

Press release: Prisons to deliver trailblazing £6m rough sleeping initiative

- Three prisons to pilot new scheme to support at-risk offenders
- Dedicated housing funding to provide stable accommodation for up to two years
- Support to help prisoners integrate into communities for the long-term

Leeds, Pentonville and Bristol prisons have been chosen to spearhead the £6 million pilot programme aimed at helping vulnerable ex-prisoners find and stay in stable accommodation.

Research shows that those who are homeless or in temporary accommodation are significantly more likely to reoffend within a year than those with a stable place to live.

The pilots are aimed specifically at prisoners serving short sentences who are at high risk of returning to prison. This represents the latest in a series of measures aimed at breaking the cycle of reoffending, from improving prisoners' employment prospects to reinforcing family ties.

The sites will pilot a new partnership approach between prisons, local authorities, probation staff, charities and others who will work together to provide the support prisoners need when they are released – such as signing up for benefits – but will primarily be focused on finding them suitable accommodation.

The two-year programme forms part of the Government's £100m Rough Sleeping Strategy announced over the summer.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

These ground-breaking pilots will help prevent rough sleeping among vulnerable ex-offenders and support them as they start a new life after prison.

As well as ensuring people have somewhere to live, dedicated key worker support will help ex-offenders manage the practical challenges of finding a job and other issues that come with trying to reintegrate into society.

Every time we help an ex-prisoner into a new life – with a stable home, strong relationships and a regular job – we increase the chances of seeing fewer victims of crime in the future.

Housing benefit top ups and rental deposits will ensure that accommodation will be provided from the day offenders leave prison, bolstered through wrap around support from key workers to address other needs which may normally cause the loss of a tenancy, such as attending appropriate probation and employment appointments.

Heather Wheeler MP, Minister for Housing and Homelessness said:

When leaving custody, ex-offenders should all have a safe and suitable home to go to and there is work to be done to ensure this is the case.

These pilots will prove pivotal to our understanding of the situation and to inform any future accommodation provision. This will help improve the outcomes for ex-offenders across the country.

Once the trial has completed, it will be fully evaluated to assess the potential for the scheme to be rolled out more widely across England. We will also be working with the Welsh Government to deliver a similar accommodation solution.

The [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) was launched in August 2018 and sets out to halve rough sleeping on England's streets by 2022 and end it altogether by 2027. It is backed by an additional £100 million and developed across government in conjunction with charities and experts.

The strategy lays out a 3-pronged approach to tackling rough sleeping, including preventing rough sleeping by providing timely support, intervening to help people already on the streets get swift, targeted support and helping people recover, find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives.