that statistics were recorded to facilitate the evaluation.

Data held locally by the service contained the required information to complete this evaluation, and where additional information was sought by the evaluator, the project was able to draw this information from the case notes of individual service-users.

Project Strengths

The attainment of these goals was facilitated by the following factors:

- Stakeholders praised the professionalism of the project worker, her ability to connect with prisoners and prison staff, and her willingness to work within existing structures and practices in the prison.
- There was clear evidence of thorough pre-release assessment of the prisoners' needs and this led to the development of a case plan for managing these needs post-release.
- Prisoners were responsive to the approach used by the In-Reach Project, and felt empowered through their involvement in the decisions made about what would occur upon their release.
- The case studies illustrate the importance of the alliance that develops between the service-user and project worker, and the impact of this alliance on the prisoner's trust in the project worker and his willingness to engage with the service post-release.

- The Post-Release Service is widely viewed by the project partners as centrally important to the In-Reach Project. The Post-Release Coordinator identifies, assesses and refers prisoners into the service, ensuring that when the project worker is in the prison, she is meeting with prisoners who are already known to be at risk of homelessness and who wish to engage with the service. When the project worker is present in the prison, her work is scheduled and directed. This is important given that the project worker works part-time on the project.

The future of the project

In considering the future delivery of the project, a number of recent developments in Cork Prison have been identified. The roll out of Integrated Sentence Management (ISM), when combined with a move to community-based sentences, is likely to mean that the profile of prisoners in Cork will change in the coming years. There will be fewer prisoners, they will serve longer sentences, and may have more complex problems. ISM will also enhance the ability of the prison services to identify and engage prisoners who are at risk of homelessness on discharge. This may lead to increased referrals to the Prison In-Reach Project in the future, a requirement for more pre-release work and more intensive case management of service-users.

ISM will also result in a re-configuration of the pre-release services in Cork Prison. ISM is designed to be a multi-disciplinary and dynamic process and is currently evolving. ISM may present an opportunity for the project to accept more referrals, do more pre-release work, and grow the service into one staffed by a full-time project worker.

With recent changes in the re-configuration of the Community Welfare Service (CWS), there is some uncertainty as to how this change will impact on the Prison In-Reach Project in the future. As part of this evaluation, the evaluator sought an update from the Department of Social Protection as to recent and intended future developments within the CWS. The Department responded that Community Welfare Officers (CWOs) will not increase their level of In-Reach support into Cork Prison, nor might the same CWO work with a client 'seamlessly' from pre- to post-release. Any impact that the 'enhanced role' will have will be on post-release services, where the CWS intends to adopt a key-worker approach to working with clients. The Department was also keen to stress that CWOs do not specialise in responding to ex-prisoners' needs.

Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below are based on the obstacles to achieving the In-Reach project goals.

Barrier: The absence of access to dedicated supported accommodation units for prisoners exiting prison was viewed by the project partners as being the greatest limitation of the service. The preferred model for transitioning prisoners into private rented accommodation is that those with high-support

needs would be accommodated in high-support units initially, until such a time that they would be ready to move into private rented accommodation. Such units are available to the In-Reach Project in Limerick, but are not currently available in Cork. Based on consultations with the project staff and other stakeholders, it is unlikely that funding will be made available for a step-down facility in Cork, but alternative accommodation models are possible, and in particular the potential to use private rented accommodation.

Recommendation: The project partners should collectively, and at Steering Group level, consider how the absence of step-down high-support or low-support in Cork accommodation can be addressed.

Barrier: The project worker reported that in a number of cases prisoners were not met pre-release due to unplanned releases. It is accepted that these occur as a result of overcrowding, and are largely beyond the control of the IPS. However, as ISM is being rolled out there will be scope to enhance discharge planning for those serving sentences of greater than 12 months. Within this, there may be an opportunity to introduce mechanisms whereby unplanned releases are notified to both the prisoner and project worker concurrently.

Recommendation: The project partners should consider the opportunity presented by ISM to provide dual notification of unplanned releases to prisoners and the project worker concurrently.

Barrier: Attempts by the In-Reach project staff at the start of the pilot project to hold meetings with the various project partners and local stakeholders proved difficult, as there were already a number of other homeless fora in Cork.

It was agreed by the local stakeholders and partner representatives that the establishment of a Stakeholders Group was not required in the way initially envisaged essential, and that operational issues and information sharing could take place at one of the existing fora.

The Steering Group was established and has met as necessary to discuss the progress of the project. Regular progress reports were provided to the group by the service manager.

Operational issues and information sharing could take place at the Operations meetings (CWOs and homeless organisations in Cork are represented on this group).

The evaluator accepts that there is little opportunity to establish a Stakeholders Group in Cork. The core stakeholders locally (i.e. the IPS staff, Probation Service staff, and the Post-Release Coordinator) meet frequently and are aware of the activities of the project. The HPU also works closely with the service. The In-Reach project worker and Post-Release Coordinator have

an excellent working relationship. As such, there is no evidence that the absence of a Stakeholders Group has undermined the project.

Specific In-Reach service issues were raised directly with the partner organisations involved (e.g. the Post-Release Coordinator, the HPU, or accommodation providers), however the lack of a Stakeholders Group meant that some staff felt that there was no forum to raise broader systems issues. Focus Ireland did not effectively communicate the actual reporting structure that was in place to all its staff.

Recommendation: The project staff should keep the local stakeholders up-to-date with the activities of the service through service update reports distributed quarterly at the Operations meetings. Broader service issues and blockages should be brought by the service manager to the Steering Group. Focus Ireland should ensure that where changes are made to reporting/governance structures these should be effectively communicated to all staff and stakeholders.

Barrier: The absence of formal Steering Group meetings since the commencement of this evaluation project in 2011 has impacted on communication amongst the project partners.

Steering Group meetings were designed to offer an important mechanism for opening lines of communication between project partners, and for ensuring that all partners are aware of their responsibilities to the project. It also allows for any barriers to service provision to be identified and collectively addressed.

The Steering Group has met as necessary to discuss the progress of the project, and regular progress reports were provided to the group by the service manager. However, the Steering Group agreed not to meet formally from the date of the commencement of this evaluation project. While , bilateral contact has continued between Focus Ireland and the IPS on matters arising of a strategic nature during this time the absence of formal meetings was noted by some staff.

Recommendation: The Steering Group should meet formally once a quarter. Members should receive quarterly updates from the service manager detailing activities and barriers to service provision. *Terms of Reference* should be established for the group that set out the roles and functions of the group. As the coordinating partner, Focus Ireland should take the lead in implementing this recommendation. Focus Ireland should ensure that where changes are made to reporting/governance structures these should be effectively communicated to all staff and stakeholders.

Barrier: A number of those consulted during the evaluation suggested that prisoners may not be aware of the presence of the In-Reach Project in Cork

Prison, and suggested that some effort to publicise the service should be considered.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given by the Steering Group to publicising the service within the prison (for example, posters or leaflets). The service should, in conjunction with the IPS and drawing on the experience of the In-Reach Project in Dublin, consider how the awareness of the project among prisoners could be enhanced.

Barrier: Most referrals into the project came through the Post-Release Coordinator. When the Post-Release Coordinator is on leave, according to the project worker, no referrals are made to the service. This is contrary to the *Project Protocol* which states that in such instances, any service may refer a prisoner to the In-Reach Project. At the time of writing, referrals are increasingly originating from the Industrial Manager tasked with introducing ISM, but are referred via the Post-Release Coordinator.

Recommendation: When ISM is fully resourced, those running the system should, in the absence of the Post-Release Coordinator, refer prisoners directly to the In-Reach Project.

Barrier: *The Way Home* states that in the future, funding allocations may be linked to the ability of projects to evidence the effectiveness of the interventions that they provide. In the context of Prison In-Reach, this will require empirical evidence on long-term housing outcomes for service-users. Evidence relating to levels of recidivism among service-users (and on other outcomes such as empowerment, self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism) should also be gathered. In terms of recidivism, a commonly used methodology is to compare levels of reconviction or re-entry to prison among service-users with a matched sample of former prisoners who did not access the service. This will allow for a full outcome evaluation in the future.

Recommendation: The project partners should gather evidence on the long-term outcomes of the project for service-users.

Barrier: The project worker is working with some ex-offenders with a history of violent offending behaviour. Of the 27 service-users for which offending behaviour history was available, 7 had been imprisoned for assault/GBH or manslaughter (i.e. a Category 1 Offence).

A prisoner's history of risks (e.g. sexual offending, vulnerability, arson, self-harm, violence to others etc.) is indicated on the referral form to the In-Reach project. An assessment of the risks involved was undertaken using Focus Ireland's internal procedures, however, no formal risk assessments were conducted with these individuals. The project worker did explore the potential to administer formal risk assessments, but was advised by a Forensic Psychologist in the prison that this required training. She was further advised

that the project worker and Post-Release Coordinator should discuss the potential risks posed by each referral, and use this in lieu of a formal risk assessment.

Recommendations:

- The project worker should complete a lone working ongoing risk assessment form for each service-user. This risk assessment should be informed by the referral form, information from linked support services, the Holistic Needs Assessment, and observed risk issues.
- Where a prisoner has a history of sexual and/or violent offending behaviour, the Guardian phone monitoring service should continue to be used when meeting with the ex-prisoner in the community.
- Focus Ireland should consider training opportunities for project staff on forensic risk and lone working with ex-offenders.

Barrier: Statistics held on service activities vary across databases.

There were marginal differences between the MIPS database and Excel records recorded by the project on service activities and service-user profile details. As a result, activity data run by the service locally and in Focus Ireland's head office may differ slightly. This could be rectified by the In-Reach Project adding extra fields of data to their Excel records, and using this new data to generate the MIPS returns. For each service-user, the date of entry to and exit from the service should be recorded. The 'actual', 'new' and 'disengaged' data for the MIPS return should then be drawn from this information.

Recommendation: The data recorded by the project in Cork should be expanded to include the relevant data that needs to be recorded in the MIPS database, ensuring that the two databases contain the same information.

Section 1: Introduction and Evaluation Methodology

1.0 Introduction

It is widely accepted that prisoners being released from prison have complex needs that can include physical and mental health problems, addictions and a history of difficulties maintaining interpersonal relationships.³ They are also more likely to have lower levels of educational attainment, higher levels of unemployment and poverty, and a greater reliance on social welfare support. Many of these problems are compounded by another experience common among those recently released from prison – homelessness.

Homelessness can occur as a result of these mental health, addiction and poverty factors. It can also be a consequence of society's response to individuals who have a history of imprisonment and return to society labelled 'an offender'. Ex-prisoners can struggle to secure private rented accommodation or local authority housing, resulting in short-term stays in emergency accommodation, 'shelters', or living rough.⁴

Ex-offenders can also find it difficult to adjust to living in the post-release world having served a prison sentence. During their imprisonment, prisoners may have become dependent on others to make decisions for them, resulting in a loss in confidence in their ability to represent themselves. They may also have disengaged from their family relationships, leading to isolation and a lack of support.⁵ As a result, on release it can sometimes take prisoners time to adapt to their new environment, reintegrate into society, and take control of their own lives.⁶

Ex-offenders have complex needs, and require services that can respond to these needs – services that can offer an intensive response tailored to the individual requirements of each service-user. This evaluation report examines one such initiative, the Prison In-Reach pilot project at Cork Prison. This project has been in operation for two years, and it is an opportune time to consider its development, functioning, and future.

³ Biles, D., Harding, R. & Walker, J. (1999). The Deaths of Offenders Serving Community Corrections orders, *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 107: 1-6; Travis, J., Solomon, A., & Waul, M. (2001). *From prison to home: the dimensions and consequences of prisoner re-entry*. Washington DC: Urban Institute.

⁴ Petersilia, J. (2003). *When prisoners come home: parole and prisoner reentry*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁵ Carnaby, H. (1998). *Road to nowhere: a report of women's housing and support needs when leaving prison*. Collingwood, Vic: Flat Out Inc.

⁶ Willis, M. (2004). *Ex-prisoners, SAAP, housing and homelessness in Australia*. Australian Institute of Criminology: NSW.

1.1 Evaluation objectives

The overall objective of this evaluation is to examine the effectiveness of the Cork Prison In-Reach Pilot Project (henceforth 'the In-Reach Project'). In doing so it is intended that any strengths of the service, and areas for improvement, will be highlighted. The evaluation has 11 key objectives. These are to:

- Provide a profile and history of the In-Reach service, the rationale for establishment of the pilot project and its context within Focus Ireland.
- Provide a detailed review of the roles and functions pre- and post-release of each partner organisation involved in the service.
- Identify the views of service-users, staff, partner organisations and key stakeholders on the effectiveness of the project's pre- and post-release work.
- Assess the compatibility of the project with national strategic objectives (e.g. *Pathway to Home*), policies and practices in re-settling and integrating homeless offenders into the community.
- Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the project in meeting its original objectives.
- Discuss the role of the Stakeholder and Steering Groups in facilitating a co-ordinated multidisciplinary approach to the partnership project.
- Analyse the outputs and outcomes of the project against agreed targets, and outcome and performance indicators. Measure the extent to which the project currently delivers pathways to independent living based on service-user satisfaction and evidenced-based findings.
- Identify potential barriers/blockages (structural, service delivery, policy, resources) that may have inhibited service-users successfully accessing appropriate services and accommodation.
- Analyse added-value/need for projects in prison and homeless sectors. Identify the cost effectiveness/financial benefit of the service, comparing project costs with costs of homelessness, emergency accommodation, offending and custody.
- Highlight good practice (standards) and lessons learned from the pilot project.
- Make recommendations based on the evaluation's evidence and conclusions and identify future demand/need for the project.

1.2 Evaluation Methodology

The Cork Prison In-Reach Project has eight stated goals, and a key objective of this evaluation is to assess the performance of the project against these goals. Some of the goals are quantifiable 'outputs' (e.g. to work with 7 service-users in 6 months), and others are not (e.g. to work to a case management model). This evaluation also considers the factors that facilitated or hindered

the attainment of these goals (a 'process evaluation') and other benefits of the service for service-users ('outcomes').⁷

This evaluation adopted the following approach:

1. Before the evaluation commenced, the evaluator and Focus Ireland reviewed the evaluation objectives and project goals. The scope and methodology for the evaluation was also agreed. The evaluator met with the project staff to explain how the evaluation would be conducted, and how they could facilitate the process.

2. The evaluator reviewed the existing literature dealing with the needs of ex-prisoners, and in particular their risk of homelessness. A review of national policy in Ireland relevant to Prison In-Reach was also undertaken.

3. Interviews were conducted with project partners and other stakeholders who were familiar with the project. Interviewees included representatives from the Irish Prison Service (IPS), the Post-Release Service, the Probation Service, the Homeless Persons Unit, other services working in Cork Prison and homeless organisations.

4. The evaluator interviewed two service-users. These individuals were approached by the project staff and asked if they would be willing to participate in the evaluation. The interviews were conducted in the offices of Focus Ireland in Cork. Informed consent was obtained prior to commencing each interview and interviewees received a small token, in the form of a voucher, for giving their time. The interviews were subsequently used to create the case studies in this document.

5. The In-Reach Project maintains a local database that contains information on each service-user. This source of information was anonymised and made available to the evaluator, and was analysed to report on the activities of the project over the period July 2009 to July 2011.

1.3 Structure of the report

The report commences with an overview of the difficulties experienced by ex-prisoners in re-entering society after a period of incarceration (**Section 2**). This includes a summary of the accommodation, mental health, addiction, education, employment and financial difficulties that are associated with ex-prisoners reintegrating into the community. The link between homelessness and re-offending (recidivism) is also considered. This section is relevant in that it highlights the complex needs of some ex-prisoners, justifying the

⁷ The term 'outcome' as used here refers to the benefits experienced by the service-users through participation in the project. These benefits were reported by the service-users during interviews, rather than measured through a formal intervention design (i.e. a randomised controlled trial (RCT)). Thus this evaluation does not provide a formal 'outcome evaluation'. See McHugh, P., Sarma, K. M., & Byrne, M. (2012, in press). Evaluating clinical services within the health system: An introduction. *The Irish Psychologist*.

provision of intensive pre- and post-release interventions to support their resettlement after prison.

One of the key objectives of this evaluation is to provide an account of, and rationale for, the establishment of the Prison In-Reach Project. This is presented in **Section 3**. In this section, the compatibility of the service with current Government strategy and policy is discussed, and a detailed description of the project partners is also provided. The section concludes with a description of the location for the pre-release service – Cork Prison.

Section 4 contains a description of the aims and objectives of the In-Reach Project and the target group for the service. A stage-by-stage summary of the service is also presented, from the identification and engagement of at-risk prisoners pre-release to their planned disengagement. A profile of service-users accessing the service from July 2009 to July 2011 is also presented, as well as a tentative cost-benefit analysis. The section concludes with a review of other services providing In-Reach at Cork Prison in order to consider the potential for duplication of interventions and service provision.

Two case studies are presented in **Section 5**. They illustrate the intensive nature of the case management approach and that the needs of ex-prisoners can vary considerably. One of the case studies demonstrates that, despite providing very intensive support, some ex-prisoners will inevitably end up back in prison. This section identifies examples of best practice in working with prisoners and ex-prisoners that were evidenced in the case studies.

The goal-by-goal evaluation of the Prison In-Reach Project is presented in **Section 6**. This includes a review of the facilitators of, and barriers to, goal attainment, as well as additional benefits for service-users who have engaged with the project (e.g. increased empowerment, self-efficacy and self-esteem).

Section 7 draws together the evidence presented in Sections 2 to 6 and makes recommendations for the provision of the service into the future.

Section 2: Supporting ex-prisoners and responding to homelessness

2.0 Introduction and overview

This section of the report provides a brief discussion of the post-release needs and experiences of ex-prisoners. In advance of this discussion, the terms 'homelessness' and 'ex-prisoner' are considered in greater detail (2.1). The range of problems that ex-prisoners can experience upon release from prison, including their risk of homelessness, is then considered (2.2). Finally, while the primary goal of the Prison In-Reach Project is to support ex-prisoners in securing accommodation, there is good reason to assume that in doing so their probability of re-offending is also reduced - this is considered in Section 2.3.

2.1 Concepts: 'homelessness' and 'ex-prisoners/ex-offenders'

Throughout this report reference is made to 'homelessness' and 'ex-prisoners'. 'Homelessness' can be defined in legal terms, or within more functional typologies of homelessness. In Ireland, the legal definition of homelessness is set out in *The Housing Act 1988* and describes homelessness as occurring when 'there is no accommodation available [that the individual can] reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of' or the individual is living in some form of emergency accommodation 'because he has no accommodation'.⁸

This legal definition is useful in terms of identifying those who are entitled to the support of the statutory services tasked with responding to homelessness. It does not reflect, however, the varying forms of homelessness that actually occur. As a result, many homeless organisations nationally and at a European level have adopted the ETHOS typology of homelessness and housing exclusion, developed by the European Federation of National Organisations Working With The Homeless (FEANTSA).⁹ This typology differentiates between four types of homelessness. 'Rooflessness' is used to describe situations where individuals are sleeping rough without any form of shelter. 'Houselessness' occurs when individuals are in temporary accommodation including institutions or emergency shelters. People are living in 'insecure housing' when they are threatened with eviction or otherwise insecure in their accommodation (for example when living under fear of domestic violence). Finally, individuals are living in 'inadequate housing' when their housing is not fit for purpose, as may occur when it is characterised by extreme overcrowding, where the structure is compromised, or facilities are inappropriate.

⁸ *The Housing Act 1988*, Sect. 2a & b.

⁹ FEANTSA. (2005). *European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion*. Retrieved from <http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/Toolkits/Ethos/Leaflet/EN.pdf>.

The ETHOS typology is useful here in that prisoners and ex-prisoners can experience each of these four types of homelessness and housing exclusion. While in prison, prisoners are in temporary accommodation and are 'houseless'. On release they can experience rooflessness, spend time in emergency accommodation ('houseless'), or live in 'insecure' or 'inadequate' accommodation.

Definitions of an 'ex-offender' tend to view the ex-offender as an individual who has been found guilty of violating the public law, but intends to live as a law-abiding citizen thereafter.¹⁰ The 'ex-prisoner' is an offender who has served a prison sentence for his crimes and has returned to society.

More important than these definitions is the way that society views ex-offenders and ex-prisoners. Those working to respond to the needs of ex-prisoners approach their clients in a non-judgmental way, accept that they may not intend to return to crime, and that they should be facilitated in reintegrating into society.¹¹ Ex-prisoners have received and served the sanction for their past violations of public law and are released as a potentially vulnerable group that deserves support in transitioning into a law-abiding life.

However, this is not always the experience of ex-offenders and ex-prisoners who often find that society has not forgotten, or forgiven, their past criminal transgressions. Ex-prisoners are viewed with suspicion and distrust, and as less worthy of access to services than others in the community.¹² This leads to a sense of isolation and alienation for ex-prisoners,¹³ as well as difficulties in accessing education, employment, welfare support, health services and accommodation.¹⁴

2.2 Ex-prisoners, homelessness and barriers to re-entry into society

Ex-prisoners can experience a range of barriers to successful re-entry into society. One of these is a difficulty in securing access to accommodation. A recent survey of 151 homeless services in the UK concluded that ex-prisoners were accessing the vast majority of these homeless services. For more than one-fifth of these services, ex-prisoners constituted 50% or more of their total client numbers.¹⁵ While the situation in Ireland may differ, research examining the prevalence of homelessness in an Irish prison sample suggested that 25%

¹⁰ See for example, Metcalf, H., Anderson, T., & Rolfe, H. (2001). *Barriers to employment for offenders and ex-offenders*. Research Report No. 155. London: HMSO.

¹¹ Home Affairs Committee. (2005). *Rehabilitation of prisoners. First report of session 2004-2005*. London: HMSO.

¹² Rourke, S. (2003). *The integration of ex-prisoners and offenders*. Dublin: Pobal. Retrieved from www.pobal.ie.

¹³ National Economic and Social Forum. (2002). *Re-Integration of Prisoners*, Forum Report 22. Retrieved from www.probation.ie/pws/websitepublishing.

¹⁴ Irish Penal Reform Trust. (2010). *"It's like stepping on a landmine..." – Reintegration of prisoners in Ireland*. Dublin: IPRT.

¹⁵ SNAP. (2008). *Survey of needs and provision: Services for homes single people and couples in England*. UK: Homeless link.

http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/SNAP2008_Full_Report_0_2.pdf

of prisoners were homeless immediately prior to arriving in prison.¹⁶ This would suggest that homelessness is a problem for many prisoners arriving in Irish prisons and is likely to remain a problem on their release.

Prisoners are also at risk of losing their accommodation during their time in prison. Research examining the housing needs of 136 ex-prisoners in England has shown that, of those ex-prisoners who had been homeowners prior to incarceration, most lost their homes as a result of not being able to make mortgage repayments during their period of detention, or not being able to secure employment (and thus service their debt) on release.¹⁷ All those who had lived in rented accommodation prior to imprisonment lost their accommodation due to non-payment of rent, and those who had been homeless prior to imprisonment, or had been living in emergency shelters, returned into homelessness on release. The study also found that a large proportion of the ex-prisoners lost their accommodation due to family disintegration, and that for many on release they had to cope with the loss of accommodation, a partner or employment.

It is now widely recognized that the prevalence of mental health problems among prisoners and ex-prisoners is significantly higher than in the rest of the population.¹⁸ In Ireland, the results of one study suggested that more than a quarter of Irish male prisoners (26.7%) suffer from a mental illness, with higher prevalence rates for psychotic disorders (2.7%), major depressive disorder (5%), affective disorder (8.5%) and anxiety disorders (13.8%) compared to the general population.¹⁹

This study also identified substance use and addiction as a major problem among Irish prisoners, with 79.6% of prisoners having some form of substance use problem. These addictions impact on the ability of the ex-prisoner to transition into the community on release from prison, affecting his mental health, employability and capacity to manage day-to-day relationships and a home.

One UK report has concluded that one of the greatest barriers to the successful reintegration of ex-prisoners is their lack of education that leads to a skills deficit, and when coupled with other factors such as addictions, leads to their inability to secure employment.²⁰ The paper argues that exclusion from the labour market can lead to experiences of poverty and greatly increases the probability of a return to crime.

¹⁶ Seymour, M & Costello, L. (2003). *A study of the number, profile, and progression routes of homeless persons before the Court and in custody*. Dublin: Dublin Institute of Technology.

¹⁷ Carlisle, J. (1996). *The housing needs of ex-prisoners*. Housing Research 178. Retrieved from <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/h178.pdf>.

¹⁸ James, D. J. & Glaze, L. E. (2006). *Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates*. US Department of Justice Document NCJ213600.

¹⁹ Duffy, D., Linehan, S., & Kennedy H. (2006). Psychiatric morbidity in the male sentenced Irish prison population. *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 23: 54-62.

²⁰ Cresswell, L. (2010). *Offenders and ex-offenders - Doing things differently: Step changes in skills and inclusion*. London: The National Skills Forum.

Most ex-prisoners experience multiple needs. They may experience homelessness, mental and physical health problems, drug and alcohol addiction, and poverty. As a result a holistic approach to responding to their complex needs is required²¹ and no individual problem can be approached in isolation.²²

2.3 Homelessness, offending and re-offending

Prison staff often deal with prisoners who have a long history of serving multiple prison sentences. These prisoners appear to be caught in a 'revolving door', where they return to criminality very shortly after release, are detected, reconvicted and re-imprisoned. For those working to prevent re-incarceration, the emphasis has been on understanding the risk factors for re-offending and in particular, those factors that can be targeted by pre- and post-release services. Homelessness has been identified as one such risk-factor.

There is an almost complete absence of evidence probing the impact of providing housing support for ex-prisoners on levels of repeat offending. However, some inferences can be made based on the large volume of research that has examined the impact of interventions for other risk-factors. This evidence base tends to suggest that the probability of reoffending is reduced when services and interventions have a strong theoretical base, are delivered in a format to which the offender can respond, assess the needs of the offender, and respond to these needs.²³

Homelessness presents a risk factor for reoffending, with one paper concluding that two-thirds of ex-prisoners who are homeless reoffend within 12 months of release, in contrast to one-third of those who have stable homes.²⁴ The experience of homelessness can reduce the ability of the ex-prisoner to fully reintegrate into society, to access employment and education, to seek help for psychological and physical health needs, and to overcome poverty. Being homeless can also bring ex-prisoners into 'crime environments' where drug misuse is high, and where others may be engaged in criminality. Prison In-Reach offers a theory-based intervention, in that in helping ex-prisoners secure stable accommodation a risk factor for future reoffending is removed.

Offenders must be responsive to the service model used by the service. McGuire and Priestly (1995) conclude that for most offenders this means an 'active, participatory method[s] of working'.²⁵ In an In-Reach Project, this would necessitate that prisoners are actively involved in the processes of considering their risk of homelessness post-discharge, and in drawing up a case plan.

²¹ Home Office. (2004). *Reducing Reoffending: National Action Plan*.

²² HM Government. (2005). *Reducing reoffending through skills and employment*.

²³ Cameron, H., & Telfer, J. (2004). Cognitive-Behavioural Group Work: Its Application to Specific Offender Groups. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 43(1), 47-64.

²⁴ Cresswell, L. (2010). *Offenders and ex-offenders - Doing things differently: Step changes in skills and inclusion*. London: The National Skills Forum.

²⁵ McGuire, J., & Priestly, P. (1995). Reviewing 'what works': Past, present and future. In J. McGuire (Ed.), *What Works: Reducing reoffending* (pp. 3-34). Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, p. 15.

Finally, services should complete a thorough needs assessment of each prisoner or ex-prisoner as soon as he/she is referred to the service. This reflects the varying needs of service-users and helps the service to design case plans that are customised to the specific needs of each service-user. Given that offenders can have multiple-needs, a thorough needs assessment ensures that services can provide the optimal level of care to service-users.

The conclusion here is that Prison In-Reach should lead to reductions in re-offending if the service offered involves a thorough needs and risk assessment, and is customised to the needs of the service-user. It is important to note that there are many outcomes that can be impacted by interventions. For those working in the criminal justice system, levels of reoffending is the 'gold-standard' outcome measure. However, interventions can also affect the psychological wellbeing of service-users, their sense of empowerment, civic responsibility and inclusion in society.

2.4 Interim conclusion

1. Homelessness can take many different forms, including living rough ('roofless'), living in inadequate accommodation, in temporary accommodation or under threat of eviction. The homeless ex-prisoner can experience any or all of these forms of homelessness following release from prison.
2. Ex-prisoners leave prison having served a sentence for their violation of public law. Many intend to live as law-abiding citizens, but require the support of others to reintegrate fully into society. Unfortunately support is not always available and ex-prisoners can struggle to access services and experience a sense of isolation as a result.
3. On release from prison, ex-prisoners can have complex needs. These can include homelessness, substance misuse and mental and physical illness. They can also find it very difficult to secure employment due to these issues, and because of a skills shortage resulting from a lack of formal education, work experience or the stigma attached to having a criminal history. This can result in ex-prisoners experiencing poverty. The complex needs of prisoners means that any response to these needs must be holistic and sufficiently intensive.
4. Homelessness can present a risk factor for reoffending. Research would suggest that interventions and services that are cognisant of the drivers of offending, that are delivered in a format to which service users are receptive, and that customise the response to the individual needs of service-users, should lead to a reduction in recidivism.

Section 3: Prison In-Reach – History, Government Policy, Project Partners and Setting

3.0 Introduction and overview

This section is the first of two sections that provide an overview of the Prison In-Reach Project. A review of the evolution of the In-Reach Project is first presented (3.1). Subsequently the section deals with the compatibility of the project with current State policy and strategy (3.2). The roles and responsibilities of the project partners are also reviewed (3.3). The section concludes with a brief overview of other services providing In-Reach in Cork Prison (3.4).

3.1 Prison In-Reach: History and Rationale

One of the objectives of this evaluation is to provide a history of, and rationale for, the establishment of the In-Reach Project in Cork Prison.

3.1.0 History

Section 2 briefly discussed the multiple problems that prisoners and ex-prisoners can experience, and the intensity of the response that is required to meet these needs. The various stakeholders were aware of these needs. The IPS has been represented on various homeless forums across the country for the last 10 years, and has been working collaboratively with the Probation Service and Homeless Persons Unit to address the risk of homelessness among prisoners exiting prison for much of that time.

Focus Ireland has had direct experience of the difficulties ex-prisoners experience through their community-based services. In September 2007 Focus Ireland, in partnership with the Irish Prison Service (IPS), Probation Service and HPU, commenced a two-year Prison In-Reach Pilot Project in Cloverhill Prison, Dublin. The partner organisations' rationale for establishing the project was that:

- Ex-prisoners who are homeless are more likely to re-offend than other ex-prisoners.
- Homelessness is often experienced by those with multiple problems including drug addiction and mental health problems.
- One-third of those accessing Focus Ireland's youth services reported having been in prison at some point in the past.
- Ex-prisoners have significant difficulty accessing private rental accommodation due to the stigma attached to past criminal activity.
- Given the complex needs of some offenders, homeless interventions must commence during the prison sentence ('pre-release').
- In supporting prisoners to transition into secure accommodation, the Prison In-Reach service addresses a risk factor for re-offending, and in

doing so provides an intervention that benefits the ex-prisoner and wider society.

The Dublin Prison In-Reach service adopted an intensive case management model in working with prisoners and ex-prisoners. This model of working with service-users is described in some detail later, and involves a nominated project worker who works with the prisoner to identify his/her needs, to develop a case plan that responds to these needs, and who provides a service that is as intensive as necessary to meet the needs of the service-user.

According to the IPS, this initial experience of working with Focus Ireland was very positive.

“Focus Ireland had high professionalism in terms of their delivery, and willingness to be flexible, and in terms of their ability to recognise the constraints of the prison system and work around them, and to work with the IPS and the Probation Service in genuine partnership”.

The experience also illustrated the benefits of a partnership approach to delivering In-Reach. The Dublin In-Reach Project drew together the IPS, Focus Ireland, the Probation Service and the HPU, ensuring good communication between the stakeholders and a collaborative approach.

In 2008, the IPS reviewed the extent to which their prisons were providing services to prisoners at risk of homelessness. Cork and Limerick Prisons were identified as having less well developed responses to this risk. On one level, the HPU was less actively providing In-Reach services in Cork and Limerick than elsewhere. On a second level, there were concerns that the then Probation and Welfare Service was to re-prioritise its service delivery towards addressing offending behaviour and away from the traditional model of welfare provision, with potential consequences for the resettlement planning of those experiencing homelessness.

In addition, in Cork Prison there was an established and successful Post-Release Service staffed by a Post-Release Coordinator. It was felt that an In-Reach Project specialising in responding to the risk of homelessness would enhance the existing post-release service through a collaborative partnership.

In 2008, the IPS secured funding through the Dormant Accounts Fund and Pobal to pilot Prison In-Reach homelessness services in Limerick and Cork Prisons. Focus Ireland was awarded the tender to provide these services after a competitive tendering process. The Cork service commenced in July 2009.

3.1.1 Rationale

The rationale for the establishment of the In-Reach Project emerges clearly from Section 3.1.0 above.

1. Focus Ireland, the Irish Prison Service (IPS), the Probation Service, and the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) were aware that prisoners are at risk of homelessness, which can exacerbate the multiple difficulties that prisoners may experience on release.

2. The project partners had a positive experience working collaboratively on the Dublin Prison In-Reach Project. This was linked to:

- The professionalism of the Focus Ireland In-Reach staff, both in terms of their responsiveness to the needs of prisoners and their flexibility when working within the constraints of a prison system.
- The positive experience of the project partners of the partnership approach, and that multiple services could work together in a collaborative way and provide enhanced specialised services.

3. There was a clear service need in Cork and Limerick Prisons. In Cork this was linked to the following factors:

- There is an established Post-Release Service in Cork Prison, linking the pre- and post-release support for prisoners exiting from prison. This service, run by a VEC/Drugs Task Force funded Post-Release Coordinator, was delivering a very effective service. The IPS felt that a Prison In-Reach Project specialising in responding to homelessness would complement this service.
- There was less In-Reach by the HPU in Cork in comparison to other prisons.
- The Probation Service was going through a period of transformation, with the then Probation and Welfare Service transitioning into the Probation Service, and limiting the welfare aspect of their remit. As a result, there was no one service provider in Cork or Limerick Prisons responding to the needs of prisoners homeless or at risk of homelessness on release.

4. In tendering for the Cork and Limerick services, Focus Ireland offered:

- Experience working with prisoners using the Dublin Prison In-Reach model.
- Access to resources locally, in terms of project staff and office space.
- Expertise working with the homeless population.

3.2 Compatibility with Government strategy and policy

One of the objectives of this evaluation is to consider the extent to which the Prison In-Reach Project is compatible with existing national strategy and policy on homelessness. There is no specific stand-alone policy document that considers the problem of homelessness in this population. As a result, the short review presented here examines a number of relevant national policies.

The review should be considered in the context of the current economic climate, which has changed dramatically since 2008. The Irish Government currently has less fiscal autonomy to fund its policy aspirations and the short and medium-term financial outlook is bleak. As a result, it is unclear to what extent current stated policies will translate into funding commitments to homeless service providers.

3.2.0 Independent Review of the Implementation of Homeless Strategies

In 2006, Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants conducted an independent review of the Government's response to homelessness in Ireland.²⁶ Of the 21 recommendations presented in the report, one dealt with the risk of homelessness faced by ex-prisoners. This recommendation proposed that a prison pilot project be established using a 'care management approach, based on individual needs assessment with provision for access to multiple services' (Recommendation 7). The position of the review group was that ex-prisoners 'should, in general, not be housed in dedicated accommodation, and should be treated for their individual housing and other support needs rather than as ex-offenders per se' (p. 16). This population, the report concluded, 'must remain a key focus of future homeless strategies as an especially at-risk group' (p. 18). The review is important as it influenced *The Way Home – A National Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness 2008-2013*.

3.2.1 The Way Home – A National Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness 2008-2013

The Way Home sets out a vision for responding to homelessness over a five-year period, and is a synthesis of the *Independent Review of the Implementation of Homeless Strategies*, and existing Government strategies including *Homelessness: An Integrated Strategy*,²⁷ the *Homelessness: Preventative Strategy*²⁸ and *Towards 2016*.²⁹ It sets out how the Government intends to prevent and respond to homelessness in the future and is considered to be the primary policy document in the area.

Strategic Objective 1 of *The Way Home* outlines the need to consider how best to respond to the needs of those leaving State institutions, including prison, and who are at risk of homelessness. This is to take the form of a multi-agency approach involving the Irish Prison Service (IPS), the Probation Service, the Multi-Agency Group on Homeless Sex Offenders (MAGS), childcare services, hospitals, local authorities, community care services,

²⁶ Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants. (2006). *Review of the implementation of the Government's integrated and preventative homeless strategies*. Retrieved from <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,1799,en.pdf>

²⁷ DOEHLG. (2000). *Homelessness: An Integrated Strategy*. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Dublin.

²⁸ DOEHLG. (2002). *Homelessness: Preventative Strategy*. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Dublin.

²⁹ Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. (2008). *The Way Home: A strategy to address adult homelessness in Ireland 2008-2013*. Retrieved from http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/National_Strategies/The_Way_Home_Aug2008_Ireland.pdf

community welfare services and addiction support services. The preventative measure is to 'improve discharge planning...and follow-up supports through close links between [prisons] and housing providers and community based services'.³⁰

Strategic Objective 4 states that not all offenders will benefit from moving from prison into independent unsupported accommodation. Prisoners can become reliant on others to meet their basic needs, to structure their day, and to sanction their everyday activities (i.e. they can become 'institutionalised'). In responding to this, the report recommends that ex-prisoners receive a tailored response to their individual needs – a response that could include 'step-down' accommodation that provides ex-prisoners with an opportunity to transition into fully independent living after a period of prolonged detention.

Strategic Objective 5 stresses the need to adopt models of care that are tailored to the service-user. The 'case management approach' is identified as the most appropriate approach to responding to clients' needs. Case management involves going beyond the coordinating of services to actually delivering interventions to clients. This objective also states that homeless services will need to maintain information systems that provide a range of information, including measures of the effectiveness of their interventions. Finally, Objective 6 suggests that these outcomes (measures of effectiveness) will determine the long-term fundability of these services.

A detailed overview of the In-Reach Project is provided later in this report. The service is fully compatible with this State policy in this area in that:

1. *The Way Home* recognises that prisoners being release from prison may be at risk of homelessness, and that any response to this risk must involve multiple agencies (Objective 1). The Prison In-Reach Project targets this high-risk group and does so as part of a partnership (i.e. with the Post-Release Service, IPS, Probation Service and Homeless Persons Unit), and with other service providers both in the prison (e.g. Merchant's Quay and The Resettlement Service) and in the community (e.g. Cork Foyer and Cork Alliance).
2. *The Way Home* recognizes that prisoners have complex needs, and require a tailored response to these needs (Objective 4). The In-Reach Project, working in conjunction with the Post-Release Service, achieves the customisation of response to the needs of customers through the conducting of an assessment, and the compilation of a holistic case plan for the prisoner based on these needs.
3. *The Way Home* recommends that services adopt a case management approach to working with service-users. The Prison In-Reach Project has adopted this model in working intensively with prisoners to aid their transition from prison into independent living.

³⁰ Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. (2008). *The Way Home: A strategy to address adult homelessness in Ireland 2008-2013*, p. 35.

3.3 Project Partners

The core partners in the delivery of the Prison In-Reach Project are Focus Ireland, the Irish Prison Service (IPS), the Post-Release Service, the Probation Service and the HPU.

3.3.0 Focus Ireland

Core project responsibility: Coordination and delivery of the pre- and post-release service.

Focus Ireland was established in 1985 as a Dublin-based charity working with homeless people. The organisation currently works at a national level with approximately 7,500 people per year experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. Focus Ireland owns 491 units of accommodation, and has access to an additional 148 units through partnerships with local authorities and private accommodation providers.

The organisation has configured its services under three key strategic themes: preventing homelessness ('Prevention'), supporting those who find themselves homeless ('Support') and developing and maintaining housing for service-users ('Housing'). The Prison In-Reach projects in Dublin, Limerick and Cork are prevention and support services. Focus Ireland's role in Prison In-Reach is to support ex-prisoners in accessing accommodation and working collaboratively with other agencies to address their wider needs.

More specifically, Focus Ireland's roles and responsibilities as outlined in the project protocol are:

- To establish an In-Reach case management and pre-settlement service for prisoners in Cork Prison who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, ensuring a seamless transition from prison to homeless services and/or community living.
- To develop service and accommodation pathways to prevent offenders returning to homelessness and/or to support offenders in accessing services and accommodation and a pathway to settlement.
- To reach agreement with service organisations and accommodation and housing providers on access for the target group, ensuring the seamlessness of pathways to settlement.
- To conduct a risk assessment if a prisoner has a history of arson, sexual offences and/or violent behaviour.

- In partnership with the Post-Release Service, Irish Prison Service, Probation Service, homeless services, statutory and voluntary accommodation providers, to resettle and integrate homeless offenders in their community.

Finally, working in conjunction with the HPU and the Post-Release Service, the Focus Ireland In-Reach project worker will:

- Register the offender/person in custody if homeless with their local housing authority.
- Complete fast-tracked medical card applications where necessary.
- Assess the prisoner for emergency welfare payments.
- In cases where an offender has a current tenancy, inform the landlord (with consent) that the offender/person is in custody, and arrange an application for maintaining the tenancy where appropriate.
- Prioritise the offender's accommodation and allied support service needs prior to release.

3.3.1 The Homeless Persons Unit (HPU)

Core project responsibility: Statutory responsibility for the coordination of homeless services in Cork City, and is thus involved in the housing of ex-prisoners post-release.

The Department of Social Protection provides In-Reach services to 12 Irish prisons through one dedicated Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) in Dublin. 1,638 prisoners accessed this service in 2011.³¹ These units are staffed by Community Welfare Officers (CWOs)

Community Welfare Officers are regularly requested to meet with prisoners in Cork Prison who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and offer advice on social welfare payments, rent supplements and a range of other entitlements available to those being released from prison.

The HPU is based in Cork City Centre. It has a statutory remit to coordinate the delivery of homeless services in Cork, and is part of the Health Service Executive's Adult Homeless Integrated Services.

The role and responsibility of the HPU in the Prison In-Reach Project, in conjunction with the Post-Release Service, is to complete fast-tracked medical card applications where necessary, assess prisoners for emergency

³¹ Information provided by the Irish Prison Service.

welfare payments, and organise access and referrals to emergency accommodation.

3.3.2 The Irish Prison Service (IPS)

Area of project responsibility: Pre-release. The IPS secured the funding for the Cork Prison In-Reach Project, and facilitates the running of the service within the prison.

There are fourteen places of detention that fall under the remit of the IPS. Of these, thirteen accommodate male prisoners, with female detainees held in the female wing of Limerick Prison, and in the Dóchas Centre. Ten of the prisons are traditional “closed” prisons with perimeter and internal security. Cork Prison is a “closed” medium security institution for males aged 17 years or older. The IPS must conform to UN and EU Conventions governing the treatment of prisoners, and is operated under national statutory frameworks that include the *Prisons Act 2007*, the *Rules for the Government of Prisons Act 2007* and the *Criminal Justice Act 2007*.

Part of the IPS’s mission is to manage prisoners ‘in a way which encourages and supports prisoners in their endeavouring to live law abiding and purposeful lives as valued members of society’.³² As such the IPS strives to move beyond management of offenders in custody, to their rehabilitation in preparation for reintegration into society as law-abiding citizen post-release.

The nature of these interventions vary from prison to prison, but may include psychological programmes that target problem behaviours and criminal cognitions, addiction counselling, psychiatric pharmacological or psychotherapeutic interventions for mental health difficulties, education and preparation for release. These interventions are delivered by members of multidisciplinary teams comprised of IPS professional staff (e.g. psychologists, prison chaplain) and voluntary sector groups who are contracted to provide specialist services (e.g. addiction counselling and homeless services).

This is provided as part of the Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) process that the IPS is striving to roll-out across prisons, and which in practice should involve the prisoner working with professionals to take responsibility for their behaviour and plan for their release. While ISM will be utilised for prisoners on sentences of more than 12 months, the services outlined above will be available to all prisoners.

The IPS’s 2010 *Annual Report* recognises that homelessness provides a major barrier to successful reintegration into society post-release, and that it is ‘crucial to sustaining employment, treatment, family support and finances’.³³ An IPS representative sits on the Cross-Departmental Team on

³² Irish Prison Service. (2010). *Annual Report 2010*. p. 7

³³ Irish Prison Service. (2010). *Annual Report 2010*, p.27

Homelessness and The National Homelessness Consultative Committee. In 2010 the IPS had representatives on seven Regional Homeless Consultative Forums.

Under the Prison Rules 2007, the IPS has a statutory obligation to provide healthcare support for prisoners in custody, and this has taken the form of primary care, chronic disease treatment, addiction and mental health. This is important given that recent research has suggested that prisoners in Ireland have greater health deficits compared to the Irish population in general.

The roles and responsibilities of the IPS in the Prison In-Reach service are:

- To encourage prisoners at risk of homelessness to engage with the In-Reach Project.
- To support access between professionals and people in custody.
- To share relevant information as agreed with consent.
- To inform the In-Reach Project of the sudden release of prisoners from custody as soon as possible.

3.3.3 The Probation Service

Core project responsibility: Pre- and post-release. The Probation Service is the lead agency in the assessment and management of offenders. Probation officers are present in all Irish prisons.

The Probation Service works under the administrative control of the Department of Justice and Equality, and works with the Courts Service, the IPS, and An Garda Síochána. The Probation Service is tasked with the management of offenders in Irish society and in supporting them to transition into a life without crime. In practice, the Probation Service provides offender assessments during pre-sentencing, supervises offenders with community sentences or on conditional release from prison, and provides psychological interventions for offenders in the form of counselling. In addition to these roles, the Probation Service works within Irish prisons to prepare prisoners for release. Probation officers have a professional qualification in Social Work, and deal with the problem of homelessness on a daily basis.

The roles and responsibilities of the Probation Service in the Prison In-Reach Project are:

- To liaise with Irish Prison Service staff and Focus Ireland to ensure people identified at risk of entering homeless services on or prior to release from prison will be referred for assessment to the In-Reach service.

- To conduct a risk assessment if prisoner has a history of arson, sexual offences and/or violent behaviour.
- To liaise and communicate effectively with all partners.
- To share relevant information as agreed with consent.
- To inform the In-Reach Project of the sudden release of prisoners from custody as soon as possible.

3.3.4 The Post-Release Service

Core Project Responsibility: The Post-Release service is responsible for identifying individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, completing a holistic needs assessment where possible, and referring appropriate cases to the Prison In-Reach Project.

The Post-Release Service is staffed by a 'Post-Release Coordinator'. This service and role is unique to Cork Prison. The Post-Release Coordinator role has been in existence for approximately a decade and is funded by the Local Drug Task Force through the Vocational and Educational Committee (VEC). The post was initially created to support prisoners in preparing for release and to help them access services from prison. Today the Post-Release Coordinator liaises with the pre- and post-release service providers. As one IPS staff member remarked, the Post-Release Coordinator *'acts like a funnel – everything goes through her, and she links in all the services that the prisoner needs'*.

In practice the Post-Release Coordinator is responsible for identifying the needs of prisoners prior to their release, and referring these prisoners to the various statutory and voluntary agencies depending on their needs. Where a prisoner is at risk of homelessness, and this is viewed as being a primary need for that individual, he will be referred to the Prison In-Reach Project. Prior to referral, the Post-Release Coordinator will often complete a holistic needs assessment with the prisoner, which is forwarded to the In-Reach project worker with the referral.

To date almost all referrals from Cork Prison to the In-Reach Project have come through the Post-Release Coordinator – the exception is a small number of referrals from the prison's Industrial Manager. As the Post-Release Coordinator assesses the prisoner prior to referral, the prisoners seeking to engage with the project have been motivated to engage with the service, meet the conditions for inclusion (e.g. Habitual Residency Conditions), and are clearly at risk of homelessness. This means that when the In-Reach project worker is doing pre-release work in the prison, appointments have been made with individuals who have agreed to engage with the service. This has allowed the pre-release work to be conducted in a targeted and efficient way.

3.4 Cork Prison

3.4.0 Population

The daily average number of prisoners in Cork Prison in 2010 is provided in Table 1 below. The Prison In-Reach services are also provided in Limerick and Cloverhill (Dublin) prisons and statistics for these centres are included in the table. This data was collated from the *IPS Annual Report 2010*.

On average, the total number of prisoners in prisons in 2010 at any one time was 4,290. On November 30th 2010, there were 3,721 prisoners. On this date, 20% of the prison population were aged 21-25, 22% were 25-30, 29% were 30-40 and 13% were 40-50.

Table 1: Daily average number of prisoners in custody

Institution	Capacity	Average in custody	Temporary Release
Cork	272	303	124
Limerick (Male)	290	307	61
Limerick (Female)	22	26	25
Cloverhill	431	465	13

As evidenced from Table 1, the number of inmates in Cork Prison exceeded the prison's capacity.

3.4.1 Other Services

The Multidisciplinary Team is fully operational in Cork Prison and meets weekly. The Integrated Sentence Management (IMS) system is currently being rolled out, which will place greater emphasis on preparing prisoners for release from prison through more systematic pre-release work, and preparation for post-release resettlement.

Prisoners have access to a range of services, including education, health, vocational training and psychological services while in prison, and these services are mainly provided directly by staff of the Irish Prison Service. In addition, a number of external agencies and individuals have a presence in the prison offering different services. This includes Merchant's Quay addiction services, VEC's education service and the Resettlement Service.

For the period covered by this evaluation, the Resettlement Service was offered by the non-profit organisation Business in the Community Ireland (BITC), in partnership with the Irish Prison Service, and was funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund until late-2011. During that time the Resettlement Service adopted an intensive and holistic approach to responding to client needs, and provided post-release follow-up in the community. In contrast to the Focus Ireland In-Reach Project, the Resettlement Service did not

specialized in terms of focusing on a specific type of prisoner need. Since April 2012, the service has been offered by the Irish Association for the Integration of Offenders.

3.4.2 Future directions

There are a number of recent developments in Cork Prison that merit further consideration here, in that they have the potential to impact on the In-Reach Project.

- The roll out of the Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) will lead to a more systematic approach to identifying the needs of prisoners and will aspire to adopting a more targeted, planned and intensive response to these needs.
- Legislative change is going to allow for community-based sentences for lesser offences, resulting in fewer short-stay imprisonments (less than one year). Consequentially, it is likely that the prisoners in Cork Prison in the future will have convictions for more serious crimes and will have longer sentences. This may also mean that they will have greater needs, and be exposed to a greater risk of institutionalisation.
- The IPS reports that it is intended that Cork Prison will undergo additional change in the coming years. Prisoner numbers will decrease to approximately 220, and this will be achieved through transfers to other prisons and fewer committals. The IPS has presented a recommendation to the Department of Justice and Equality that a new prison be built in Cork. This facility may be ready for occupancy in 2015.

ISM achieves more positive outcomes for prisoners through more intensive pre-release assessment and rehabilitation, and careful preparation for resettlement. This may result in an increased demand on the resources of service providers working in the prison, including the In-Reach Project.

It may also lead to a reconfiguration of the pre-release service, with existing services responding to priorities identified in ISM reports on each prisoner. It is unclear how this will impact on the current referral pathway into the Prison In-Reach Project, and whether or not referrals will come directly from ISM.

The move to community sentences, and the reduction in prisoner numbers, is likely to result in a prison population that is smaller but has more profound needs. When combined with ISM, this is likely to result in an opportunity to work with prisoners for a longer duration pre-release - although it is hard to predict if overall numbers of service-users being referred to the service will increase or decrease.

There is considerable variability in the configuration of services across prisons. The shift to ISM, and any reconfiguration of referrals systems or services, will differ as each prison adopts the system to meet their specific

requirements. This means that it is not possible to predict how the In-Reach Project in Cork Prison will be impacted by these changes. It does mean, however, that the service must be prepared to adapt to this change and, once again *'mould itself to the service structure'*.

3.5 Interim conclusion

This review would suggest that the Prison In-Reach Project in Cork Prison evolved due to a recognition of the risk of homelessness faced by prisoners post-release, the presence of an exemplar service in the Dublin Prison In-Reach Project and the perceived service needs in Cork and Limerick Prisons. The project was also clearly compatible with Government strategy and policy on responding to homelessness, resonating with objectives set out in *The Way Home*.

ISM and changes in the profile of prisoners in Cork Prison have the potential to impact on the In-Reach Project, and are considered again later in this report.

Section 4: Prison In-Reach: A profile of the service

4.0 Introduction and overview

This section of the report provides an overview of the aims and objectives of the Cork Prison In-Reach Project (4.1), the group targeted by the service (4.2), how the project is monitored (4.3), and the staffing arrangements (4.4). This is followed by a functional description of how the service operates from the identification of at-risk prisoners, to their disengagement (4.5). A profile of service-users who have accessed the project since July 2009 is also presented (4.6), as well as a tentative discussion of the costs and benefits of the service (4.7).

4.1 Aims and Objectives

The primary objective of the service is to:

Provide a seamless transition from prison to the community, for offenders who have been previously homeless or may be at risk of homelessness on release from custody. The Service is set up to prevent the cycle of homelessness on release from prison and to ensure an easy transition from prison to emergency, transitional or more long-term accommodation options in the community and to provide follow up supports using a case management model.

Cork Prison In-Reach has 8 stated aims, each of which is considered in detail in this evaluation.

1. The service aims to work with offenders who have been previously homeless or are at risk of homelessness on release to ensure there are appropriate accommodation options in place.
2. The service will work to liaise with accommodation providers in the community to ensure options exist on release.
3. The service will ensure that the offender has been met in custody and that an assessment, service contract and case plan are in place prior to release.
4. The service will aim to work with 7 service-users at any one time for a period of 6 months.
5. The service will liaise with the Post-Release Service in relation to referrals made.
6. The service will ensure that all relevant referral and service-user statistics are recorded.
7. The service will work to a case management model.

8. The service will have a representative on the Stakeholders Group and will report any blocks and gaps experienced by them or the wider group to management.

4.2 Target Group

The target group for this service are male offenders over 18 years of age who will be, or are at risk of, becoming homeless on release from prison. In order to access the service, prisoners must meet the Habitual Residency Condition (HRC) – i.e. they must be habitually resident in the State for a period of two or more years prior to seeking to access the service. While the project accepts referrals for all prisoners, regardless of their criminal history, the project protocol envisaged that those with convictions for arson or sexual/physical violence would be subject to a formal risk assessment prior to acceptance into the service.

4.3 Project Monitoring and Guidance

The Cork In-Reach protocol document stated that two multi-agency groups would be created and have a project-monitoring role. First, a Steering Group was to be formed and comprise of senior management from the IPS, Probation Service, Focus Ireland, and Prison Governors. This group was to have a monitoring and guidance role in the service, reviewing statistics relating to the activities of the project, and addressing any barriers to delivery of the service. A primary purpose of this group was to promote communication among the project partners.

The second group was described as a 'Stakeholders Group' and should comprise of representatives from Focus Ireland, other voluntary sector housing services, the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU), addiction services, and prison staff. It was envisaged that the Stakeholders Group would be directly involved in operational matters, and would have a monitoring and reporting role through the organisations represented on the Steering Group.

One of the goals of the In-Reach Project is to 'have a representative on the Stakeholders Group and....report any blocks and gaps experienced by them or the wider group to management.' It was agreed by the local stakeholders and partner representatives that the establishment of the Stakeholders Group in Cork was not essential. This is considered in more detail in Section 6.6 below.

The Steering Group met as necessary early in the project cycle to discuss the progress of the pilot project. These meetings were attended by Focus Ireland's Director of Services, the In-Reach service manager, and an IPS representative. Since the commencement of this evaluation project in 2011, the Steering Group has not met formally (by agreement), pending

consideration of the final evaluation report. This is discussed in detail later in this report.

4.4 Staffing and location

The service is staffed by a project worker who works half-time on the In-Reach Project and half-time with other Focus Ireland service-users in Cork. This individual has a qualification in social care. The project worker works under the supervision of a project leader. The project leader provides supervision for the project worker and can, when necessary, engage with In-Reach service-users when the project worker is on leave. A Focus Ireland service manager spends approximately 10% of his time involved in the project. The total cost of resourcing the Cork In-Reach project, including salaries and non-salary overheads, was €46,657 in Year 1 and €48,032 in Year 2.

The project worker is based in Focus Ireland's Cork offices in Penrose Quay. These offices offer a safe, comfortable and private location for meeting with service-users.

4.5 Description of service

This section provides an overview of the delivery of the In-Reach service, from when an individual is identified as at risk of homelessness to his disengagement from the service.

4.5.0 Referral into the Service

The Prison In-Reach Project relies on other services to refer prisoners who are homeless or at risk of homelessness into the project. These services must:

1. Identify individuals who are potentially in need of the service
2. Engage these potential service-users
3. Review their needs and refer them as appropriate

A prisoner in Cork Prison can be **identified** as homeless or at risk of homelessness either on arrival at the prison, or at any stage during his committal. According to the *Project Protocol* document for the service, a designated prison officer will enquire as to the accommodation status of the prisoner when he is received at the prison. Where the prisoner is homeless or at risk of homelessness on release from prison, he should be referred to the Post-Release Service at that point.

At any stage during a prisoner's committal, other service providers in the prison may identify a prisoner who is at risk of homelessness, and these services can encourage the prisoner to **engage** with the In-Reach service. For

example, those working in the School, in addiction services (Merchants Quay), prison officers, probation officers, or medical staff can identify prisoners at risk of homelessness and encourage them to engage with the Prison In-Reach service. Almost all referrals to the Post-Release Coordinator have been made by the Probation Service or, more recently, by the Industrial Manager in the prison responsible for the roll-out of the Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) system.

Barriers to successfully identifying and engaging with prisoners who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are discussed in detail later in this report. On one level there are barriers to identifying at-risk prisoners, with some prisoners unwilling to disclose being homeless as this would mean that they could not avail of Temporary Release (TR). IPS staff also reported that some prisoners may not be aware of the In-Reach Project, as it is not advertised in Cork Prison (e.g. through posters or fliers). On a second level, it can be difficult to engage prisoners who are on short-term sentences, or where they are released from prison in an unplanned way.

Where a prisoner has been identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness, and he has agreed to engage with the Post-Release Service, he is initially referred to the Post-Release Coordinator³⁴ for review.

When referrals are made to the Post-Release Coordinator, she meets with the prisoner and if he has a history of accessing homeless services, completes a Holistic Needs Assessment form, which is also used by Cork City Council and the HSE. The Post-Release Coordinator identifies the service needs of the prisoner and makes referrals as appropriate.

According to the Post-Release Officer:

'If I need to bring in the Community Welfare Officers, housing officers, addiction services, or citizen information people, I will get them in so the prisoner will have an individualised plan – so if someone is homeless I'll refer them to [the In-Reach project worker].'

The Protocol document states that referrals can come directly from the Post-Release Service 'or any other service within Cork Prison'. However, in practice most referrals to date from Cork Prison have been processed through the Post-Release Coordinator.

The In-Reach Project, IPS and Probation Service staff have reported that the Post-Release Service works exceptionally well, with all organisations reporting a preference for referrals to be processed through the Post-Release Coordinator.

³⁴ The Post-Release Coordinator role has been in operation for approximately 10 years and was initially created to support prisoners in preparing for release and to help them access services from prison.

4.5.1 Delivering the Service

The In-Reach Project has adopted a case management model of working with service-users. Case management is characterised by a careful assessment of need, intensive work with a small number of clients, linkage with external agencies as appropriate, and good service availability.³⁵

Once a **referral** is made to the Cork Prison In-Reach service, the project worker will meet with the prisoner and introduce the service. The Post-Release Coordinator will have ensured that the prisoner meets the HRC, and in most cases will have completed the Holistic Needs Assessment. This 'pre-screening' of prisoners means that all referrals to the In-Reach Project meet the project's criteria and are **accepted**. It also means that the pre-release work of the In-Reach project worker is very efficient and targeted at prisoners who have been identified as at risk of homelessness and are willing to engage with the project.

Where the Post-Release Coordinator has not completed a formal Holistic Needs Assessment, the In-Reach project worker will assess the needs of the service-user and prepare his case plan. The HNA assessment considers the service-user's background demographic information, housing situation, education and employment, care history, physical health, mental health, drug use, alcohol use, offending behaviour and source of income.³⁶ At this point, the project worker becomes the key worker for that individual, taking the lead role in preparing for the prisoner's resettlement on release from prison.

It is at this stage that the intensive nature of the case management model emerges. A review of the data held by the In-Reach Project indicates that, on average, the project worker meets with each prisoner four times in prison to **prepare for his release**. The first two-to-three meetings focus on building up an alliance, providing information on the project, and signing the service contract. After these initial meetings, the project worker and the service-user will start to develop and implement the case management plan.

According to the project worker: *'It is ideal if we can meet with the customer four to six times in prison, so that we can devise the case plan and build up a relationship with the customer. I have found that if the relationship has not been established, [the ex-prisoners] are less likely to engage with the service post-release'*.

One of the goals of these meetings is that the prisoner will perceive his release as being planned and supported. For those with more complex needs, they can experience *'a lot of anxiety about getting out [of prison], and about where they will stay. It causes huge anxiety, because they feel they don't even know how to go about making that phone call to the landlord – they don't*

³⁵ These process-based descriptors are based on Morse, G (1999). A review of case management for people who are homeless: Implications for practice, policy and research. Chapter in Linda B. Fosburg & Deborah Dennis (Eds). *Practical lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homelessness Research*, US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

³⁶ Information drawn from the Cork Prison In-Reach Project's *Assessment Form*.

have the skills to do that.' The pre-release meetings can alleviate anxiety for the prisoner.

A joint-working relationship between the Post-Release Coordinator and the In-Reach project worker has emerged over time. They discuss new referrals and service-users currently engaging in the service on a weekly basis. Where a prisoner is due to be released, they consider accommodation options and discuss these with the prisoner. They will also discuss this with the HPU and agree where the prisoner will be accommodated on release. When the prisoner is released, the Post-Release Coordinator contacts the HPU, who will in turn advise the relevant accommodation provider (e.g. Sophia Housing, Cork Simon Community, St. Vincent's Hostel etc.) to 'expect' the ex-prisoner.

The Post-Release Coordinator and In-Reach project worker reported that, in a number of cases, attempts to complete the Holistic Needs Assessment and case plan were prevented by unplanned releases of prisoners.

'It still does happen that you would come in and someone would have been released. It depends in the staffing levels... and if you have a regular [prison] officer, which we have more often than not, doing releases, then he will know if somebody was homeless and he would ring up and ask 'Is everything set up for this guy?', but if he is not there and there is another officer filling in, then prisoners will fall through the cracks. And this can occur before I even refer the prisoner to [the In-Reach project worker]'.

On release, the case plan is used to guide the support provided by the project worker to the service-user. The Cork Prison In-Reach Project does not have direct access to 'step-down' accommodation, or other form of accommodation, for service-users. The service-users are supported in their move to emergency accommodation or to living with family or friends, with a view to working with the service-user to secure more stable accommodation in the short-to-medium term.

The In-Reach project worker reports that:

'It is practically impossible to get a place from prison. It has happened once or twice with the assistance of the Homeless Persons Unit. But usually you will be going to a hostel, going to live with friends, or going back home with your mother's agreement'.

The project worker developed links with the Cork Simon Community, St. Vincent's Hostel, Sophia Housing, the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) and other agencies to ensure that accommodation options are available for the service-users on release. These organisations, according to the project worker, *'have been open to joint case working and this has proved very beneficial for the client'*.

Subsequently the project worker will meet with the service-user to assess longer-term accommodation options. These meetings often occur in Focus

Ireland's Cork office. The project worker and ex-prisoner will contact private landlords who have worked with Focus Ireland customers in the past to determine if they have any suitable accommodation available.

Joint working also occurs with addiction services, probation services, and services for ex-prisoners (e.g. Cork Alliance) to respond to the service-user's broader needs.

The frequency of meetings and overall intensity of the response and support provided to service-users varied depending on the needs and skills of the service-users. The highest level of support, for instance, was provided to those with multiple needs who required joint working with a number of other service providers post-release, and who did not have the education, occupational or social skills to *'work their own way out of their situation'*.

According to the In-Reach project worker, these service-users would need help to *'set up a bank account, open an ESB account, and pay their rent, and link-in with the Community Welfare Officer around rent, budgeting. They are high support and high need'*.

Other cases involved service-users with less complex needs, who could act autonomously after a short period of time. These individuals were met by the project worker less frequently post-release, transitioned into private rented accommodation faster, and disengaged from the service earlier than other service-users.

The absence of high support accommodation, directly accessible to the project, was seen by the project worker as the greatest barrier to providing the service. This posed difficulties for the service in responding to those with greater needs - dual diagnosis of addiction and mental health problems and behavioural problems for instance - who were not suitable for placement in emergency accommodation and who could not return home to family members.

Throughout the post-release service period, the project worker provides weekly updates to the Post-Release Coordinator on the progress of service-users. The Post-Release Coordinator has, on occasion, attended meetings in the community with the project worker and service-users.

Disengagement can be planned or unplanned, and can occur at any stage during the process of engaging with the service. A positive planned disengagement occurs when the case has come to a positive conclusion. This can arise when: a) the case plan goals are met or; b) the service-user is able to independently access supports.

Unplanned disengagement can occur as a result of a number of factors, such as when:

- The service-user no longer wishes to engage with the In-Reach Project.

- The prisoner is transferred to another prison, and cannot engage with the project.
- An unplanned release of the prisoner occurs, and the ex-prisoner does not make contact with the service upon release.

4.5.2 Capacity of the Service

Due to the intensive nature of the case management model, project workers tend to provide services to a small number of clients. The exact number varies, depending on the collective needs of the service-users currently engaging with a service (and thus overall demand on the project worker). In the case of the In-Reach Project in Cork, the project worker aims to work with approximately seven service-users in a six-month period. The service data suggests that service-users tend to stay engaged with the service for five-to-six months - this means that the project worker aims to have seven service-users engaging with the service at any one time.

4.6 Profile of Service-Users

4.6.0 Referrals

Between July 2009 and July 2011, 32 referrals were received by the Cork In-Reach service - 15 were received in the first 12 months of the pilot project, and the remainder in the second year. Two of these cases did not engage with the service after the initial referral; thus the In-Reach Project actively worked with 30 cases during the pilot period. As noted earlier, most of the referrals into this service came from the Post-Release Coordinator. Two service-users were referred to the service from Limerick Prison, and wanted to be resettled in Cork City. One of these service-users was female.

The average length of prison sentence that was served by the service-users, based on records held by the service, was 20 months.

Table 2: Sentence length and distribution (n=27).

Sentence (months)	No. clients (n=27)	%
0-6 months	8	29.6
7-12 months	5	18.5
13-18 months	2	7.4
19-24 months	1	3.7
25+ months	11	40.7
Sentence distribution	Months	
Mean	20.07	-
Mode	5	-
Min	1	-
Max	60	-

4.6.1 Age profile

The average age of the 30 service-users on the date of their referral to the project was 28 years. The oldest service-user was 48 years of age and the youngest was 20. Forty-four percent were between the ages of 18 and 25, 49% were between 26 and 40, and 7% were over the age of 41.

4.6.2 Nationality

All those who were accepted into the service were 'Irish'.

4.6.3 Category of Offences

Information on the history of 'offending behaviour' of the service-user is recorded by the service. Data on offending behaviour history is available for 27 service-users. Of this group, the most prevalent types of offences committed in the past were robbery and theft (52%). Forty-one percent reported having a history of public order convictions or convictions for threatening behaviour. Seven of the service-users had been convicted of criminal damage.

The project worker also worked with a small number of prisoners imprisoned in the past for assault and manslaughter. Of the 27 service-users for which offending behaviour history was available, 7 (26%) had been imprisoned for assault/GBH or manslaughter (see Table 3 below).

In the *Project Protocol* document it is stated that all such offenders should be subjected to a formal risk assessment by Focus Ireland and the Probation Service prior to referral to the In-Reach Project.

A prisoner's history of risks (e.g. sexual offending, vulnerability, arson, self-harm, violence to others etc.) is indicated on the referral form to the In-Reach project. However, no formal risk assessments were conducted due to the specialised training required to administer and report on forensic risk. Instead, the project worker and Post-Release Coordinator discussed the risks posed by a service-user in a less formal way.

Table 3: Offence category of prisoners engaged with the In-Reach Project (n=27)*

Offence (more than one offence may apply to an individual)	No. clients	%
Category 1: Offences Against the Person		
Manslaughter	1	4
Assault/GBH	6	22
Category 3: Offences Against Property Without Violence		
Robbery and theft	14	52

Handing stolen goods	2	7
Criminal damage	7	26
Category 4: Other Offences		
Public order/Threatening Behaviour	11	41
Drug offences	3	11
Driving offences	5	19
Possession of firearms/weapon	1	4
Other	1	4

* Information on past criminal behaviour was available for 27 service-users.

4.6.4 Risk Factors

In determining risk factors for homelessness, and in reaching a holistic understanding of the client's needs, the project records whether or not each service-user has a history of addiction, State care, mental health problems, attempted suicide or deliberate self-harm, a learning disability, relationship issues or other risk factors. Summary results are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Risk factors for homelessness for those engaged in the In-Reach Project

Risk Factor	Number	Percentage
Alcohol/drug dependence	26	87
Relationship problems/Support	15	50
Mental health problems	8	27
History of Suicide/Deliberate self-harm	4	13
History of State Care	3	10

As illustrated in Table 4, alcohol or drug dependence was present in 87% of service-users, and was the most prevalent risk factor recorded. This resonates with the extensive literature linking addictions with both a risk of homelessness and a risk of offending. Similarly, that 50% reported relationship difficulties is unsurprising given the causal link between relationship breakdown and homelessness.

Twenty-seven percent had a history of some form of mental health problem. This is based on self-reported mental health difficulties, and as these often go undiagnosed in prison populations and among marginalised communities, it is likely to under-represent the full extent of mental illness among this cohort of service-users. The specific diagnostic categories were not recorded.

4.6.5 Post-Release

As of February 2012, 9 service-users were living in private rented accommodation, and 4 were living at home or with a friend.

Table 5: Housing situation of service-users worked with between July 2009 and July 2011 (as of February 2012) (n=20)*

	Last Known n=20	%
Private Rented Accommodation	9	45
Deceased/Emigrated/Unknown	4	20
Living at Home	3	15
Friend/Partner	1	5
Emergency Accommodation	1	5
Transitional Accommodation	2	10

* This table excludes those who are still in prison (not yet released, n=3) and those who returned to prison (n=4).

A core outcome of an intervention for prisoners and ex-prisoners is a greater reduction in levels of recidivism rates among those accessing the intervention, compared with a similar cohort who did not receive the intervention. While a randomised control trial was not possible within the scope of this evaluation, the IPS did examine levels of 'return to prison' among the service-users.

20 of the service-users returned to prison at some stage after accessing the In-Reach service, 6 of whom are currently in custody. A further 8 are no longer in custody, 2 are on Temporary Release, and 2 are Unlawfully At Large (UAL). Seven of the service-users have not returned to prison since accessing the In-Reach service. The IPS generated this information in May 2012. The maximum follow-up period for a prisoner was 34 months (for a prisoner released in July 2009) and the minimum was 4 months (for a prisoner released in January 2012). Four of the service-users who had not been recommitted had been released within 12 months of the IPS analysis of 'return to prison' data, and it is pertinent to note that recidivism follow-ups are usually based on occurrence of repeat offending at 12 months, 2 years and 5 years.

It is not possible to causally link any trend in recidivism data to the In-Reach service. To do so would require a matched cohort of prisoners from the same prison who did not receive this service, with multiple follow-ups. However, it should be stressed that the offender population in question has multiple risk factors for re-offending and very high levels of recidivism should be expected. Given the high cost of offending, both in terms of monetary and human suffering terms, even a very small impact on recidivism levels should be considered to be of great value.

4.7. Project Costs

The cost of delivering the Cork Prison In-Reach Pilot Project is detailed in Table 6 below. The costs associated with the input of the project leader and service manager are estimates, based on interviews with these two Focus Ireland staff members. In total, the service cost €46,657 in Year 1 and €48,032 in Year 2.

Table 6: Cost of delivery of the In-Reach Project over the two-year pilot period

	Year 1	Year 2
Salary	€	€
Project Worker (50%)	24,422	25,797
Project Leader (5%)	5,000	5,000
Service Manager (5%)	3,500	3,500
Salary Total	32,922	34,297
Non-Salary		
Mobile Phone	720	720
Travel	1,410	1,410
Rent	5,500	5,500
Training	500	500
Utilities	600	600
Staff Support	120	120
Administration	4,885	4,885
Non-Salary Total	13,735	13,735
Total	46,657	48,032

One of the objectives of this evaluation is to consider the cost–benefit of the delivery of the In-Reach Project. It should be noted that this cost-benefit analysis proved difficult. Cost-benefit analysis generally involves ascertaining the cost of providing a service, compared against the cost to society if no service had been offered. Services are deemed to be cost-effective when they save society more money than they cost to resource. While other proxy measures of cost-benefit can be considered, they tend to be overly reliant on subjective assumptions.

Calculating the cost of delivering a service is relatively straightforward. It involves ascertaining the cost of salaries and non-salary overheads, which are generally readily available from the service itself – in this case the total cost was €46,657 in Year 1 and €48,032 in Year 2, or €94,689 in total. As 30 service-users engaged in the service during the 2 year pilot period, it can be estimated that each service-user ‘cost’ the project €3,156.30 to work with.

There are costs to society in providing services for ex-prisoners who are homeless, for example accommodating them in transitional or emergency homeless accommodation. However these are not costs that are considered costs of the In-Reach Project. These costs would be borne by society in accommodating homeless ex-prisoners even in the absence of the In-Reach Project. However, the In-Reach project assists service-users to move into

more stable long-term accommodation (i.e. out of emergency accommodation and not returning to prison).³⁷

The benefits to society of having service-users engaged with the Prison In-Reach Project are difficult to quantify, particularly in the absence of any empirical research into the effectiveness of the service in reducing repeat offending and providing other positive outcomes for ex-offenders. Hypothetical assumptions need to be made about the prevalence of recidivism, the severity of the offences committed during the repeat offence, the costs to the victim, the costs of investigating the offence and prosecuting offenders through the courts, and the cost of imprisonment.

The average weekly cost of incarcerating a prisoner in an Irish prison in 2010 was €1,356 (or €70,513 per year).³⁸ The total cost of providing the In-Reach Project for Year 1 was €46,657, or 66% of the cost of accommodating just *one* offender in prison for one year. While it would be tempting to conclude that if just one of the 30 prisoners who engaged with the In-Reach Project during the pilot period was redirected from a future offence leading to a two-year prison term, the project would have been 'cost neutral' to society - but this conclusion would be erroneous.

In recent testimony in front of the *Sub-Committee on Penal Reform*, Jimmy Martin, from the Department of Justice and Equality, noted that

*“The current cost is approximately €70,000 per year for a prisoner in a medium security prison. However, if we take out ten prisoners, we will not save €700,000 because much of it is fixed costs and labour costs. The saving is that we should have to buy less milk, food and such things.”*³⁹

However, additional savings are made by diverting ex-prisoners away from further prison sentences. This includes an overall reduction in the costs associated with detecting, investigating, and prosecuting a criminal offence.

Moreover, this cost-benefit analysis does not quantify the often unquantifiable gains to service-users engaging with an intensive service. Improvements in quality of life, self-empowerment, mental health, self-esteem, and resilience to return to addiction and offending are impossible to quantify, yet are at the centre of the gains offered by the Prison In-Reach service.

If a service-user does not reoffend or return to homelessness, the following conclusions could be made based on the brief consideration above of the costs and benefits of providing the In-Reach service:

- The service is relatively inexpensive to administer.

³⁷ As of February 2012, 13 (of the 20 service-users whose housing situation was known) were living in private rented accommodation, at home, or with a friend/partner.

³⁸ Irish Prison Service. (2010). *Annual Report 2010*.

³⁹ Presentation to the Sub-Committee on Penal Reform, House of the Oireachtas, February 1st, 2012.

- In diverting individuals away from further crime, there are savings for the Department of Justice and Equality.
- In diverting individuals away from further crime, there are benefits to society in terms of providing safer public and private spaces.
- In diverting individuals away from sleeping rough and spending less time residing in emergency accommodation upon release from prison, there are financial benefits for society.
- In responding to the needs of ex-prisoners at risk of homelessness, these individuals can experience a greater quality of life and overcome their personal difficulties.

4.8 Duplication of Services/Service overlap

There are a number of service providers providing In-Reach services into Cork Prison, and this raises the question: “Is there duplication of effort or service overlap occurring?” In addressing this question, this evaluation considers the role and functions of the organisations involved in providing prison In-Reach services.

4.8.1 Cork Simon Community

The Cork Simon Community provides emergency accommodation in Cork City, and also has an intermittent presence in Cork Prison. According to the stakeholders and service providers consulted with as part of this evaluation, the In-Reach Project differs from the Simon Community’s activities in a number of ways.

1. The Cork Simon Community does not have a formal partnership protocol with the IPS, the Probation Service or the HPU to provide In-Reach services to prisoners. Where a prisoner is referred to the Post-Release Coordinator as being at risk of homelessness, she does not refer this prisoner to the Cork Simon Community unless the prisoner has a history of accessing Simon’s services and wishes to be referred to that organisation.
2. While Focus Ireland’s In-Reach staff will work with new referrals, the Cork Simon Community will “visit prisoners pre-release who would have a history of accessing their services when in the community...and they do come up and visit the prisoners because a lot of them don’t have any family to visit them – so it is more a visit than a piece of work”.

This would suggest that the services offered by the Prison In-Reach Project and the Cork Simon Community’s project are exclusive and do not involve duplication of effort.

4.8.2 The Resettlement Service

The Resettlement Service is based in Cork Prison five-days a week and is funded by the IPS. The focus of the service is on preparing prisoners for resettlement, and provides follow-up support in the community post-release. This is done through practical advice on how to secure benefits, accommodation, mental and physical health services, training and employment. Based on consultations with staff in Cork Prison, this service is highly valued within the prison in that the mentor is on-site and can be accessed immediately by a prisoner.

In relation to service overlap with the In-Reach Project, the following should be noted:

1. The Post-Release Coordinator manages referrals into both services, and ensures that duplication of effort does not occur.
2. Both services provide an intensive and holistic response to prisoners needs, and thus can only respond to a limited number of clients. Currently both services work at full capacity.
3. The Prison In-Reach project targets those homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Resettlement Service deals with a broader population of prisoners, and does not specialise in one 'needs' area.

It can be concluded that both services operate at full capacity and have different target groups. The Resettlement Service does not specialise in responding to homelessness. Thus the services do not overlap and there is no duplication of effort.

4.8.3 Community Welfare Service (CWS)

The Community Welfare Service (CWS) is provided by Community Welfare Officers (CWOs) who administer a range of social welfare schemes, including rent and income support. The CWS went through a period of transition recently, having been transferred from the HSE to the Department of Social Protection. All CWOs officially became staff of this new Department in October 2011.

CWOs provide support for all people seeking to claim, or claiming, social welfare allowances or exceptional needs payments. This includes prisoners and ex-prisoners who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with CWOs providing an In-Reach service to prisons across the State. They also refer clients to other statutory or voluntary services if required.

In the future, it is intended that CWOs will adopt a key worker relationship with clients, and will deal with all the individuals' needs, including education and work placement. The additional resources required to provide this 'enhanced role' will be met by the recent transfer of FAS workers into the Department of Social Protection (on 1st January 2012), which will augment the CWS.

With these recent changes in the configuration of the CWS, there is some uncertainty as to how this change will impact on the Prison In-Reach Project in the future. As part of this evaluation, the evaluator sought an update from the Department of Social Protection regarding the recent and intended future developments within the CWS. The Department has stated that:

1. Where a CWO attached to a HPU provides In-Reach into a prison, he/she will not be a key worker for that prisoner post-release. Rather, once the individual has been provided with the relevant emergency supports, he will be referred to the mainstream community welfare service that sits outside the HPU. Thus CWOs will not offer the same level of 'seamless' support as the In-Reach Project.

Any impact that the 'enhanced role' will have will be on the post-release services – where the key worker model will be used in the future. The CWS does not intend to alter the current level of In-Reach into Cork and Limerick prisons. Nor do they consider their existing In-Reach activities as duplicating the work of the Focus Ireland project which is 'more specialised' and involves a key worker supporting the service-user pre- and post-release.

2. The CWS provides services to a broad range of clients, and while ex-prisoners are among the client base, the CWO does not specialise in responding to ex-prisoners needs. This is in contrast to the In-Reach Project, which is highly specialised in responding to ex-prisoners.
3. The CWS does not provide the same level of 'availability' as the In-Reach Project. The project worker will meet with service-users at short notice and they will have multiple meetings or telephone conversations each week. Due to the relatively high caseload of the CWOs, they are less available.

4.8.4 Cork Alliance

The Cork Alliance Centre was established in 2002 to provide resettlement support for prisoners during and after their sentence, with the core aim of preventing reoffending. While some of their clients may have tenancy needs, the Cork Alliance Centre does not specialise in this area. Where one of their clients is homeless or at risk of homelessness on release, and the prisoner does not have a plan for managing this risk, then the Cork Alliance worker in the prison will make contact with the Focus Ireland In-Reach project worker. According to Cork Alliance:

“For example, we have someone at the moment and we sit down with the client and [the project worker] and we work through all their needs, including the accommodation issue... and we will work through these needs together, keeping the contact between ourselves, the client and [the project worker]... it means that I don't have to worry about the accommodation side, because I know that Focus Ireland is dealing with that aspect of it.”

In terms of service overlap, the Cork Alliance worker stated that:

“Certainly there is no overlap when the service-user needs intensive work around the accommodation...home visits and that kind of thing...because Focus Ireland will take that on.”

4.9. Interim Conclusion

This section has provided an overview of the service, focusing on how the service is delivered and monitored. A profile of those accessing the service between July 2009 and July 2011 was also presented. The costs of delivering the In-Reach service, and the benefits that result from it, were also considered.

Section 5: Case Studies

5.0 Introduction

Behind the structured evaluation of a service there are service-users whose voices often go unheard. A central objective of this section is to present case studies that illustrate the experiences of service-users who accessed the Prison In-Reach Project. In providing these case studies, the section also illustrates how the service functions in practice, as well as identifying some of the principles of best practice in service provision.

The names of service-users have been changed in order to protect their identities.

5.1 Case Study 1: Sean

5.1.0 Background

Sean, 20, is from Cork City. Since the age of 16 he has received a number of custodial sentences. He has a history of drug and alcohol addiction. He was sentenced twice to a juvenile facility at the age of 16, and has served three terms in Cork Prison. He states that these sentences were for road traffic offences, assault and public disorder. His most recent conviction was for slashing the tyres of a member of An Garda Síochána living near his parents' home, for which he received a 2-year sentence. He served 6 months of this sentence.

This is Sean's first experience of homelessness.

5.1.1 Engagement

"I was homeless ever before I left prison", Sean reported. "I was living with my Mam, but because the Guard lived four doors away, I couldn't go back... My probation officer has said I can't go back. I had a home going into prison, but not now" Sean does not recall being asked about his risk of homelessness on reception at Cork Prison, but sought out the Post-Release Coordinator as "I knew I was going to be homeless" on release. Sean self-identified himself as homeless and engaged with the service to seek help.

Sean approached the Post-Release Coordinator and informed her that he was "going to be homeless" on release.

5.1.2 Review/Referral

The Post-Release Coordinator met with Sean "three or four times" to discuss his broader needs, and to decide what service(s) might have a role to play in

responding to these needs. For instance, Sean was referred for counselling to the Merchant's Quay addiction counsellor. He was also referred to the Focus Ireland In-Reach project worker. Sean was released (unplanned) after 6 months of his 2-year sentence.

5.1.3 Prepare and follow-up

Due to his unplanned release, Sean met with the In-Reach project worker on just one occasion prior to release. He felt that this meeting was an important changing point in his life:

“Because the chance of me being back in prison is because of routine. It is about getting up in the morning, going out, doing things, and coming home. And if I don't have a place to stay, I won't have a routine. If I don't have routine, I won't get a job, and then I'll be back in trouble again”.

During his pre-release meeting with the project worker, they discussed the project and Sean's expectations of the service.

Sean contacted the project worker on the day of his unplanned release. He was offered accommodation in an emergency hostel, but decided not to stay with this service as there was “too much heroin there and I wouldn't put myself into temptation”. Instead, Sean stayed with a friend on this first night out of prison.

Sean met with the project worker 12 times between July and October 2011. During these meetings, the project worker and Sean developed a case plan based on his needs. Apart from his risk of homelessness, a history of behavioural problems, drug and alcohol misuse, and a breakdown in his relationship with his family were identified as Sean's support needs. These difficulties were compounded by Sean's lack of ability to take charge of his own life.

“I hadn't a clue what to do, how to get things done for myself.” The meetings, he reported, “covered everything, we discussed everything that I needed to do to get myself in order and stay out of prison. We filled out social welfare forms, Cork Council forms.... Everything. I didn't know what to do or anything, or how to approach it. So I did it with [the project worker].”

5.1.4 Current Situation

At the time of interview (October 2011) Sean was living in private rented accommodation with a friend. He is completing a one-year computer training programme. If he successfully completes this training, he will be eligible for further training that will lead to employment opportunities. The project worker, he reports, helped him identify these training opportunities.

With the help of the In-Reach Project, he “got assessed by the Council to see if I can get rent allowance.” This application has been successful and he is now in receipt of this support.

5.1.5 Outcomes

Sean reports that he has been supported by the In-Reach Project to take control of his drug and alcohol problems. This was achieved, in part, by the introduction of a routine in his daily life that involved up-skilling, frequent contacts with the project worker, and concentration on the task of identifying suitable private rented accommodation.

Sean states that having access to the project worker, who can help him identify ways of overcoming his problems, has meant that he feels less alone now. He also feels better about himself, suggesting that the changes in his life that were facilitated by the project have had a positive impact on his self-esteem.

He also believes that he has better knowledge of the different services and how to access these services. He feels more empowered as a result of this knowledge. He was “very clueless” as to where to go to secure accommodation, education or employment, and the In-Reach service has been invaluable in this regard. “Where I am from there is none of this. There is no-one to help you. I didn’t have a clue until I met with [the project worker] and she told me what I needed to get, what to say, how to say it – Cork Council forms and things”.

When asked about what his life would have been like had the In-Reach Project not been available, he said that he would “be back on drink and drugs, and probably back in prison”.

5.2 Case Study 2: Mary

5.2.0 Background

Mary, 35, reports that her childhood memories are of parental alcoholism, physical abuse and domestic violence. At the age of 16 she became a heroin addict; an addiction that she struggled with for the next 15 years and cost between €400-€500 each day. She funded this addiction from the proceeds of burglaries, which led to numerous convictions and long sentences in Limerick Prison, and more recently in the Dòchas Centre, Mountjoy Prison in Dublin. Since the age of 17, her longest period out of prison has been 16 months, which coincided with her second pregnancy.

Mary has been in and out of homelessness since the age of 26 when she left her mother’s home. Since then, she has used emergency shelters in the Cork area, slept rough (roofless), stayed with a family member, or returned home to her mother. Prior to her most recent prison sentence, Mary was resident in a shelter for women in Cork City. She has two children aged 5 and 12, but has never lived with them due to her drug addictions and long prison sentences.

Mary's most recent conviction was for approximately 40 charges relating to robbery and burglary, and for which she received a 4-year sentence. Mary was transferred to the Dòchas Centre after 2 years, as she was involved in on-going altercations with another female prisoner at Limerick Prison. In the Dòchas Centre, she accessed the methadone treatment programme.

5.2.1 Engagement

In the Dòchas Centre, Mary informed the Probation Service that she would be homeless on release. "I went to Probation 'cause I knew that I was getting out and that I was homeless. And I didn't want to go to [emergency accommodation]" because she "did not want to be near heroin".

5.2.2 Review/Referral

According to Mary, the Probation Service in the Dòchas Centre was aware of the In-Reach Project in Cork. "They knew everything about it and I didn't know anything. I'd never heard of this project".

"She [the probation officer in the Dòchas Centre] said "look you've no place to go when you go back to Cork, you don't want to go back [the emergency accommodation] because there is drugs there", so she said, "I'll contact the In-Reach worker".

The Probation Service subsequently contacted the In-Reach Project in Cork.

5.2.3 Assessment

The In-Reach project worker visited the Dòchas Centre to meet with Mary. "I didn't know if she was just telling me things I wanted to hear, because to be honest that is what I was used to...", Mary reported.

Mary reports that she had always struggled to access services in Cork City as she "hadn't a clue about how to go about it". For instance, she didn't know how to apply for a medical card "or a deposit for a flat". She said that at the initial meeting with the In-Reach service, the project worker "talked me through everything that I would need to do when I got out" and that "she would help me to get all the things that I needed to get". Mary felt that she was starting to take control of her life.

One of Mary's greatest fears was that she would have to reside in emergency accommodation on release, where, she said, there was easy access to heroin. The project worker reassured her that they would work together to secure alternative accommodation as quickly as possible upon release.

"I said, 'Thanks be to God', because people had been promising me things, and then they would find out that I'm from Cork, and say "Oh, but you're from Cork we can't do anything for you". So I thought, "Jesus I'm not going to get anything."

5.2.4 Prepare and follow-up

As Mary was based in the Dòchas Centre, there was insufficient opportunity to hold multiple pre-release meetings, and her full assessment and case plan was not completed until her release. The project worker recalls that Mary:

“...Was looking to access housing and tenancy sustainment. She wanted support around getting back with her kids, computer classes and training and she wanted me to be involved with her probation worker. She also wanted a medical card and wanted help getting a doctor, and support around her drug use”.

Mary was initially accommodated in emergency accommodation on release from prison. After her first week in this accommodation, she went to the project worker and told her that she had “to get out of there” because she was among drug users and did not want to start taking heroin again.

“So we sat down with the paper and started looking for a place. And that evening we saw the first place, a small flat, and I said ‘Yeah, I like this one’”.

The landlord had worked with Focus Ireland in the past, and agreed that Mary could move in that evening. “I always wanted my own place”, Mary said, “but I just didn't know how to go about it. I'd prefer to be paying rent, than spending money on drugs”.

Mary also worked with Cork Alliance, an organisation that works with ex-offenders to help them reintegrate into society and reduce offending. She is continuing to access drug addiction counselling services, and is attending the Rape Crisis Centre following a sexual assault earlier in her life. Until recently the project worker met with Mary at least once a week to review her case. During these meetings they discuss Mary's educational opportunities, money management, her family situation, and any other concerns that arose.

5.2.5 Current Situation

Mary progressed well for a period of time after her release. She actively sought out opportunities to rebuild her life and reintegrate into society. She secured private rented accommodation and completed a preliminary computer training course.

Mary is currently on remand in Limerick Prison, following her involvement in an alleged burglary. She also returned to drug misuse temporarily before this imprisonment. While this outcome is disappointing, it does reflect the reality of the complex needs of those who access the In-Reach Project and that some service-users will struggle to redirect their lives despite intensive support.

5.2.6 Outcomes

Mary was interviewed in October 2011, at a time when she was engaging well with the support services and was positive about the future. At this time she felt that her engagement with the In-Reach Project had empowered her to take control of her own life, and to seek support when she needed it.

Mary had a place to call home for the first time since she left her family home at the age of 26. This, she said, removed her from an environment in which drugs were freely available and has increased her resilience to drug taking.

5.3 Case Study 3: John⁴⁰

5.3.1 Background

John is a 51 year-old man who has a history of homelessness, alcohol misuse and criminality. He has been in-and-out of prison since the age of 16. John was married but has been separated for over 10 years. John has 6 children, two of whom are deceased. John does not have contact with his children. John has contact with his parents and siblings however his relationship with them is problematic.

John has no formal education and has worked sporadically farm-labouring and cleaning. He has been homeless for the past 12 years and attributes this to the breakdown of his marriage, being in-and-out of prison and his misuse of alcohol. John has stayed in emergency hostels, but mainly sleeps rough when he does not have access to more secure accommodation. John has never lived in private rented accommodation.

5.3.2 Engagement and Review

John was referred to the In-Reach service by the Post-Release Service in April 2011. A Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA) was completed with John by the Post-Release Service. John was assessed as having high support needs and requiring a high level of pre- and post-settlement support.

John was met 5 months prior to his release from prison and work began on developing his case plan. John was met by the In-Reach project worker 12 times while in prison and it was through these meetings that John's support needs were identified.

5.3.3 Prepare and follow-up

It was agreed that John initially would be referred to a homeless hostel as there was no alternative accommodation available for him upon release from prison. It was recognised that as John had not lived independently, he would

⁴⁰ This case study was prepared by the Cork In-Reach Project.

need to develop skills that would ensure that when he secured private rented accommodation he would be able to maintain his tenancy.

John acknowledged that his misuse of alcohol would need to be addressed. He was not linked in with addiction services in the prison but agreed to attend AA meetings, which he did. John agreed to be referred to an addiction service for assessment.

John had previously linked in with a counsellor from the Traveller Outreach Service to address his relationship issues with his family. Contact was made with his counsellor prior to John's release and he agreed to link in John post-release.

John's literacy skills were poor and he identified that he wanted to learn to read and write once he was settled in his own place.

John was released to a hostel in September 2011. He needed high support from the In-Reach service on release. He was initially met three/four times a week. John was anxious about staying in the hostel and needed to be encouraged not to leave the hostel - his previous pattern had been to leave a hostel within the first week and sleep rough. In order to ensure that John stayed in this accommodation, links were made with John's key worker in the hostel.

John's literacy and communication skills were poor and he needed assistance with applying for his social welfare benefit and medical card. John was accompanied by the In-Reach worker to the Homeless Persons Unit, Department of Social Protection and a GP.

He attended key work meetings two times a week in preparation for moving into private rented accommodation. He started counselling and appeared to be managing his misuse of alcohol. As the weeks progressed, John stated that he was bored. A support plan was developed which tried to address this.

John was referred to the Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) and was accompanied to his initial meeting. He was also referred to the Cork Foyer Garden Project but did not follow through with this referral. John did not proceed with both referrals due to his misuse of alcohol.

John's misuse of alcohol increased and he began to miss his counselling appointments. He did, however, attend his key work meetings and paid his rent weekly in the hostel. John at this stage was spending all day out of the hostel and was not meeting his key worker.

A case plan review meeting was held with John, his key worker and In-Reach project worker in the hostel to discuss supporting John through this time. The outcome was that John would be referred to the Addiction Counsellor in the hostel and that housing options other than private rented would be explored (i.e. transitional housing). John started attending AA meetings and did well for two weeks.

John's circumstances changed when he met his current partner. He no longer wished to be referred to transitional accommodation. His level of alcohol misuse increased and he started to sleep out, returning to the hostel two/three nights for respite. This was discussed with John during a key work meeting and he agreed to go to a Treatment Centre. John was facilitated in going to this Centre, but only stayed for a week. He returned to the hostel and re-engaged with the In-Reach service.

5.3.4 Current Situation

Another case review meeting was held to discuss John's housing options, which now included his partner. John and his partner attended this meeting. It was identified at this meeting that John and his partner would find it difficult to secure private accommodation at this time and so they agreed to be referred to the Cork Simon Community, Gateway Project (Transitional Housing). John and his partner are currently waiting for a vacancy in this accommodation. John is still linked in with the In Reach service.

5.4 Best Practice

These case studies highlight a number of examples of good practice in case management.

1. The project worker was able to identify the needs of the service-users and put in place case management plans that addressed these needs. This response facilitated the transition from prison to community.
2. It is clear that the service-users were responsive to the format of the interventions offered. Involving service-users in their case management plans promotes a sense of empowerment and responsibility, and ensures that it is fully tailored to their needs.
4. One of the great strengths of the Prison In-Reach Project is that it allows for the building of a very strong alliance between the project worker and service-user. This leads to a building of trust, and a sense that even at a time of crisis there is someone to whom the service-user can turn to for support.

Section 6: Goal and Process Evaluation

6.0 Introduction

This section of the evaluation examines the extent to which the Cork Prison In-Reach Pilot Project has reached its stated goals. The project has 8 stated goals, and each is considered in turn below. In addition, the evaluation considers the experiences of the project team and project stakeholders in striving to attain these goals (i.e. a process evaluation).

6.1 Goal 1: Work with at-risk offenders

The service aims to work with offenders who have been previously homeless or are at risk of homelessness on release to ensure there are appropriate accommodation options in place.

In reviewing this goal, the focus is on the engagement and support provided to offenders in custody and the facilitators and barriers to the pre-release aspect of the project.

6.1.0 Goal evaluation

As outlined earlier, the In-Reach Project receives referrals (mainly from the Post-Release Coordinator) for prisoners who have been homeless or are at risk of homelessness. In the 2-year period, 32 referrals were received by the project, including two prisoners who did not engage with the project subsequently. Therefore the service worked with 30 'clients'.⁴¹

Of this group, 12 were homeless when referred to the service. The remaining referrals were for individuals 'at risk' of homelessness upon release from prison.

The project worker and Post-Release Coordinator worked collaboratively to ensure there were appropriate accommodation options in place for each service-user on release. This process is described in Section 4.5, and involves the project worker meeting prisoners pre-release to introduce the service to them, and agree a case plan. The project worker and Post-Release Coordinator also discuss the accommodation options for the prisoner on release, and liaise with the HPU to ensure that appropriate accommodation is in place.

⁴¹ Of these 30 referrals, 2 were re-referrals. As such the service worked with 28 different individuals. However, as these two individuals exited and then re-entered the service, they are considered separate 'service-users' for the purposes of this report.

Table 7 below presents a summary of where service-users were accommodated their first night out of prison, and their last known situation with regards to housing. Information was available for 27 service-users.

Table 7: Accommodation on first night upon release from prison (n=24), and last known housing situation (n=27)

	1st Night n=24		Last Known n=27
Emergency accommodation	9	Emergency accommodation	1
Transitional accommodation	5	Transitional accommodation	2
Treatment centre	1	Treatment centre	0
Street/rough sleeping	1	Street/rough sleeping	0
Friend/partner	2	Friend/partner	1
Private Rented Accommodation	2	Private Rented Accommodation	9
Living at home	4	Living at home	3
		Returned to Prison	4
		Still in Prison*	3
		Other**	4

* 'Still in Prison' refers to service-users who were engaged in the pre-release service (i.e. had yet to be released) when the data was made available to the evaluator, and based on data held by the service.

**Deceased (1), Emigrated (1), Unknown (2)

With one exception, all service-users (whose accommodation situation on their first night on release from prison was known) had some form of accommodation on their first night out of prison. The exception was one client who slept rough, as the project worker was not aware that he had been released (unplanned). Nine of the 24 service-users were accommodated in emergency accommodation (Cork Simon Community or St. Vincent's). Four of the service-users returned to their family home and 2 secured private rented accommodation before their release – with the support of the In-Reach Project.

The last known housing situation (as of February 2012) of the 27 service-users is also provided in Table 7. Nine had secured private rented accommodation and a further 3 were living at home. Seven were in prison, and 3 were either residing in emergency accommodation (1) or transitional accommodation (2).

Section 4.5 provided a detailed description of the pre-release work by the Post-Release Coordinator and project worker to arrange accommodation for prisoners on their exit from prison. Based on these figures, it would appear that the In-Reach Project and Post-Release Service have been successful in securing accommodation options for the majority of service-users upon release from Cork Prison.

6.1.1 Outcome evaluation

The service-users reported a sense of being involved in making decisions about accommodation options post-release and that this provided them with an opportunity to take control of their own lives. The outcome for offenders from the process was enhanced empowerment and self-efficacy.

A second outcome for offenders was that the pre-release work built trust and an alliance between the service-users and project worker. Again this is important, as on release from prison, ex-offenders can have high support needs and require access to a project worker with whom they have an established relationship.

6.1.2 Barriers to, and facilitators of, goal attainment

Probation staff in the prison, and other service providers, were very supportive of the In-Reach Project, showing a willingness to work with the project to discuss the needs of prisoners. This was particularly notable during initial stages of the service, when the project worker was able to work within the existing structures of the prison. This was described by the IPS as an ability to “mould the service around what was already happening in the prison”.

The level of professionalism of the In-Reach project worker during the two-year pilot was also identified as being an important factor in the success of the pre-release aspect of the service. The project worker was able to build relationships with the Post-Release Coordinator, prison officers, probation staff, other services provided in the prison, and the prison governor. Those interviewed during the evaluation identified her communication skills and work ethic as being major contributors to the success of the project to date.

Third, the Post-Release Coordinator role is widely viewed as being an essential element of the service. This individual coordinates the delivery of services in the prison, promoting a multidisciplinary approach to case management pre-release. She also reviews each prisoner to ascertain his suitability for the In-Reach Project prior to making a referral. This means that referrals to the In-Reach Project have been pre-screened and require very little additional review by the project worker prior to commencing work. According to the project worker, this means that her time in the prison is very directed and efficient.

The Post-Release Coordinator post is currently funded in yearly funding cycles. If this service is discontinued, then a gap in the referral system will emerge. Logically this gap could be filled by the Probation Service, as occurs in Limerick Prison. However, since 2010 the probation staff in Cork Prison only work with prisoners who are being released from prison on probation or where the offender requires post-release monitoring (as in the case of sexual offenders). This would limit prisoners access to the Probation Service, and by extension undermine the referral process to the In-Reach Project.

Finally, as noted earlier (Section 4.5.0) a number of those consulted during the evaluation process suggested that prisoners may not be aware of the presence of the In-Reach Project.

6.1.3 Conclusion

There is clear evidence from this evaluation that the project worked with offenders pre-release to identify their needs and to ensure that appropriate accommodation is in place on their release.

6.2 Goal 2: Meet prisoners pre-release

The service will ensure that the offender has been met in custody and that an assessment, service contract and case plan are in place prior to release.

The evaluation of this goal focuses on whether or not each service-user was met in custody, and if assessments and case plans were in place prior to their release.

6.2.0 Goal Evaluation

Met in custody

Based on the data recorded by the service, of the 30 service-users who engaged with the service, 26 were met in prison pre-release. Two were community referrals, and two were referred from the In-Reach Project in Limerick and had been met pre-release by that service.

On average four meetings were held with each service-user prior to release. There were variations in the intensity of the pre-release work – e.g. one service-user attended 13 pre-release sessions. This reflects the nature of intensive case management, where more intensive interventions are provided to those with greater and more complex needs.

Assessments conducted

Assessments were completed with 25 service-users, either by the Cork In-Reach project worker (9), Post-Release Coordinator (14), or the In-Reach Project in Limerick (2). Three disengaged from the service before their assessment could be completed, and two were transferred to another prison.

Service contract and case plan in place prior to release

Service contracts and case plans were in place for all 30 service-users. Where prisoners were released before the case plan could be finalised, this occurred as soon as practically possible post-release.

6.2.1 Outcome Evaluation

Service-users reported that the process of transitioning from prison to society was managed and controlled. The transition is managed through the pre-release meetings, the signing of the service contract, and work on the assessment and case plan. As a result they 'knew what to expect' and that their release from prison was less stressful than it otherwise would have been.

6.2.2 Barriers to, and facilitators of, goal attainment

The project worker reported that, in a number of cases, service-users could not be met or assessments carried out due to unplanned releases (as discussed in Section 4.5.1). Unplanned releases will always occur and do not reflect a failing on the part of the IPS. Yet they do impact on the ability of the project to fully engage with those at risk of homelessness. The Post-Release Coordinator noted that the frequency of unplanned releases has decreased recently. Under the Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) system, these should become even less frequent.

Prison staff also suggested that many of those at risk of homelessness on release do not admit to being homeless – as this would mean that they are not eligible for temporary release (TR). Others exit prison hoping to return to the family home, but very quickly end up in emergency shelters or on the street.

According to the Post-Release Coordinator, "You'd phone their Mam or sister or whoever and they would say 'Yeah he can come home', but he would only last a day or an hour because whatever issues they had before imprisonment are still there, and he finds himself homeless within a day or two".

6.2.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the In-Reach project worker and the Post-Release Coordinator worked with service-users prior to their release. This enabled the project worker to establish a service contract and develop a case plan.

6.3 Goal 3: Work with 7 service-users in 6 months

The service will aim to work with seven service-users in any six-month period.

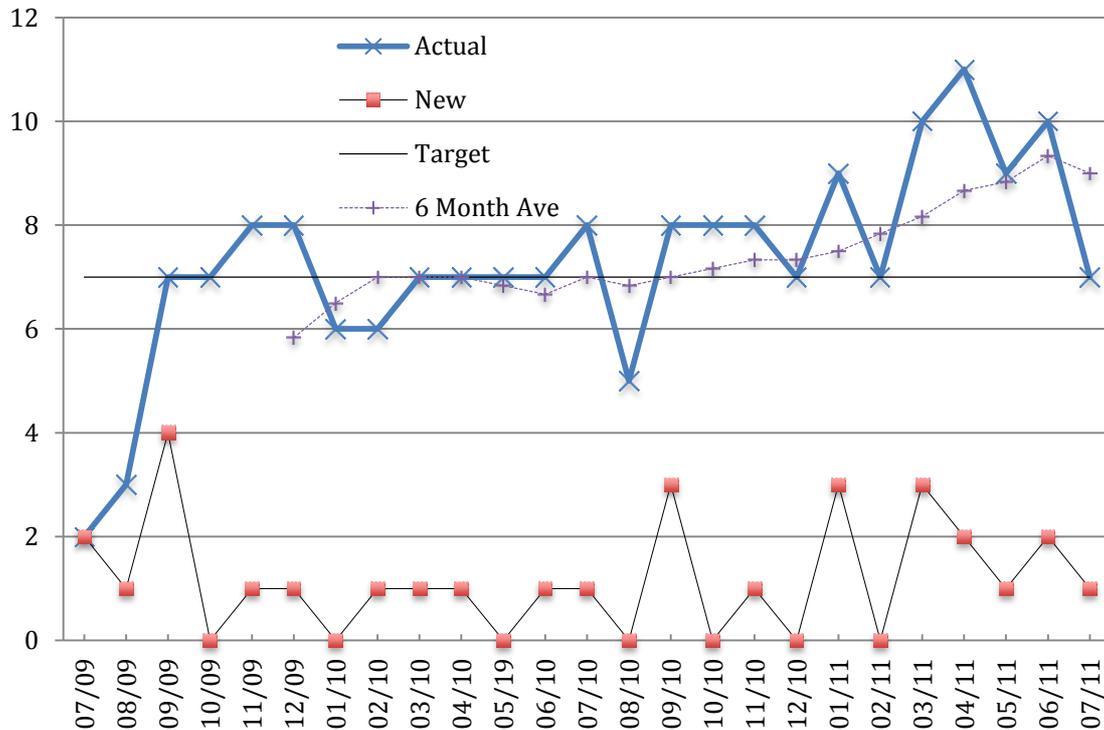
In addressing this project objective, data was analysed from the service-user database held locally by the Cork In-Reach Project, with additional information provided by the project worker on request.

6.3.0 Goal Evaluation

Figure 1 below plots the numbers of service-users entering the service each month ('New'), the total number of service-users worked with each month

(‘Actual’), a six-month rolling average (‘6 Month Ave’) and the target case-load of 7 service-users (‘Target’). As illustrated in the line-plots, the project was working with 7 service-users by the third month of the pilot. For the remaining period of the pilot, there were just three months when the project worker’s caseload fell below 7 service-users.

Figure 1: Caseload of project worker from July 2009 to July 2011.



6.3.1 Process evaluation

The Post-Release Coordinator controls the flow of referrals into the service. However, the project worker liaises with the Post-Release Coordinator around her caseload and availability to accept additional referrals. This has allowed the In-Reach Project to work at capacity, or above capacity, for most of the pilot period.

As discussed earlier, the *Project Protocol* states that the Post-Release Coordinator would be the main referral source to the project, but that when this individual was unavailable, any other service could refer prisoners. In practice, almost all pre-release referrals have come from the Post-Release Coordinator and, according to the project worker, when this individual is on leave no referrals from Cork Prison are made to the service.

6.3.2 Conclusion

A review of the service-user and case-load data held by the service suggests that the target caseload was met or exceeded for most of the pilot project period.

6.4 Goal 4: Liaise with accommodation providers

The service will liaise with accommodation providers in the community to ensure options exist on release.

This goal pertains to the ability of the project to identify and access accommodation options for prisoners on release.

6.4.0 Goal Evaluation

The service has maintained a record of the accommodation providers that have been involved in accommodating service-users on release from prison. As described earlier, the project worker and Post-Release Coordinator work together to secure accommodation options for service-users, and this has taken the form of liaison work with the HPU and accommodation providers.

Table 8 below identifies the homeless service providers that have accommodated the In-Reach service-users. In advance of a service-user arriving at one of these centres, the project worker will inform staff that the person is involved in the In-Reach Project and that she is his/her key worker.

Table 8: Homeless service providers who have accommodated In-Reach service-users

Statutory	Coordination	HPU
Voluntary	Emergency Accommodation	St. Vincent's Hostel
		Cork Simon Community
	Transitional Accommodation	Cork Foyer
		Sophia Housing
	Treatment Centre	Bruree
St. Helen's		

6.4.1 Process Evaluation

The greatest barrier to service provision is the absence of transitional accommodation in Cork City that is a dedicated resource for the In-Reach Project. Many of these prisoners have high-support needs. According to the project worker, what these ex-prisoners need is:

“...head space, an address even, for people who need to access treatment, or need to get a deposit for accommodation from the HPU, or want to get social welfare... and from where you could refer them on to other services. People would have the opportunity to find a place. This would be for up to three months, although some would only need it for a couple of weeks. People get very worried and anxious when

they are getting out, where they are going to have to stay, and who else will be there and if there will be drugs and so on”.

The service initially attempted to secure an accommodation unit through Cork City Council’s Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), but they were told that the service did not meet the RAS criteria. The HPU also declined to fund a unit for the project. Another option that was explored involved Focus Ireland renting a unit from a private landlord, and using this for In-Reach service-users.

At the time of completing this evaluation report, the In-Reach Project in Cork does not have access to a dedicated unit for service-users. The preferred model for transitioning prisoners into private rental accommodation is that those with high support needs would be accommodated in supported units. Such units are available to the In-Reach Project in Limerick as part of a larger set of supported accommodation units in Parnell Place. This building is owned by Focus Ireland, with three units set aside for the Limerick In-Reach Pilot Project.

6.4.2 Conclusion

The In-Reach Project has been successful in liaising with the various service providers in the Cork area, facilitating the placement of prisoners in various accommodation options post-release.

6.5 Goal 5: Case management model

The service will work to a case management model.

A detailed description of the case management model has been provided earlier in this report. In summary, case management involves a key worker working with a client to help address his needs, meeting frequently over a prolonged period of time, linking with other service providers, and who is readily available to the clients.⁴²

6.5.0 Goal Evaluation

The In-Reach Project works to a case management model, as described in Section 4.5 and illustrated in the case studies in Section 5. In summary, this has involved the following:

- The project worker has been the key worker for service-users, assessing their needs and designing and implementing case management plans.

⁴² These process-based descriptors are based on Morse, G (1999). A review of case management for people who are homeless: Implications for practice, policy and research. Chapter in Linda B. Fosburg & Deborah Dennis (Eds). Practical lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homelessness Research, US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

- Where the ex-prisoner has multiple needs, the project worker will liaise with other services (e.g. addiction services, education providers) to put in place the supports that are required.
- The project worker has worked with service-users for as long as is necessary to meet their needs. Those with more complex needs received a more intensive response, with more frequent meetings over a longer period of time than those with less complex needs.
- The service is 'available' to service-users. The service-users interviewed reported that the project worker could be easily reached, either in person or on the telephone, and that they could 'drop in' at short notice if they felt they needed support.

6.5.1 Process Evaluation

A strength of the Prison In-Reach Project is that pre-release work is followed up by an extensive post-release service. This intensive model best meets the needs of offenders whose risk factors for both homelessness and re-offending are complex.

6.5.2 Conclusion

The service matched its responses to individual service-users' needs, and this resulted in an intervention that followed best-practice in case management.

6.6 Goal 6: Stakeholders and Steering Groups

The service will have a representative on the Stakeholders Group and will report any blocks and gaps experienced by them or the wider group to management.

The *Project Protocol* envisaged a two-tiered monitoring and reporting structure. On the first tier, the project would report to a Stakeholders Group comprised of representatives from the various project partner organisations and local stakeholders. Members of this group would in turn report to a Steering Group comprising representatives from Focus Ireland and the IPS.

6.6.0 Goal Evaluation

Both groups could potentially play very important roles in the project. These groups would traditionally be involved in project management, planning, securing resources, monitoring progress, and approving future directions. Steering Groups also provide direct channels of communication between stakeholders. This ensures that all those involved in the project are kept updated on the progress of the project, and challenges that prevent it reaching its full potential.

6.6.1 Process Evaluation

According to project staff, early efforts to draw together meetings with the various project partners proved difficult, because other opportunities for the stakeholders to meet already existed in the Cork,

It was agreed by the local stakeholders and partner representatives that the establishment of a Stakeholders Group was not required in the way originally envisaged, and that operational issues and information sharing could take place at one of the existing fora.

According to the project worker:

“When we started here we set up a meeting with all the different services and stakeholders in Cork – to tell them about the service. And basically we were told “no, there are too many meetings already”, and people just felt it would be pointless. Instead it was suggested that we could be part of the Operations meeting, which has all the homeless agencies on it and Community Welfare Officers and so on, and that any difficulties that came up could be dealt with there... but the Operations meetings are really where they discuss clients, and it was not a place to discuss the service issues”.

Specific service issues were raised directly with the services involved (e.g. the Post-Release Coordinator, the HPU, or accommodation providers), but some staff felt that there was no forum to raise broader systems issues.

The Steering Group was established and has met as necessary to discuss the progress of the project. Regular progress reports were provided to the group by the service manager. Since the commencement of this evaluation in 2011, the Steering Group has not met formally by agreement, pending consideration of the final evaluation report. Bilateral contact has continued between Focus Ireland and the IPS on matters arising of a strategic nature.

6.6.2 Conclusion

The Stakeholders Group was not formed as other homeless fora exist in Cork. The Steering Group has met as necessary to discuss the progress of the project.

6.7 Goal 7: Liaise with Post-Release Service

The service will liaise with the Post-Release Services in relation to referrals made.

6.7.0 Goal Evaluation

The project worker liaises with the Post-Release Coordinator through weekly meetings in the prison, and through more frequent telephone conversations to discuss new referrals or service-users currently engaged with the service. To date all referrals from Cork Prison have come through the Post-Release Service, and as a result the Post-Release Coordinator is familiar with the service-users engaged with the project.

The Post-Release Coordinator reported that she valued the extent to which the project worker would keep her informed on the progress that was being made with the ex-prisoners following release.

As the Post-Release Coordinator noted:

“Before [July 2009] if I was sending them to the hostels, it was very rare that I would get feedback. But now I get a sense of continuation back into the community, and I’ll even meet with [the project worker] from time to time and visit with the ex-prisoners or meet with them for coffee”.

6.7.1 Conclusion

The Post-Release Coordinator made almost all of the referrals from Cork Prison into the In-Reach Project, and is familiar with the circumstances faced by each service-user engaged with the project. On release the project worker keeps the Post-Release Coordinator updated on progress being made with the ex-prisoners.

6.8 Goal 8: Maintain Statistics

The service will ensure that all relevant referral and service-user statistics are recorded.

Caseload statistics provide an important measure of the activities of the project. However their utility is determined by the accuracy with which statistics are recorded, and the depth and breadth of the information held. This evaluation addressed the following questions relating to this goal.

- Were statistics maintained for the service?
- Was this information reliable?
- Was the information useful in evaluating the service?

6.8.0 Were statistics maintained for the service?

There are three sources of data on the Cork Prison In-Reach Project.

Focus Ireland’s MIPS database contains summary information on the activities of the In-Reach Service, entered at the end of every month.

Information recorded in MIPs includes the number of new cases entering the service, number of cases in the service at the end of the preceding month, number of unplanned disengagements, and number of planned disengagements and cases closed. The number of referrals received and accepted is also recorded. Focus Ireland can then run summary 'reports' for the service that provide a numerical overview of the activities of the service. The evaluator was provided with a MIPS report covering the period July 2009 to July 2011.

Focus Ireland's bespoke Client Database contained a record for each service-user that was updated by the Focus Ireland project staff as soon as possible after contact with a client. A client's file on the database includes a description of their needs, risks, case plan etc. Due to the confidential nature of this information, the evaluator did not access this database.

The In-Reach project maintains an Excel file of its activities and service-user profile details. For each referral received, information is recorded on the date of referral, whether or not an assessment has been completed, the offending behaviour of the prisoner, services 'linked-in with the prisoner', housing situation, needs and outcomes. This record includes both numerical information (e.g. number of pre-release meetings with the service-user) and descriptive content (e.g. 'client didn't contact the service post-release'). The evaluator had access to this data after the service had removed information that could lead to the identification of individual service-users.

Conclusion: The service has maintained statistics on the activities of the service and service-user profile details.

6.8.1 Was this information reliable?

The MIPS data and Excel data serve different purposes, and thus record different information. Whereas the MIPS data is 'summary' in nature, the Excel data is more detailed and provides case-by-case information. On first review of the two databases, it was clear that there were some discrepancies between the two sources. Following consultations with the service, and with a Focus Ireland staff member who works with the MIPS database, it was concluded that the Excel data was accurate, and that the MIPS database contained some inaccuracies that needed to be corrected.

The Excel data contained a summary of the information held in the individual service-users' files. This information was reliable, specific, and where clarification was required, the project worker was able to provide this.

Conclusion: The Excel data was accurate, but the MIPS database contained some inaccuracies that made this data less reliable for the purposes of this evaluation.

6.8.2 Was the information useful in the evaluation of the service?

The Excel data was useful in completing this evaluation. The dates of referrals provided a timeline for entry into the service and there were clear entries on the needs of the individual service-users, and services accessed by the service-users.

Conclusion: The information retained by the service was useful in evaluating the service.

6.8.3 Conclusion

The Excel data contained the required information to complete this evaluation, and where additional information was sought by the evaluator, the project was able to draw this information from the case notes of individual service-users. This objective was attained, but recommendations for recording statistics in the future are made later in this report.

Section 7: Conclusions and recommendations

7.0 Introduction

This section commences by presenting some conclusions that follow from the evidence presented in Sections 1-6 (7.1). Subsequently, recommendations are made for future service provision (7.2).

7.1 Conclusions

Section 2 presented an overview of the risk of homelessness, and range of other difficulties, that can be experienced by ex-offenders on release from prison. The conclusions that arise from this review are that:

- Ex-prisoners often require the support of voluntary and statutory organisations to successfully reintegrate fully into society. Unfortunately support is not always available and ex-prisoners can struggle to access services and experience a sense of isolation as a result.
- These supports are required because ex-prisoners are more likely to experience mental illnesses, addiction disorders, family disintegration, poverty and unemployment than the general population. They are also particularly at risk of homelessness. The complex needs of prisoners means that any response to these needs must be holistic and sufficiently intensive.
- Homelessness can present a risk factor for reoffending. Research would suggest that interventions and services that are cognisant of the drivers of offending behaviour, that are delivered in a format to which service-users are receptive, and that customise the response to the individual needs of service-users, should lead to a reduction in the probability of repeat offending.

Section 3 provided an overview of the history of the emergence of the In-Reach Project in Cork Prison, and considered the extent to which the service was compatible with Government policy on homelessness. It also reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the project partners, and the setting (Cork Prison) in which the pre-release service is delivered. The conclusions drawn here were that:

- The Cork Prison In-Reach Project emerged from a recognition amongst Focus Ireland, the IPS, the Probation Service, and the HPU that prisoners are at risk of homelessness and this can exacerbate other co-morbid problems that they may experience. These organisations also had a history of working in partnership in providing a Prison In-

Reach service in Dublin, and Focus Ireland had a 'track record' of working with prisoners and ex-prisoners. Cork and Limerick Prisons were chosen as locations for new In-Reach Projects because homeless In-Reach services were less well developed in these institutions.

- The concept of Prison In-Reach is fully compatible with national strategy on homelessness as set out in *The Way Home: A strategy to address adult homelessness in Ireland 2008-2013*. As with the In-Reach Project, *The Way Home* recognises that prisoners have complex needs, require a tailored response to these needs, and that any response must involve multiple agencies. It also identifies the case management approach as the most suitable model of working with homelessness, the model used by the Prison In-Reach Project.
- In considering future delivery of the project, a number of recent developments in Cork Prison were identified. The roll out of the Integrated Sentence Management (ISM), when combined with a move to community-based sentences, is likely to mean that the profile of prisoners in Cork Prison will change in the coming years. There will be fewer prisoners, they will serve longer sentences, and may have more complex problems. ISM will also enhance the ability of the prison services to identify and engage prisoners who are at risk of homelessness on discharge. This may lead to increased referrals to the Prison In-Reach Project in the future, and a requirement for more pre-release work and more intensive case management of service-users.
- ISM will also result in a reconfiguration of the pre-release services in Cork Prison. ISM is designed to be a multi-disciplinary and dynamic process and is currently evolving. Through this process there may be an opportunity for the project to accept more referrals, do more pre-release work, and grow the service into one staffed by a full-time project worker.

Section 4 provided a functional overview of the operation of the In-Reach Project and a profile of the service-users accessing the service between July 2009 and July 2011. It also considered the extent to which other services providing In-Reach work into Cork Prison are resulting in a duplication of effort, and the costs and benefits of the Cork Prison In-Reach service. The evidence presented in this section suggests that:

- The Post-Release Service is widely viewed by the project partners as of central importance to the In-Reach Project. The Post-Release Coordinator identifies, assesses and refers clients into the service, meaning that when the project worker is in the prison, she is meeting with service-users who are already known to be at risk of homelessness and who wish to engage with the service. When the project worker is present in the prison, her work is scheduled and

directed. This is important given that the project worker works part-time on the project.

- There is no evidence of a duplication of effort between the Cork Prison In-Reach Pilot Project, the Resettlement Service, Cork Alliance and the In-Reach activities of the Cork Simon Community. The Cork Simon Community does not have a preventative role in the prison, and meets with prisoners who have accessed their emergency shelters in the past. The Resettlement Service and the In-Reach Pilot Project are complementary, rather than overlapping. The Resettlement Service provides general support for prisoners in preparing for their resettlement, in contrast to the In-Reach Pilot Project, which is a specialist service. In addition, both the In-Reach Project and the Resettlement Service work at full capacity in a setting where ISM is likely to lead to a growth in demand on their services. Cork Alliance does not specialise in the area of tenancy support, and will contact the In-Reach service on behalf of a client who is at risk of homelessness on release from prison.
- A prisoner's history of risks is indicated on the referral form to the In-Reach project. An assessment of the risks involved was undertaken using Focus Ireland's internal procedures, and the Guardian system adopted by Focus Ireland was in operation, however, no formal risk assessments were conducted with these individuals. The project worker did explore the potential to administer formal risk assessments, but was advised that this required specialist training. Instead the project worker and Post-Release Coordinator discussed the risks posed by each individual being referred into the project, and based on their interactions with and knowledge of his behaviour.
- The costs of providing the In-Reach service were estimated at €46,657 in Year 1 and €48,032 in Year 2. This would appear to be a relatively inexpensive service, when compared with the cost of accommodating a prisoner in prison for one year (€70,513). A financial cost-benefit analysis was not provided in this report due to the lack of a reliable methodology for estimating financial benefits to society.

In Section 5, three case studies were presented based on interviews with service-users and the project worker. These case studies illustrate the stages of progression through the In-Reach Project, from engagement to referral, acceptance, case planning, post-release implementation of the case plan, and disengagement from the service. The case studies identified a number of examples of best-practice in working with prisoners and ex-prisoners, including:

- There was clear evidence of thorough pre-release assessment of the prisoners' needs and this led to the development of a case plan for managing these needs post-release.

- Prisoners were also responsive to the approach used by the In-Reach Project, and felt empowered through their involvement in the decisions made about what would occur upon their release.
- The case studies illustrated the importance of the alliance that develops between the service-user and project worker, and the impact of this alliance on the prisoner's trust in the project worker and his willingness to engage with the service post-release.

Section 6 presented the evaluation of each of the stated goals of the project. The results of this goal evaluation were that:

- There is clear evidence that the project worked with offenders pre-release to identify their needs and to ensure that appropriate accommodation is in place for their release. The following points are of particular relevance:
 - Stakeholders praised the professionalism of the project worker, her ability to connect with prisoners and prison staff, and her willingness to work within existing structures and practices in the prison.
 - The Post-Release Coordinator's role means that work conducted by the project worker is efficient and directed.
 - The project worker is working with some ex-offenders with a history of violent offending behaviour; while the Focus Ireland procedures were operated, no formal risk assessments were conducted with these individuals.
 - The project has not been promoted in the prison through any form of awareness campaign. Some at-risk prisoners may not be aware of its existence.
- Where possible, the In-Reach project worker or Post-Release Coordinator conducted an assessment with service-users prior to their release. This enabled the project worker to formulate a case plan and to establish a service contract with the service-user. One notable barrier to the delivery of this was unplanned releases, which meant that some prisoners were released before the assessment and case plan could be completed.
- A review of the service-user and caseloads data held by the service indicates that the target caseload of 7 service-users was reached within three months of project start-up.
- The In-Reach Project has been successful in liaising with the various service providers in the Cork area, facilitating the placement of prisoners in these settings post-release. However the fact that the project does not have direct access to step-down accommodation is viewed as being a limitation of the service.

- The service matched its support response to individual service-users' needs, and this resulted in an intervention that followed best practice in case management.
- The service maintained service-user profile and activities data that contained information for this evaluation, and where additional information was required, the project worker was able to provide this.
- The In-Reach Project liaised with the Post-Release Coordinator in relation to all referrals, and provided weekly updates as to progress with service-users both pre- and post-release.
- The Stakeholders Group was not formed as other homeless for a involving the same stakeholders were already in existence in Cork. The Steering Group has met as necessary to discuss the progress of the project.

7.2. Recommendations

A key objective of this evaluation is to make recommendations for the future delivery of the Prison In-Reach Project in Cork Prison. The recommendations presented below are based on the obstacles to achieving the projects goals, which were outlined earlier in this report.

Barrier: The absence of access to dedicated supported accommodation units for prisoners exiting prison was viewed by the project partners as being the greatest limitation of the service. The preferred model for transitioning prisoners into private rented accommodation is that those with high-support needs would be accommodated in high-support units initially, until such a time that they would be ready to move into private rented accommodation. Such units are available to the In-Reach Project in Limerick, but are not currently available in Cork. Based on consultations with the project staff and other stakeholders, it is unlikely that funding will be made available for a step-down facility in Cork. Alternative accommodation models with support are needed, in particular the potential to use private rented accommodation.

Recommendation: The project partners should collectively, and at Steering Group level, consider how the absence of step-down high-support or low-support accommodation in Cork can be addressed.

Barrier: The project worker reported that in a number of cases prisoners were not met pre-release due to unplanned releases. It is accepted that these occur as a result of overcrowding, and are largely beyond the control of the IPS. However, as ISM is being rolled out there will be scope to enhance discharge

planning for those serving sentences of greater than 12 months. Within this, there may be an opportunity to introduce mechanisms whereby unplanned releases are notified to both the prisoner and project worker concurrently.

Recommendation: The project partners should consider the opportunity presented by ISM to provide dual notification of unplanned releases to prisoners and the project worker concurrently.

Barrier: Attempts by the In-Reach project staff at the start of the pilot project to hold meetings with the various project partners and local stakeholders proved difficult, as there were already a number of other homeless fora in Cork. It was agreed by the local stakeholders and partner representatives that the establishment of a Stakeholders Group in the way originally intended was not essential, and that operational issues and information sharing could take place at the Operations meetings (CWOs and homeless organisations in Cork are represented on this group).

The evaluator accepts that there is little opportunity to establish a Stakeholders Group in Cork. The core stakeholders locally (i.e. the IPS staff, Probation Service staff, and the Post-Release Coordinator) meet frequently and are aware of the activities of the project. The HPU also works closely with the service. The In-Reach project worker and Post-Release Coordinator have an excellent working relationship. As such, there is no evidence that the absence of a Stakeholders Group has undermined the project. However, not all staff were aware of the decision to operate in this manner and Focus Ireland's communication of the agreed governance structure could have been improved.

Specific In-Reach service issues were raised directly with the partner organisations involved (e.g. the Post-Release Coordinator, the HPU, or accommodation providers), however the lack of a Stakeholders Group meant that there was no forum to raise broader systems issues.

Recommendation: The project staff should keep the local stakeholders up-to-date with the activities of the service through service update reports distributed quarterly at the Operations meetings. Broader service issues and blockages should be brought by the service manager to the Steering Group.

Barrier: The absence of formal Steering Group meetings since the commencement of this evaluation project in 2011 has impacted on communication amongst the project partners.

Steering Group meetings were designed to offer an important mechanism for opening lines of communication between project partners, and for ensuring that all partners are aware of their responsibilities to the project. It also allows for any barriers to service provision to be identified and collectively addressed.

The Steering Group has met as necessary to discuss the progress of the project, and regular progress reports were provided to the group by the service manager. However, the Steering Group agreed not to meet formally from the date of the commencement of this evaluation project. While bilateral contact has continued between Focus Ireland and the IPS on matters arising of a strategic nature during this time the absence of formal meetings was noted by some staff..

Recommendation: The Steering Group should meet formally once a quarter. Members should receive quarterly updates from the service manager detailing activities and barriers to service provision. *Terms of Reference* should be established for the group that set out the roles and functions of the group. As the coordinating partner, Focus Ireland should take the lead in implementing this recommendation. Focus Ireland should ensure that where changes are made to reporting/governance structures these should be effectively communicated to all staff and stakeholders.

Barrier: A number of those consulted during the evaluation suggested that prisoners may not be aware of the presence of the In-Reach Project in Cork Prison, and suggested that some effort to publicise the service should be considered.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given by the Steering Group to publicising the service within the prison (for example, posters or leaflets). The service should, in conjunction with the IPS and drawing on the experience of the In-Reach Project in Dublin, consider how the awareness of the project among prisoners could be enhanced.

Barrier: Most referrals into the project came through the Post-Release Coordinator. When the Post-Release Coordinator is on leave, according to the project worker, no referrals are made to the service. This is contrary to the *Project Protocol* which states that in such instances, any service may refer a prisoner to the In-Reach Project. At the time of writing, referrals are increasingly originating from the Industrial Manager tasked with introducing ISM, but are referred via the Post-Release Coordinator.

Recommendation: When ISM is fully resourced, those running the system should, in the absence of the Post-Release Coordinator, refer prisoners directly to the In-Reach Project.

Barrier: *The Way Home* states that in the future, funding allocations may be linked to the ability of projects to evidence the effectiveness of the interventions that they provide. In the context of Prison In-Reach, this will require empirical evidence on long-term housing outcomes for service-users. Evidence relating to levels of recidivism among service-users (and on other outcomes such as empowerment, self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism) should also be gathered. In terms of recidivism, a commonly used methodology is to compare levels of reconviction or re-entry to prison among service-users with a matched sample of former prisoners who did not access the service. This will allow for a full outcome evaluation in the future.

Recommendation: The project partners should gather evidence on the long-term outcomes of the project for service-users.

Barrier: The project worker is working with some ex-offenders with a history of violent offending behaviour. Of the 27 service-users for which offending behaviour history was available, 7 had been imprisoned for assault/GBH or manslaughter (i.e. a Category 1 Offence).

A prisoner's history of risks (e.g. sexual offending, vulnerability, arson, self-harm, violence to others etc.) is indicated on the referral form to the In-Reach project. However, while Focus Ireland's own risk assessment procedures were in operation, no formal risk assessments were conducted with these individuals. The project worker did explore the potential to administer risk assessments, but was advised by a Forensic Psychologist in the prison that this required training. She was further advised that the project worker and Post-Release Coordinator should discuss the potential risks posed by each referral, and use this in lieu of a formal risk assessment.

Recommendations:

- The project worker should complete a lone working ongoing risk assessment form for each service-user. This risk assessment should be informed by the referral form, information from linked support services, the Holistic Needs Assessment, and observed risk issues.
- Where a prisoner has a history of sexual and/or violent offending behaviour, the Guardian phone monitoring service should continue to be used when meeting with the ex-prisoner in the community.
- Focus Ireland should consider training opportunities for project staff on forensic risk and lone working with ex-offenders.

Barrier: Statistics held on service activities vary across databases.

There were marginal differences between the MIPS database and Excel records recorded by the project on service activities and service-user profile details. As a result, activity data run by the service locally and in Focus

Ireland's head office may differ slightly. This could be rectified by the In-Reach Project adding extra fields of data to their Excel records, and using this new data to generate the MIPS returns. For each service-user, the date of entry to and exit from the service should be recorded. The 'actual', 'new' and 'disengaged' data for the MIPS return should then be drawn from this information.

Recommendation: The data recorded by the project in Cork should be expanded to include the relevant data that needs to be recorded in the MIPS database, ensuring that the two databases contain the same information.

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