

Understanding the transition between the community and prison for individuals with multiple and complex needs

Executive Summary

Background

Introduction

This report looks to explore the transition between the community and prison for clients with multiple and complex needs using the Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead client group as an example. This report should be used as a scoping exercise helping to understand the situation facing these individuals.

About Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead

The Fulfilling Lives Programme is seeking to help people with complex needs to better manage their lives, by ensuring that services are more tailored and better connected to each other. The focus of the programme is on those people who often spiral around the system(s), are excluded from the support they need and experience a combination of at least three of the following four problems; homelessness; re-offending; problematic substance misuse and mental ill health.

Our goal is to improve and better coordinate services to support people across Newcastle and Gateshead living with multiple and complex needs – to see people for the potential they have, rather than for their problems.

The longevity of the programme and level of funding allows real opportunity to make a serious impact upon the lives of people with complex needs living in and between Newcastle and Gateshead. This means that beyond supporting the individual, one of the main aims of Fulfilling Lives is to learn through the programme, and through that learning evoke a change

to the system that will allow us all to work more effectively for people with multiple and complex needs.

Fundamental to this learning is the engagement of service users in the delivery of the programme and finding ways of improvement from a service user perspective.

Context

Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead aims to support the wider system to improve services and support for individuals with multiple and complex needs. One of the key areas of the programmes focus is those periods of transition i.e. when individuals are moving from one environment to another, or experiencing a significant change. Evidence from the first two years of our programme have identified these periods to be time of increase in chaotic behaviour, crisis and vulnerability amongst the clients. One of these transition areas that is frequently identified is that of prison release.

This report aims to inform the understanding of this period for individuals with multiple and complex needs. Section one is a literature review exploring existing findings relating to prison release and multiple and complex needs. Section two is a review of the findings from the Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead caseload.

Prison release and community transition – understand the journey for people with complex needs

Demographic

The data used for these analysis includes all clients who have served a custodial sentence during their time working with FLN&G. A total of 50 clients meet this criteria, constituting 21% of our overall accepted caseload to date.

The demographic breakdown of these 50 clients are (frequency):

- 32% female (16) and 68% (34) male.
- 86% White British (43), 2% Asian (1), 2% Latin American (1), and 10% did not disclose their ethnicity (5).

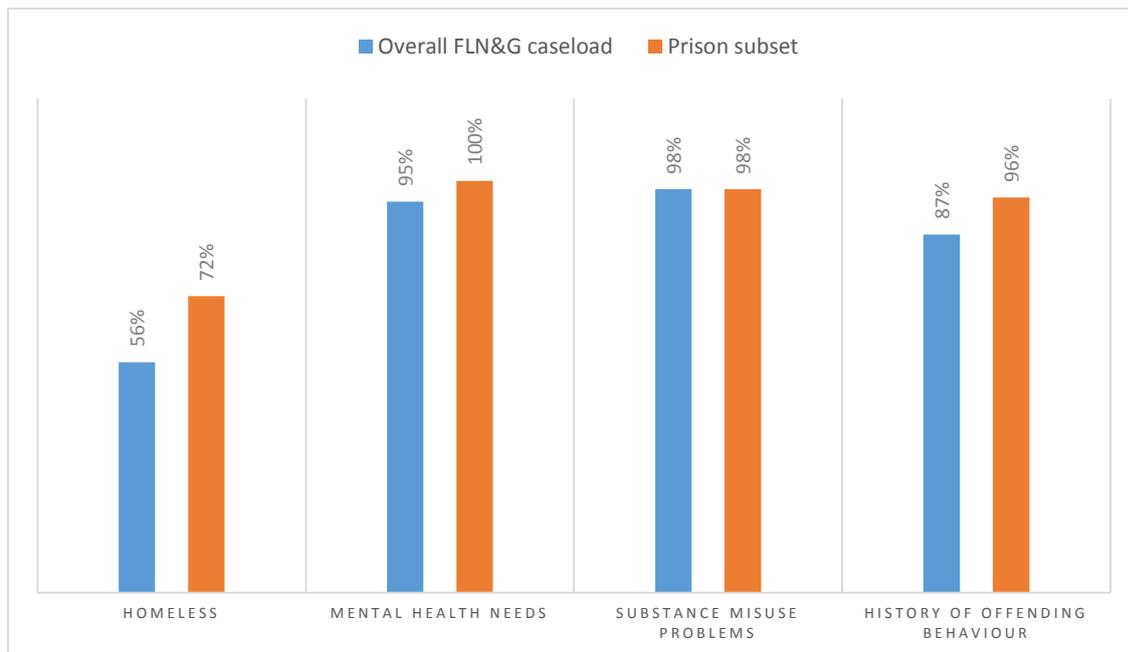
- The age breakdown is:

Age range	Percentage	Frequency
20-25	8%	4
25-30	20%	10
30-35	30%	15
35-40	30%	15
40-45	4%	2
45-50	8%	4

- 10% (5) have a physical disability or long term health condition.
- 48% (24) are Newcastle based, and 52% (26) are Gateshead based

Support Needs

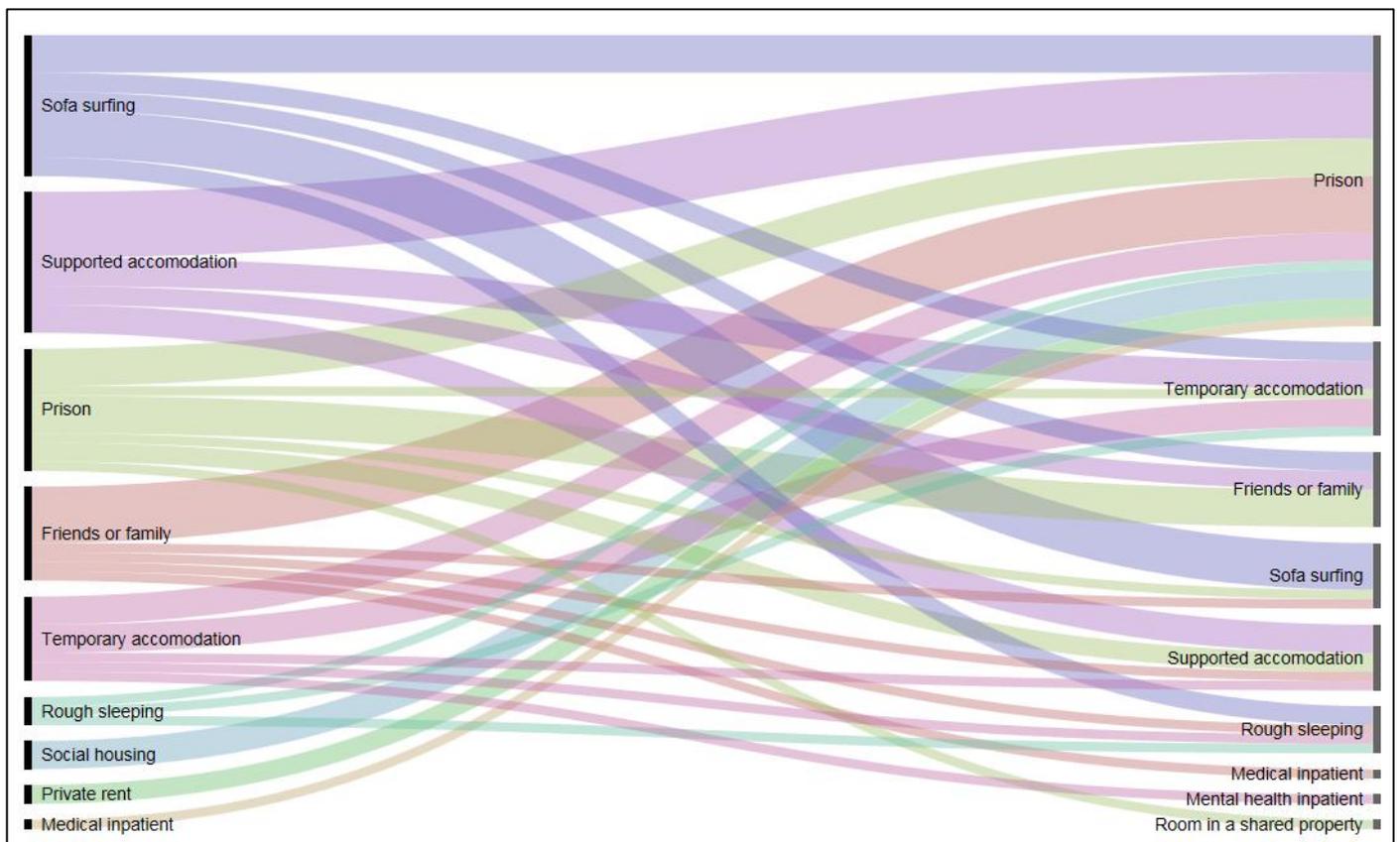
The below chart shows a comparison between the support needs, at time of referral, of the overall FLN&G caseload and a subset of those clients who have been in custody. This comparison has been done to help understand whether this group of clients are showing any patterns of need that separates them from the overall cohort.



The prison subset of clients do present with a higher level of need than the average FLN&G client. Significantly, there is a 16 percentage point difference between the overall cohort and these specific clients, giving an indication that there is a link between housing or accommodation situation and offending behaviour.

Housing Options

We have mapped the accommodation status pre and post prison, which shows the following patterns.



It should be noted that not all of these transitions are negative – 20% of these transitions would account for an improved housing situation than prior to release. However 37% are a negative change in accommodation meaning an individual had either temporary accommodation, supported accommodation or their own tenancy prior to custody, and on release were rough sleeping, sofa surfing or with friends or family.

Accommodation on Release

Analysis of clients pre and post prison accommodation identifies how transient and unstable their accommodation is.

- **71% of clients had different accommodation on release than they had prior to custody**
- **44% were released to No Fixed Abode**

Accommodation on release	Number of clients	Average length of stay (days)	Average ongoing accommodations
Rough Sleeping	5	21	6
Sofa Surfing	9	110	4
Family or friends	9	73	4
Temporary accommodation	11	50	4
Supported accommodation	8	112	3
Room in a shared property	1	87	1
Hospital	1	5	2
Mental Health Inpatient	1	45	7
Still in custody	33	-	-

It is apparent from these figures that the more unstable the housing situation an FLN&G client is released to, then the more chaotic that their housing or accommodation situation will continue to be. However whilst rough sleeping clearly results in the shortest transition before moving on to a different accommodation, it should be highlighted that temporary accommodation only has an average of 50 days before an individual moves accommodation. This is lower than the average time spent for those who are staying in unstable accommodation such as sofa surfing or with family or friends. This is a particular concern as these individuals are likely to be hidden from support helping individuals transition between prison and the community as it is likely they will be recorded as being housed and moving into a supportive environment.

Accommodation on Release by Local Authority

Accommodation on release	Newcastle	Gateshead	Total
Rough Sleeping	4	1	5
Sofa Surfing	6	3	9
Family or friends	2	7	9
Temporary accommodation	8	3	11
Supported accommodation	4	4	8
Room in a shared property	-	1	1
Hospital	-	1	1
Mental Health Inpatient	1	-	1
Still in custody	14	18	32

What is apparent is that neither Local Authority has a fully successful prison release strategy with individuals in both Newcastle and Gateshead being released with no fixed abode (NFA).

The breakdown between the two Local Authorities show relatively similar trends in post release accommodation with 52% (13) of Newcastle prison release being housed in provided accommodation, and 48% (12) in NFA or in less stable accommodation, against 45% (9) and 55% (11) in Gateshead respectively.

That both areas see a high proportion of individual's sofa surfing or residing with family or friends post prison release emphasises a concern around hidden homelessness, and individuals in unstable or unsafe accommodation not being visible to Local Authority support.

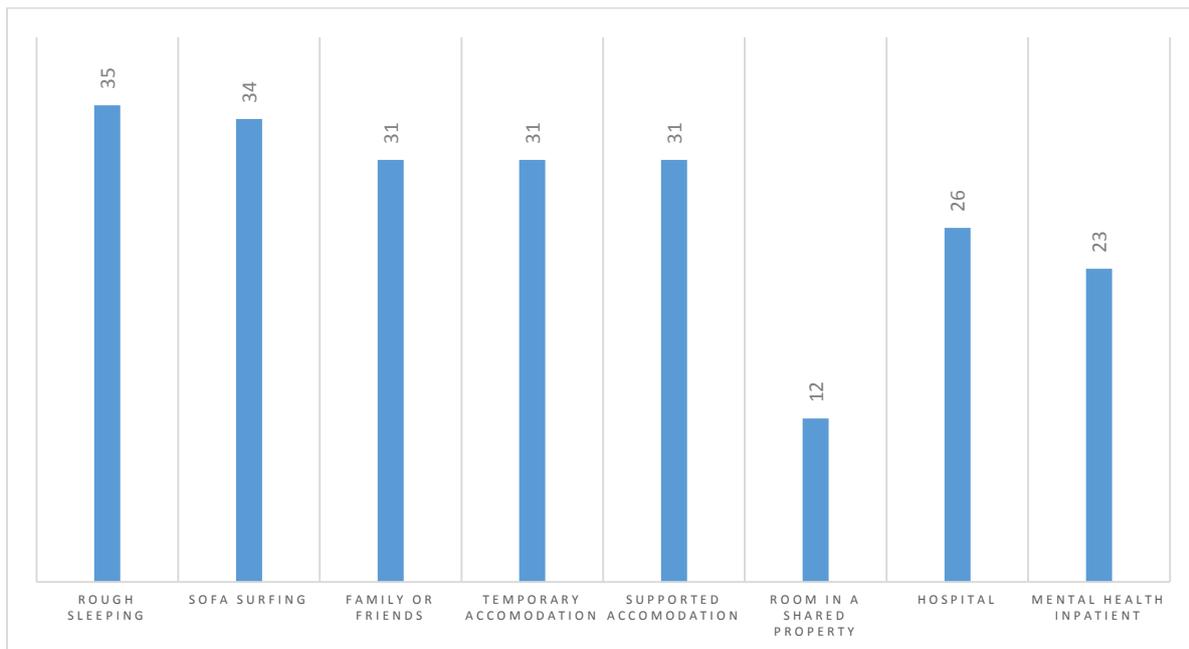
Ongoing Accommodation

The levels of chaos and crisis increase the more volatile and vulnerable an individual's housing situation

All clients in the Fulfilling Lives programme are assessed using the New Directions Team Assessment (NDTA), or Chaos Index at regular sampling points. This is a tool developed by South West London and St

George's Mental Health Trust as a way of assessing people with chaotic lives who would be appropriate for their services. The tool requires the individual to be scored on 10 different

criteria relating to engagement with services; intentional self-harm; unintentional self-harm; risk to others; risk from others; stress and anxiety; social effectiveness; alcohol/drug abuse; impulse control; and housing. A high score indicates high levels of chaos, with the highest score being 48. The below chart shows the average NDTA score of clients taken shortly following release from prison, and separated out by their housing situation at time of release.



Following release from prison the majority of FLN&G clients are still presenting as highly chaotic. A score of over 30 in the NDTA would be considered high levels of chaos. Whilst there is some differentiation between those who are released NFA against those who are released into temporary or supported accommodation, nearly all housing options demonstrate that individuals with multiple and complex needs are being released from prison with high support needs and chaotic behaviour.

Reoffending

42% (21) of these FLN&G clients have either re-offended or been recalled into custody during the time they have been engaged with the programme. For the majority (15) of these individuals they have had two custodial sentences whilst engaged, however 3 individuals have

returned to prison 3 times, 2 individuals four time and 1 individual 5 times. There is little difference in the re-offending figures dependent on Local Authority with 10 clients in Gateshead and 11 in Newcastle.

42% (21) of these FLN&G clients have either re-offended or been recalled into custody during the time they have been engaged with the programme.

We have mapped accommodation in relation to reoffending, which shows the following.

Accommodation prior to remand	Number of clients	Percentage re-offending
Rough Sleeping	3	67%
Sofa Surfing	15	53%
Family or friends	11	73%
Temporary accommodation	9	67%
Supported accommodation	15	40%

It is clear that the accommodation that is least likely to result in return to prison is supported accommodation – which is the most stable, holistic and supportive of the accommodations that FLN&G clients are released into.

Case Study 1: JW

We have looked at four cases across Newcastle and Gateshead to provide an in-depth look at their transitions from prison to community. The case studies have been developed in a timeline format, mapping their journey since joining the Fulfilling Lives programme. An example of the case study.

JW is a 29 year old male who was referred to FLN&G by Northumbria CRC in February 2015. At the time of referral he was staying at his mother’s address although due to their relationship this was unstable and he was at risk of street homelessness. He was using legal highs on a daily basis to the extent that it was affecting his health. He reported feeling

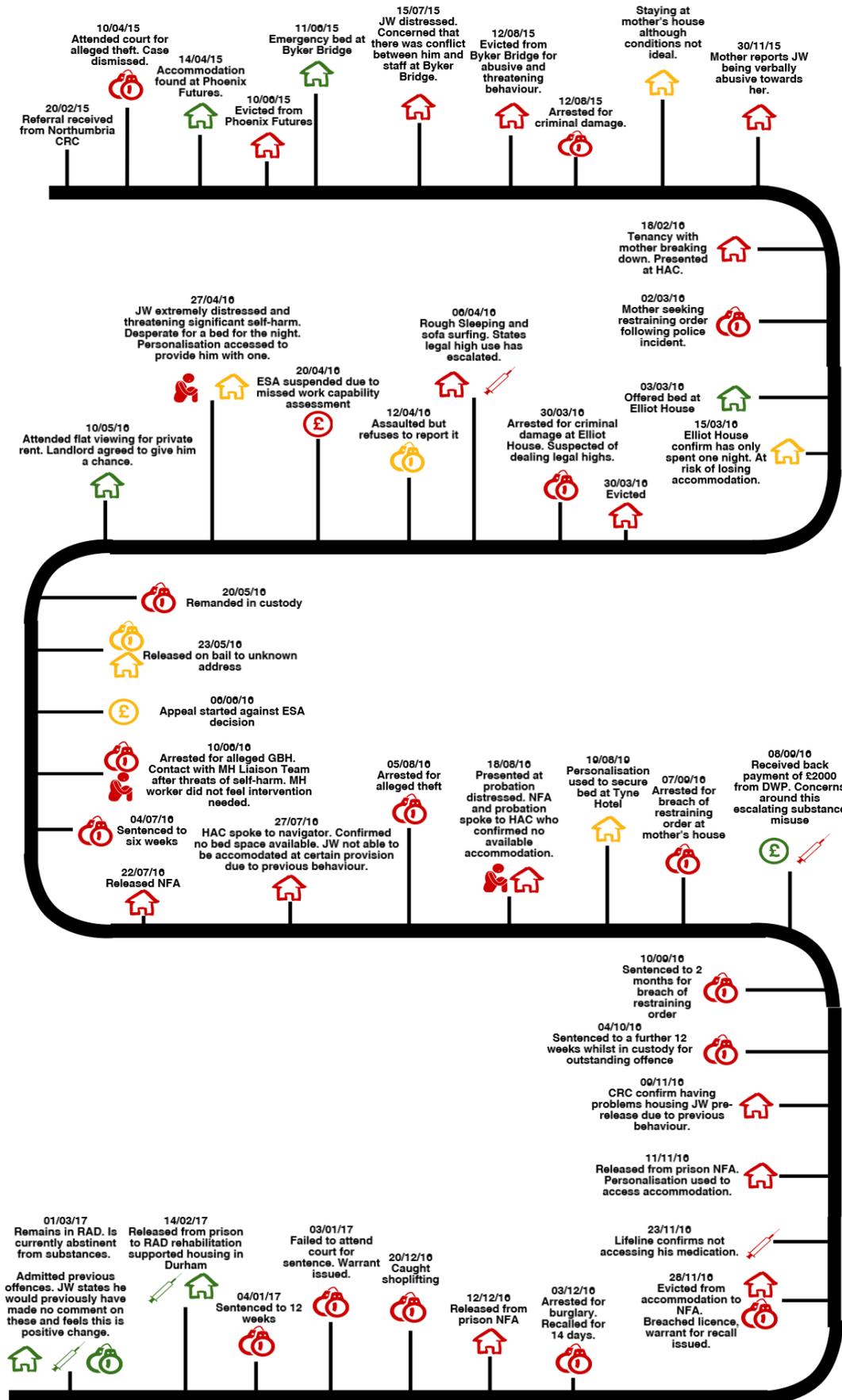
paranoid, and suffering from depression and anxiety. Despite being prescribed medication for his mental health he was not taking this and had not seen his GP in months. He had recent offending behaviour relating to acquisitive offences and has failed to engage with the criminal justice system. JW has two children, both in foster care, who he has contact with four times per year.

The below timeline details the key points in JW's journey between February 2015 and March 2017. During this period JW was remanded in custody five times, and released with no fixed abode three times. Positive engagements with each service type are shown in green, negative in red, and neutral engagements in yellow.

What is immediately apparent is the number of red, or negative interactions. The majority of JW's experiences with services are not positive or offering positive support towards his stability. Also evident is how his housing needs and his offending behaviour dominate the support that he's accessing. Despite substance misuse problems and mental health needs JW is not accessing support across any of these services, instead bouncing between housing providers, street homelessness and short term sentences. Whilst there were instances that JW presented as distressed, and expressed a desire to self-harm there was no linking in with mental health services or support at these points, and indication shows that had there been that JW would not have engaged (on one instance mediation was offered and he declined). However JW's current successes being observed whilst housed within the rehab based supported accommodation does suggest that a similar intervention earlier might have limited some of the offending behaviour and housing breakdowns.

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Conclusions

The wider literature highlights how significant the issue of homelessness is for individuals transitioning between prison and the community. 71% of FLN&G clients experience a transition in accommodation pre and post release with the majority of these resulting in a worsening housing situation. That 44% of prison releases where to NFA and resulted in either rough sleeping or sofa surfing highlights a substantial concern around the support available to individuals on release. Furthermore the findings from the FLN&G cohort identify that in a number of cases, despite being housed on release, this accommodation provision is breaking down and individuals are going on to either rough sleeping or sofa surfing, or re-offending and returning to custody. This suggests that the care available at these housing projects is not able to adequately support individuals transitioning back into the community. A number of the case studies exemplify the consequences of this unsuitable, or short term accommodation, resulting in increased substance misuse, increased offending, and then leading to further custodial sentences.

That many of the sentences served by this client group are short term should also be highlighted. 68% of completed sentences served are 3 months or less, and of these 42% are repeat or recall sentences. This means alongside the vulnerability and chaos that these individuals are experiencing they are transitioning in and out of prison, for sentences that are too short to offer meaningful rehabilitation, and often losing accommodation and other previously accessed support. Indeed case study 2 highlights how effective prison rehabilitation can be if the sentence given allows for enough time to meaningfully engage, however case studies 1 and 3 demonstrate the significant problems that come from repeat short term sentences that result in no meaningful support either in custody or in the community.

In thinking of solutions for this group of individuals there remains a challenge in understanding that what works for one person, does not for another. For example, the wider literature around prison release identifies both the positive and negative impact of family support when moving back into the community. Where positive, family support has the potential to have one of the largest effects and this is highlighted in case study 2. However

case study 1 demonstrates the converse of this where negative family relations can have a significant detrimental impact. Understanding the diversity and differing needs of individuals within groups is paramount to looking at how the system can respond to their support needs.

Transition between prison and the community is a significant point in any person's life, when compounded with multiple and complex needs this period becomes critical. That so many of these individuals are released with stable accommodation and support in place shows a significant problem in need of a system wide response and solution.

Next Steps

Based on the findings of the FLN&G complex needs cohort who have been in prison and required support with accommodation we recommend the following next steps:

1. Prison release pathway and strategy review for people with multiple complex needs
2. Review of the assessment and screening process to match people with multiple complex needs to the right support for their needs
3. Consideration given to the housing options offered to people leaving prison, to ensure there is choice based on need
4. A review of the transition from prison to community with consideration given to the Critical Time Intervention model <https://www.criticaltime.org/>