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## **Providing for the Housing Needs of Drug Interventions Programme Clients**

**A briefing for those involved in the provision of Throughcare  
and Aftercare services for drugs and housing need**

November 2004

# Providing for the Housing Needs of Drug Interventions Programme Clients

A briefing for those involved in the provision of Throughcare and Aftercare services for drugs and housing need

## **This Briefing has been written by:**

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**Note to readers. This guidance is published in on-line copy only. Readers should be aware that web references can most easily be accessed by reference to the footnote accompanying references in the text.**

## Introduction

Appropriate and sustainable housing is a foundation for successful rehabilitation of drug users and offenders. Appropriate housing provision and housing support is crucial to sustaining employment, drug treatment, family support and finances, and is a major resettlement need for those leaving prison, treatment and residential rehabilitation.

This briefing is to assist in providing housing support and accommodation for Drug Interventions Programme (formerly CJIP) clients. The **client group** described in this briefing are adult drug misusers and former drug misusers who are offenders, ex-prisoners, leaving treatment or in treatment. This group are subject to the targeted interventions of Criminal Justice Integrated Teams (CJITs) and Throughcare and Aftercare work across the country.

The audiences for this briefing are:

### Primary

Drug Action Team (DAT) and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)  
Criminal Justice Integrated Teams (CJITs)  
Probation Area Managers (PAMs)  
Government Offices  
National Treatment Agency (NTA) Regional Managers

### Secondary

Local authority housing and homelessness teams  
Supporting People (SP) commissioners and officers

This briefing provides advice and examples of practice identified by DAT partnerships and stakeholders in addressing the housing needs of adult drug users through working in partnership; these are included in the text.

Throughout the briefing cross-references to relevant documents and websites are made and full details of these can also be found either in the footnotes or at the back of the document in Annex B.

At the end of the document a checklist of actions which local partnerships should consider undertaking in developing local strategies and services is also provided (Annex A).

## **Rationale**

Effective resettlement of any drug misuser requires the development of a holistic package of support including housing. CJIT workers need to ensure that, alongside other drug treatment and independent living support, an understanding of the housing need of new clients is sought. DAT partnerships need to ensure that where housing needs are identified, strategies and systems are in place to address this need.

Drug misusers without housing or with housing problems have difficulty sustaining or entering drug treatment. Those leaving drug treatment or custody without suitable housing and support are likely to relapse and may re-offend. The provision of housing and housing support is, therefore, crucial.

This briefing – prepared in partnership by the Drug Interventions Programme, Home Office, and Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, with the NTA, Probation and Prison Service – seeks to consolidate and build on existing information relevant to the particular housing needs of the CJIT client group. It provides suggestions and practice to encourage work to address the housing needs of this group.

This briefing concentrates on three key areas of housing and homelessness prevention provision:

- **Accommodation** concerns the availability of appropriate housing for vulnerable people.
- **Housing support** is principally concerned with services available under the Supporting People programme to prevent homelessness and enable independent living.
- **Housing management** concerns the need for the management and control of problems surrounding housing and homelessness, such as drug use, in the community.

References to 'housing' are presumed to include all three of these areas or any part of them as is relevant.

## **Links between DIP clients and work with Offenders in general**

The 'Reducing Re-Offending National Action Plan' aims to address concerns raised in the Social Exclusion Unit's report: 'Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners'. In response the Home Office is leading action on a cross-departmental plan to reduce re-offending. Work based on the National Action Plan is being taken forward in nine key areas, of which drugs and housing are two. DIP is leading the drugs element of this work through the Drug Sub Board which meets bimonthly and agrees policy, promotes good practice and monitors action. This briefing forms part of the work of the Drug and Accommodation Sub Boards and is part of the delivery of a National Accommodation Strategy for Offenders being developed alongside the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

The Probation Service is contributing to the development of the National Accommodation Strategy to ensure that the accommodation needs of offenders are identified at national, regional and local level. For planning purposes and individual

offenders (whether prisoners or sentenced in the community) there must be appropriate pathways which secure and sustain accommodation.

Prison and Probation staff, Probation Area Managers and Chief Officers & Probation Officers with a role in the strategy and commissioning of Supporting People will particularly benefit from further reference to new Practitioners' Guidance 'Supporting People Guidance for the National Offender Management Service' (August 2004):

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/probation/index.html>

Probation play a key role in assisting offenders on license or community sentence, including drug misusing offenders, to find suitable accommodation, in order that they can be stabilised and engage with treatment, using links with local housing resources and, where appropriate, making use of Home Office Approved Premises (hostels). The links between this work and that of DIP continue to be strengthened and will be developed further in proposals for a Community Gateway Accommodation Model. This is described at Section 5.

Supporting People teams and DAT partnerships will also benefit from cross-referencing this briefing to 'Guidance on Accommodation and Support Options for People who Misuse Substances' (Home Office/ ODPM, Forthcoming).

National offender resettlement objectives include the following accommodation work for all offenders:

- (a) the introduction from April 2004 of a shadow Prison Service Key Performance Indicator (KPI) on accommodation, building on the 71% of prisoners with accommodation arranged on release in an April 2003 resettlement survey
- (b) the development of a common, modular-based, OASys-compliant housing needs assessment tool across the correctional services.

The 'Future Work', Section 5, of this briefing gives further detail of potential policy developments at a national level linked to the establishment of these targets. This rest of this briefing concentrates on options for work to address the housing needs of DIP clients as part of Aftercare provision.

## **1 Housing, Throughcare and Aftercare and the Drug Interventions Programme**

The Drug Interventions Programme aims to reduce drug-related offending by using every opportunity in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to engage and retain drug misusing offenders including those leaving treatment. An essential objective of the Programme is to ensure that, while individual interventions are expanded, there is a step-change in the delivery of an end-to-end approach for drug misusers in the CJS and for those leaving treatment. This means appropriate support in the community which can

sustain gains the client has achieved through their contact with interventions.

Throughcare and Aftercare is a key element of the Drug Interventions Programme. Acknowledging that drug treatment is not the only need of a drug misusing client, it highlights housing, employment and family issues as wraparound services as need based interventions necessary to complete and sustain gains. Housing work, of the type outlined in this briefing, should be addressed as a key priority alongside a package of interventions.

As an integral part of Throughcare and Aftercare the housing needs of the client group should be identified and arrangements for further assessment, if needed, and services to meet these needs, developed. DAT partnerships should ensure CJIT workers, and those delivering Throughcare and Aftercare, are aware of and collate any housing and employment need assessments for their clients. Information on a clients housing status and needs can be gathered from other Criminal Justice agencies, for example data collected on the OASys system or by CARAT teams, Housing Assessment and Counseling Service (HACS) teams, Probation Housing Assessments or Prisoner Passports – or any information from the DAT or CJIT itself.

An example of how to assess and understand housing need, where information is not already known, is available on the [www.drugs.gov.uk](http://www.drugs.gov.uk) website. Further assistance for clients with housing needs will need to be co-ordinated with either Local authority housing and homelessness or Supporting People teams where specialist knowledge, including for the assessment of statutory Homelessness need, is available.

The local Supporting People Commissioning Body is responsible for determining local needs and priorities for housing-related support services. Supporting People does not provide bricks and mortar accommodation but rather provides housing-related support to vulnerable people to help them maintain or improve their ability to live independently. While services can be made available to any vulnerable person, particular groups will potentially benefit from Supporting People services including substance users, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending. As such, Supporting People commissioners should ensure that the local needs for these groups have been assessed and that opportunities have been explored for the provision of services as part of a package of support. DAT and Supporting People partnership working is discussed further in Section 2.

Accommodation itself is provided from a number of sources, with varying levels of support and management, from housing authorities stock, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), local authorities housing, the private rented sector, hostels and Home Office Approved Premises ('bail hostels'). Accommodation can be mainstream with support packages (including in the private rented sector) or specialist with support provided as part and parcel of the housing and services. Contact details can be collated through mapping (see Section 3 and 4) or accessed through locally provided networks and schemes. This information should where possible be agreed with that of the local housing and homelessness and Supporting People teams. Housing schemes may not be drug specific and, as with all interventions, need to be appropriate to the substance misuse needs of the client.

There are a range of housing providers who will engage with DIP clients, and substance users as a whole, and efforts should be made to identify these and build them into

strategies. Section 4 of this guidance provides information on the types of accommodation providers and methods of accessing their accommodation. The most important action to provide appropriate housing will be in strategic working and service development at sufficiently senior levels with Supporting People teams, local authority housing and homeless departments and housing providers. This work may contribute to wider resettlement strategies for offenders and ex-offenders and DATs will therefore need to ensure that appropriate links with the prison service, probation service and in the future NOMS are in place. It is also important to take into account the need to address the perception of housing providers that drug using tenants do not take care of property and are likely to sell furnishings and equipment to pay for drugs. A package of support and the build up of trust through successful tenancies will do most to change these views.

This briefing assumes that services providing for the housing and aftercare needs of DIP Clients will ensure the diversity of their local communities and client group in line with local diversity strategies and action. Services must be planned and provided with reference to the DIP Briefing on Diversity and Throughcare and Aftercare available on [www.drugs.gov.uk](http://www.drugs.gov.uk)

From April 2004 funding for Throughcare and Aftercare was made available to all DAT partnerships in England and Wales. Guidance circulated in December 2003 outlined how funding should be used. Whilst, this funding cannot be used to meet direct costs associated with the provision of housing or housing related support it can be used to provide many aspects of services beneficial to drug misusers and related housing need. For example:

- contributing through joint funding a drugs element to supported housing for example an existing floating housing support scheme
- contributing to or establishing a rent deposit scheme for DIP clients
- contributing to the joint funding of posts which provide housing advice and access to provision for DIP clients
- contributing to funding of a Substance Misuse Worker in line with the local Homelessness Strategy

Rent deposit schemes are being encouraged for the first time here assisting work with private sector accommodation providers, demonstrating a real financial commitment to them in returning DIP clients to independent living and addressing their drug related needs. Rent deposits can provide reassurance against loss for housing providers and helping clients to find the capital needed to get back into housing, especially in higher demand areas.

## **2 Partnership**

In 2003 joint Homelessness Directorate, Drugs Strategy Directorate, National Treatment Agency and Department of Health good practice guidance recommended that DAT partnerships work closely with local authorities on their homelessness strategies. It also recommended that they work with Supporting People teams to ensure that there are plans for accommodation and support to meet the needs of homeless drug users as a distinct group. For example:

- DAT partnerships, CJITs, local housing authorities and Supporting People commissioners need to work together to map the availability of supported housing for drug misusers, identify the level of need locally and ensure that the needs of this group are met.
- It is essential that where it is not already the case invitations are made by the partners targeted by this briefing to take seats on each other's strategic commissioning and planning groups. For example all DAT partnerships should be inviting local Supporting People representation and Supporting People should be seeking DAT involvement in Core Strategy Groups and forums which address the needs of vulnerable groups. Shared problems such as the availability of appropriate accommodation suitable and accessible to drug misusers can be addressed.
- It is essential that DAT Treatment Plans, Homelessness Strategies, Supporting People Strategies and the work of CJITs are joined up locally. A drugs and housing group could for instance meet as part of both the Supporting People and DAT partnership.

**Effective partnerships can:**

- assess and map the need for relevant housing-related support, other support and care services
- integrate planning for service commissioning and delivery
- provide integrated commissioning options of benefit to the clients of all partnerships
- improve access for individuals to housing in the social and private rented sectors
- provide joint initiatives to improve housing outcomes for drug misusers
- help improve retention and treatment outcomes

One strategy which has proved effective at both regional and local level is the exchange of staff through secondment. Seconded staff can provide expertise and contacts, building up local strategies and services, and building closer working relationships and understanding between different teams and professions.

**2.1 DAT partnership responsibilities at a local level**

The Supporting People Core Strategy Group is the principal forum to address the housing support needs of drug users. DAT partnerships should ensure their representation and use this as a basis for cross over between housing support, treatment plans and Throughcare and Aftercare work. This may involve joint funding of some services as mentioned already. DAT partnerships should also work with their partners in the probation service to ensure that their interests are fed into Supporting People commissioning decisions.

DAT partnerships may wish to consider commissioning training for housing workers to enable them to better understand the needs of drug users or in return to familiarise drug workers with housing needs, options or support. National Occupational Standards provide the standards of performance that people in professional fields, in this case drugs and housing, describe the knowledge and skills workers should be working towards. In the drugs and alcohol field these should be those described under the Drug and Alcohol National Occupational Standards (DANOS) should provide a basis for the understanding housing and homelessness workers who have contact with substance misusers need, which is to at least Tier 1 level. Professional training such as this should allow for greater exchange of information and advice on clients housing and substance misuse needs, informing the better case management of drug using individuals.

Clients taken onto a CJIT caseload are allocated a case manager to support delivery of

their care plan. The case manager will need to work closely with other partners e.g. the housing provider to co-ordinate positive outcomes such as access for homeless clients to rapid prescription services.

DAT partnerships should also ensure that they have representation from local housing authorities at a sufficiently senior level to be able to both inform the DAT about local housing resources and policies and be able to form strategic housing solutions. In authorities where the management of housing stock or the actual property has been transferred a similar level of representation may need to be sought from larger housing authorities. Housing authorities, providers of social housing, can be involved in the provision of appropriate accommodation but will be best contacted at a strategic level through the local authority housing department who will be able to explain the nature of local housing provision including stock transfer and management.

## **2.2 Cross Authority and Regional Working**

All regions outside London have Supporting People Regional Groups, a forum where local lead officers come together to discuss local processes and strategic issues. In London, this role is fulfilled by the Association for Local Government's "London Supporting People Forum" and by sub-regional cross-authority groups. There are also some sub-regional groups operating outside of London. The Probation Service has successfully worked with cross-authority initiatives in the provision of Supporting People services.

In building joint working, DAT partnerships, where agreed represented at Government Office level in larger regional forums, and Supporting People teams may find it helpful to consider whether issues might be more effectively and efficiently addressed through a broader cross-authority or regional approach. This may include, for example, considering whether a better spread of services might be achieved if the use of resources were to be planned on a wider geographical basis.

### **2.3 Information sharing**

Local partnerships between DAT partnerships, CJITs, Prisons and Probation, local authority housing and homelessness teams and Supporting People teams and their partners will need to consider and review existing arrangements in place and share appropriate information with informed consent.

Managing information and continuity of approach have been identified as key elements in effective throughcare and aftercare including in addressing the housing needs of drug misusers. Continuity of Care is crucial to the Throughcare and Aftercare of a DIP client based upon their informed consent the right information can be made available and used by the relevant agencies. The principle needs for information exchange are:

- in the community as they come into contact with treatment and wrap around services
- in subsequent contact with the criminal justice system and back into the community

As part of the NTA Models of Care arrangements, DAT partnerships should already be introducing information sharing arrangements as part of their referral process between providers and care co-ordination. A framework to support the transfer of minimum personal information with consent for the Throughcare and Aftercare of the client has also been developed to address the gap between the community and prison. The Managing Continuity of Care guidance, circulated to the 47 Intensive DAT partnerships is being revised for circulation to all DAT partnerships in April 2005. The guide is currently available to the 47 DATs on the [www.drugs.gov.uk](http://www.drugs.gov.uk) website.

## **2.4 Developing a local protocol**

Partnership is about improving working relationships in order to achieve shared and mutual goals. Local protocols can be an important part of providing housing and drug treatment services through more effective referral, case management and accessibility for service users. Their development may, in particular, stimulate closer working and organisation, improving working relationships to help realise the benefits and problems of addressing clients' needs, through a variety of services. Protocols are particularly useful where partnership work is entering a new phase of joint working or there are historical problems in joint working on care provision.

## **2.5 Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPOs)**

DIP will work with PPO projects in the 12 pilot areas to cut drug-related prolific offending by providing identified PPOs with swift access to drug treatment as well as addressing their other support needs. Each area has submitted a plan on how it will spend its allocation and six of these include a housing provision or a dedicated housing officer. Further details about the PPO programme can be found on:

[www.crimereduction.gov.uk/ppo](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/ppo)

## **3. Housing Support: Providing support based upon housing need**

### **3.1 Methods of assessing housing need**

A detailed guide on how to assess the level of need was produced in 2004 by the Drugs Strategy Directorate and is available on the [www.drugs.gov.uk](http://www.drugs.gov.uk). This tool may be used by DAT partnerships, Supporting People and housing partnerships to assess potential need for housing support amongst drug users in their area and help services to be commissioned appropriate to need. This tool can usefully be used alongside the drug treatment need estimator also provided on [www.drugs.gov.uk](http://www.drugs.gov.uk)

Related data, reviews and information on housing need can be used in partnership to inform the 5-year Supporting People Strategies currently being written for completion by March 2005. Guidance on making contributions to the Five Year Strategy can be gained from 'Supporting People Guidance for the National Offender Management Service' (August 2004).

Early liaison is needed between service commissioners of drug, housing and offender interventions to understand what assessments and data are needed to ensure that

options for joint funding of more intensive services can be explored. DAT partnership commissioned interventions and CJITs could record data on:

- the number of clients with housing support needs;
- the extent of that need;
- the type of service used;
- the outcome of the intervention;

This data could then be used to work out what type of housing support is needed and should be developed appropriately. DATs can work with Supporting People teams to inform any joint commissioning of housing support for drug users, including the appropriate alignment of treatment plans.

### **3.2 The level of supported housing available for drug users**

Local factors will determine the level of supported housing available to drug users. DAT partnerships, Supporting People teams and local authority housing and homeless teams will need to work together with their partners to identify what is available in their areas.

At a regional level several studies exist including:

- a mapping exercise in the North East completed in 2003,
- a mapping exercise completed in the South West in November 2004

In addition, the Supporting People Programme publishes national data, which shows the number of services primarily designed to support specific client groups. This is available on [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk)

Locally DAT partnerships need to accurately map the availability of supported housing accessible by drug users. This must include specialist drugs support schemes as well as other schemes that are general access but will also house drug users.

DAT partnerships should assess the level of housing need locally using a variety of sources including detailed local research, any regionally commissioned research and National Supporting People Data and may then use this alongside Supporting People programme mapping of the need for housing-related support. Local authorities also

commission housing assessments (formerly known as housing needs assessments), and should be engaged to make sure data on the client group is collected and that their accommodation needs are planned for. DAT treatment plans will be able to inform planning based on the expected numbers needing drug treatment and agreed cross over to Homelessness Strategies.

Commissioners and providers of supported housing, including floating support and hostel accommodation, need to address the following questions and develop services accordingly:

- the type and level of support needed
- the type and level of support they can provide
- how clients can access services (through direct access or referral)
- whether the service is available on a first come first serve basis or through a waiting list
- any gender or diversity issues which should be considered prior to commissioning or placing individuals in certain services
- factors which could lead to exclusion such as: drug use, offending history, degree of vulnerability, level of need, mental health and accumulation of rent or charge arrears
- entry requirements for example the age range accepted or particular housing status
- whether the service takes clients on bail conditions
- any agreements which will encourage clients to be taken into accommodation including rent deposit schemes
- any mapping and gaps in services which needs to be addressed
- what action is needed and partners involved in taking this forward

DATs partnerships should not feel they are starting from a blank sheet in addressing housing needs provision, there will already be a lot going on. Where a new phase of work on housing need is beginning DAT partnerships will need to work to identify what exists with key partners and take joint action. This will include services to address the gaps and identifying how existing services can be adapted to meet the specific needs of the client group.

### **3.3 Partnerships improving access to supported housing**

Supporting People Administering Authorities are in the process of developing their 5 Year Strategies, for completion by 31 March 2005. Appropriate support and engagement from DATs will assist in the development of the strategies, including through identification and incorporation of needs information and by identifying opportunities for joint commissioning using wider funding streams aimed at the provision of drug treatment services. Drugs funding cannot be used to provide housing but can assist with specific services which help meet the needs of this client group. The suggested solutions below will improve the provision of how supported housing for the client group locally and regionally:

#### Strategic work

- DAT partnerships and drug agencies need to use their links to Supporting People partnerships, including mutual representation, to improve links between services provided as part of the Aftercare package and other potential sources of housing

related support interventions

- Local authority housing and homelessness departments should also be involved and represented in this partnership work, drawing upon existing drug treatment and homeless strategy links and agreements for service development, use and planning
- The DAT partnership can develop a local strategy to provide housing support to drug users in partnership with the Local authority housing and homelessness Department and Supporting People, and with their providers for drug users. This should be based on the mapping of housing need and availability at 3.1 and 3.2 and include how the client group will be supported in all types of schemes including, for example, in specialist schemes and with floating support
- Regional schemes can also improve access to services and cross boundary working manage overlap with traditional resettlement services such as those from prisons this work may benefit from local Government Office input and reference to the regional Supporting People Group

#### Client services

- Effective partnership working based around a package of interventions
- Addressing unmet need through advice and provision for the client group to accessing and sustain accommodation, along pathways agreed by Local Housing and Drug partnerships
- Advice on managing finances and obtaining benefits, sustaining tenancies, removing debt barriers, obtaining furniture, preventing Anti-Social Behaviour and help to mediate solutions with neighbours
- Provision of drug workers alongside a team of housing support workers
- Outreach to homeless drug users

#### **4 Accommodation: Delivering accommodation based upon housing need**

Work to help drug users to get appropriate accommodation should ensure that all accommodation is suitable to the needs of the client, access to other services is ensured and support in maintaining this accommodation available. The DAT partnership itself should work with strategic partners, especially via the local authority, to investigate and co-ordinate services and agree availability of accommodation for drug misusers. DAT partnerships should work with local authorities to ensure that in the local authority's allocation schemes the housing needs of the client group are taken into account.

##### **4.1 Housing drug users**

*Tackling Drug Use in Rented Housing* (Home Office/DTLR 2002) provides guidance on housing drug users. Housing and support for problematic drug users needs to take account of:

- **Drug services available for the service user:** this will include treatment, user and family support groups and aftercare provision and access to employment via schemes such as progress2work
- **Tenancy sustainment and other housing related support services:** this will include housing support such as floating support, rent deposit schemes and tenancy management services
- **The suitability of the accommodation, environment and needs of the service user:** placing a recovering drug user in a building known to house many other users, dealers, and premises such as crack houses will increase the likelihood of relapse and further problems
- **Homelessness prevention:** work to prevent tenancies from failing due to substance misuse, rent arrears and anti-social behaviour involves early identification of problems and interventions

#### **4.2 Overcoming barriers to accommodation**

Local accommodation can be found from a variety of different sources and as such needs to be matched and suitable for an individual client. Individual needs must be considered thoroughly in resettlement and housing. DIP client tenancies in both the private and social rented sectors may benefit from any combination of the key services at 4.1.

Landlords may be more willing to house drug users and DIP clients if they are supported in their tenancy through a holistic package of support. Drug users are often thought to be challenging tenants, with high support needs, but liaison and reassurance work can be successful, especially where a package of housing and drug interventions is provided. Landlords may be assured by this work that potential difficulties between themselves, their tenants and the community will be minimised.

Drug users and ex-offenders can find the sustainment of tenancy difficult. However, there is no legal basis for blanket bans on any group. The recent Housing Corporation Regulatory Circular of July 2004 provides specific guidance to Housing Providers that blanket bans for any group of service users are indefensible. This is particularly relevant for drug users and ex-offenders who may have previously been discriminated against and will assist in the development of capacity, especially where linked to supporting interventions such as drug treatment or peer or family support.

There are schemes for re-housing people away from one area to another. The Housing Employment Mobility Scheme (HEMS) offers help to people to relocate to other areas and may be particularly of benefit with some clients who are ready to change and have successfully developed many independent living skills.

#### **4.3 Accessing social accommodation: duties of local authorities**

Local authorities have a duty to ensure that housing advice and information is available to everyone in their area and this work can be furthered for the client group through the promotion by DAT partnerships of the specific needs of DIP clients. Individuals need the right information to apply for accommodation and local authorities must secure this advice and assistance including for individuals likely to have difficulty in making an

application for accommodation. DAT partnerships may find that where they work with local authorities on this they can ensure the right information is made available, appropriate to the needs of DIP clients.

Recent Guidance, "Effective Co-operation in Tackling Homelessness" provides useful information on the prevention of homelessness. It advises local authorities and housing authorities of the need to set up nomination agreements between themselves, and that a proportion of housing authority stock should be made available to homeless people and that temporary homeless accommodation should also be made available.

#### **4.4 Housing allocations generally**

Access to long term social housing (tenancies with housing authorities or housing associations) is generally via the local authority's housing waiting list. Housing must be allocated by authorities in accordance with the priorities set out in their published allocation scheme. It is important that DAT partnerships work with the local authority to influence these where possible to take account of the needs of the client group.

Allocation legislation provides that in framing their scheme, housing authorities must ensure that "reasonable preference" for an allocation is given to certain categories of people, including people who are homeless (including intentionally homeless) and people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds. Medical and welfare grounds encompass care or support needs, and might a behavioural difficulty, or the fact that the person's capacity for independent living is restricted for other reasons, it is here that substance misuse needs may be considered but they will not be identified separately.

Housing authorities are no longer able to impose blanket exclusions of certain categories of housing applicant, such as ex-offenders or drug users. However, authorities do have the power to treat individual applicants as ineligible for an allocation, where that person (or a member of his household) is guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant. It is important that DIP clients are not seen in this light and where appropriate support is provided problems such as this can be avoided.

Where a person has previously been treated as ineligible because of their unacceptable behaviour, they must be given the opportunity to demonstrate that they have reformed their behaviour and should now be considered for an allocation. If a tenancy has appropriate support, such as services provided by Supporting People, it is more likely that an allocation will be considered. As outlined in Section 3 substance misusers should be considered, dependant upon need, by Supporting People.

#### **4.5 Choice based lettings**

The Government is encouraging social landlords to adopt a new way of allocating social housing which gives tenants more of a say in deciding where they live - so-called choice-based lettings (or CBL) - and has set a target for all housing authorities to have adopted CBL by 2010. Traditionally tenants have been matched to vacancies by housing officers according to their housing needs and priority, with little say over where they live. Under a choice-based lettings approach, prospective tenants can apply for vacancies which are usually openly advertised. A choice based-lettings approach requires applicants to play an active role in finding accommodation and some people will need help and support in navigating the system and making a choice of appropriate housing.

Housing authorities have a duty to ensure that assistance is made available to anyone who is likely to have difficulty in applying for housing without such assistance.

#### **4.6 Accessing Private Rented Accommodation**

DAT partnerships should consider approaching the private rented sector for additional housing for the client group. Local authorities will already have established links with suitable landlords, landlord associations or forums which can be used to access housing in the private rented sector. Landlords may be easier to motivate to help problematic drug users where they see a package of care being provided. As mentioned earlier consideration should also be given access partnerships to the development of rent deposit schemes for DIP clients. Tenancies secured with private landlords can be accessed rapidly and provides additional accommodation, especially single units. In order to develop this resource DATs will need to ensure confidence is built through appropriate allocation policies and, ensuring with partners such as Supporting People, the provision of necessary services to address the clients needs. Further advice on Rent Deposit Schemes is forthcoming from the Home Office and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## **5. Future services and work**

### **5.1 The Drug Interventions Programme Client Group**

Provision of appropriate housing continues to be a key feature contributing to reducing re-offending, sustaining interventions and preventing relapse. Funding from the Drug Interventions Programme for Throughcare and Aftercare is available to all DAT partnerships in England and Wales. Information in this briefing has highlighted that this funding can be used to fund rent deposits in line with the local Homelessness Strategy and guidance (forthcoming HO/ODPM) will be provided. Work on all areas highlighted in this briefing is central to the delivery of Throughcare and Aftercare services and should be taken forward by local partnerships in their mapping, planning and commissioning roles.

Many DIP clients leaving custody require targeted support to continue treatment programmes and access resettlement services, alongside housing. Effective joint

working between; Drug Action Teams, Criminal Justice Integrated Teams, Supporting People and local housing authorities can help to improve access to treatment and retention in treatment, prevent loss of tenancies and reduce the risk of re-offending.

The checklist provided as Annex A of this briefing should be used by those developing drug and housing services for the client group to prevent homelessness, reduce re-offending and address the housing needs of those that may be vulnerable to homelessness.

## **5.2 National Offender Management Service – An integrated Accommodation Plan as part of the National Re-offending Action Plan**

The new National Offender Management Service, bringing together prisons and probation, will be responsible for reducing re-offending and managing the budget for offender services. These services will be managed at a regional level to enable effective links to be forged and joint strategies developed with complimentary services and partners.

Regional Offender Managers (ROMs) will be responsible for the end-to-end management of offenders in the nine English regions and Wales. They will have an important role in developing the strategic partnerships necessary to underpin regional working and, in due course, in commissioning interventions to reduce re-offending. In taking forward this approach, account needs to be taken of the effective local partnerships currently in place, so they can underpin regional working. NOMS will develop a seamless case management approach which would be delivered across all the areas likely to reduce re-offending.

Providing a seamless service for DIP clients is a key part of the work of the Home Office and ODPM to address the housing and treatment needs of offenders. Housing Advice and Support Services (HACS), are being set up in over 70 prisons to provide interventions and housing assessment on reception, critical in improving the likelihood of prisoners being able to access accommodation on release. Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare (CARAT) teams in prisons currently inform CJITs of prisoner needs, including housing. In future jointly prepared release plans between CJITs, CARATs, Probation and HACS will assist in the provision of appropriate accommodation.

Criminal Justice Integrated Teams (CJITs) use a case management approach to offer problematic drug misusers access to treatment and support. CJITs will allocate a worker after a drug-misusing offender has been assessed and it has been agreed that he/she will be taken onto the CJIT caseload. This can happen at any point in the criminal justice system or on leaving treatment. The CJIT worker will develop a care plan with the offender and link with appropriate interventions. DIP and the NTA are working closely with NOMS to ensure that this case management approach for drug related needs is aligned with Offender Management.

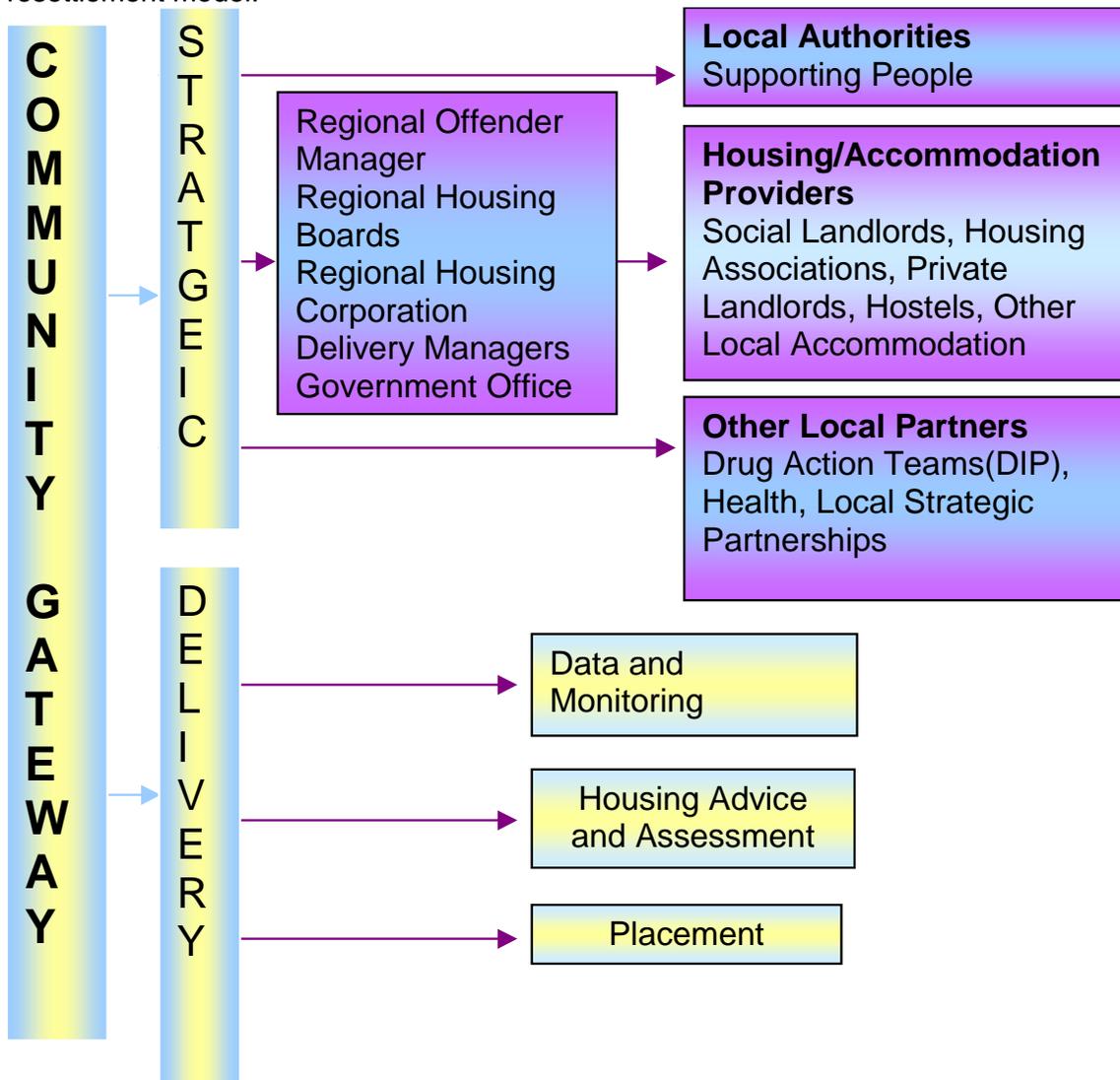
The case management approach is focused on keeping the individual engaged: missed appointments are followed-up, phone contact is kept with the client, issues that threaten progress on the care plan are tackled (housing, employment, family difficulties etc).

Where a CJIT client is remanded into custody, CARATs take responsibility for case managing drug treatment whilst the offender is in prison and will liaise with the CJIT in preparing release plans at the end of the sentence. Working with CARATs, CJITs will identify and broker access to resettlement agencies on release and provide on going support and co ordination.

Where there is a statutory order or licence, overall responsibility for offender management will be National Probation Service/ NOMS. CJITs can provide support for drug-related needs. On completion of statutory contact, the offender’s drug treatment needs may continue to be managed by a named CJIT worker.

NOMS aims introduce a Community Gateway Model for resettlement into the community, which should match the accommodation needs of the offender to the community they are returning to and help to ensure they have sufficient access to services to prevent re-offending and develop independent living skills.

The diagram below is helpful in understanding the intention of the Community Gateway resettlement model:



The Community Gateway will provide a central reference point for all offenders exiting custody in a region, linking services and case managing interventions and the return to the community.

## **Annex A**

### **Briefing Checklist**

This checklist should be used by those developing drug and housing services for the client group to prevent homelessness, reduce re-offending and address the housing needs of those that may be vulnerable to homelessness. If not in place already, partnerships should:

#### **DAT partnerships should lead work with other partners to**

- highlight the issue of housing need amongst DIP clients
- highlight need and agreed joint action on accommodation, housing management and housing support in local plans and target
- ensure that there is access and availability to wrap around services including housing provision
- agree and deliver effective protocols for specialist housing referrals and assessments
- work with private landlords to maximise provision for problematic drug users
- demonstrate to all landlords that security of tenure is assisted by services and support for the client group
- work in partnership with Supporting People to ensure the provision of appropriate supported housing
- use Throughcare and Aftercare funds to provide specific housing related outcomes for DIP clients
- consider developing, in line with Homelessness Strategies and drug treatment plans, rent deposit schemes for work with private landlords and overcome barriers to housing
- consider in planning processes potential future developments surrounding NOMS and the Community Gateways
- consider NOMS and potential Community Gateways in commissioning where links are made

#### **DAT partnerships, Probation and Supporting People**

- to work together to agree the commissioning and targeting of housing support services including with the 5 year Supporting People strategies for March 2005
- to assist Supporting People teams through mapping the availability and need for supported housing for the client group and help to ensure that need is met
- to include in mapping appropriate housing support and drug needs gap analysis and consider based on this services which could be appropriate for joint funding
- to ensure the cross representation on DAT and Supporting People groups

#### **DAT partnerships, Supporting People and Government Offices**

- ensure that where appropriate cross authority supporting people provision and access mechanisms are in place for the client group
- to take a role in regional work where active and appropriate
- discuss with the Government Office and partners the potential for regional mapping and assistance

#### **DAT partnerships and the local authority in its strategic housing role**

- to assist in the provision of cross disciplinary training between drugs and housing

professionals

- that accommodation of DIP clients should be considered and developed based upon housing and drug needs and the availability wrap around aftercare services
- develop service and client group protocols specifically including housing and drug needs
- to encourage housing associations including Registered Social Landlords to make accommodation available to problematic drug users in their general, or in specialist allocations agreements
- offer training or guidance to landlords on handling drug use
- identify with LA housing and homelessness and Supporting People appropriate sources of accommodation to inform applications for housing from DIP clients

#### **DAT partnerships and CJIT**

- DAT partnerships should ensure that CJITs include an initial assessment of immediate housing need within their assessment process and provide CJITs with information and access to specialist housing assessments
- CJITs to ensure that details of previous assessments of housing needs are collated and understood so that need can then be further assessed if necessary
- To support resettlement for those drug misusing offenders leaving the Criminal Justice System and Treatment , partners referring to CJITs and providing information to inform continuity of care should ensure that information on housing action undertaken, and key community contacts should be included with consent

## Annex B

**Additional reading: Please see references in text and footnotes for other documents.**

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