



RESETTLEMENT MANIFESTO

Over the past 3 years the National Equal Offender Network (NEON) involving 10 Development Partnerships funded by the Equal ESF Community Initiative has tested innovative ways of providing sustainable employment, education and training opportunities for ex-offenders. This Manifesto represents the findings from these projects based on the Reducing Re-offending Pathways.



Summary of Key Messages:

- Adopt an offender-centred approach – i.e. flexible, needs-led services, in recognition that offenders have complex and multiple issues.
- Ensure services prepare offenders for the job market by equipping them with the basic employability skills, not just vocational qualifications.
- Ensure that all sector stakeholders are

effectively engaged and supported to facilitate a seamless transition from custody to the community and the labour market.

- Provide on-going workplace support to both ex-offenders and employers.
- Implement recommendations of Rehabilitation of Offenders Act Review.
- Implement Custody Plus to enable short term prisoners to access services.

The Reducing Re-o

ACCOMMODATION

Issues:

- Only those released on licence are able to access supported housing
- Limited connection between pre- and post-release housing advice
- Local Authorities assess need differently (some treat ex-prisoners as intentionally homeless)
- Rent arrears
- Limited supply of appropriate housing
- Housing Benefit delays

Recommendations:

- Dedicated “through-the-gate” housing advice workers (supported by Peer Advisors in prison)
- Engage Local Authorities and social landlords as part of their “Safer Communities” strategy
- Protected tenancies for short term prisoners
- Rent Deposit Scheme
- Involve families/social support networks to promote return to the family home

EDUCATION, TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

Issues:

- Lack of IAG services to remand and short term prisoners
- Prison transfers
- Lack of pre- and post-release continuity
- Inconsistent needs assessments
- Lack of gender and BME specific support mechanisms
- Poor interagency information exchange
- Disclosure of criminal convictions
- Employer attitudes
- Opportunities for self-employment

Recommendations:

- Amend the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act
- Protection for ex-offenders under Equal Opportunities legislation
- Develop Peer Advisors for IAG services to remand and short term prisoners
- Plan continuity of education/training before release
- Electronic data/information sharing (between establishments and through-the-gate)
- Empowerment courses for women and BME prisoners
- Implement an Employer Advice Line for queries about employing ex-offenders
- Increase support for self-employment
- Link vocational training to prison work/enterprise
- Stronger focus on sectors skills gaps
- Work with OLAS to facilitate offender reintegration into mainstream community ETE provision

HEALTH

Issues:

- Poor integration of health services in resettlement planning
- Mental health issues incorrectly or not diagnosed
- Lack of support services
- Lack of recognition of impact of bullying/intimidation

Recommendations:

- Peer Mentors in prisons and community (through-the-gate support), this has proved especially effective in the mental health arena
- Trained “listeners” in YOIs as well as in adult prisons
- Sensitive co-location of prisoners
- Involve family/social contacts
- Ensure adequate assessment/diagnosis time
- Integrate health issues in resettlement planning

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

Issues:

- Staff do not have experience of drug misuse
- Failure to provide a full range of integrated support services
- High drop out rate with young people
- Lack of services for alcohol misuse
- Difficulty of engaging drug misusers
- Lack of choice of services

Recommendations:

- Person centred approach
- Train ex-users as mentors
- Use sport/leisure activities to engage users
- Need holistic accessible range of services
- Reward system (behaviour modification models)
- Consistent support workers
- Continuity of ‘through-the-gate’ service provisions



- Align and integrate cross departmental strategies, policies and resources (i.e. Criminal Justice, Education, Employment, Health, Housing).
- Improve provision for women, young people and minority ethnic communities.
- Develop a common database and evaluation framework to measure the effectiveness of increasing employability, job outcomes and

reduced re-offending.

- Effective resettlement creates a wide range of cross-departmental down-stream savings.
- Prison over-crowding and frequent movement prevents effective resettlement.
- Work with the media to restore public confidence in criminal justice services.

Offending Pathways

FINANCE, BENEFIT AND DEBT

Issues:

- Complexity of benefit rules
- Poor access to financial services/advice
- Difficulty of opening bank accounts
- Insurance regulations barrier to self-employment

Recommendations:

- Financial capability training
- Debt management advice
- Flexible insurance rules
- Benefits advice
- Training allowances

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Issues:

- Families not involved in resettlement planning
- Impact on families not recognised
- Prison location often unhelpful
- Parental responsibilities/contact not supported
- Visiting conditions often non-family friendly

Recommendations:

- Family Link worker in every prison and YOI
- Involve family in reviews and resettlement planning
- Good parenting classes in prison
- Family friendly visitor centres
- Locate prisoners close to home area
- Cross-departmental work to support the children of prisoners

ATTITUDES, THINKING & BEHAVIOUR (Adults)

Issues:

- ATB interventions not available to short term prisoners
- Transfers interrupt programmes
- Lack of flexibility – “one size fits all”
- Relevance/appropriateness for some groups (e.g. BME groups/ women)
- Relies on skills of “trainer”

Recommendations:

- Introduce ‘through-the-gate’ programmes for short term prisoners
- Introduce pre-ATB course for BME/women
- Encourage creative flexibility within accredited programmes
- Develop short programmes for short term and remand prisoners
- Use specialist trainers

CASE MANAGEMENT & TRANSITION (Young Offenders)

Issues:

- Young offenders have limited involvement in resettlement planning
- YO's often located far from home area
- YOTs do not give resettlement a priority
- Health issues (including mental health) get little attention
- Policy conflict with Every Child Matters agenda
- Frequent change of “case manager”

Recommendations:

- Involve Young Offenders in resettlement planning
- Improve coherency of training between YOTs and the secure estate
- Locate Young Offenders in home area
- Recognise Young Offenders as children first, offenders second
- Ensure young offenders have access to open custodial conditions





Contacts

www.equal-works.com

This website contains details of all of the EQUAL funded projects.

NEON Members:

EXODUS

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EXODUS focused on addressing barriers to short term prisoners and their move to employment in the South East and London.

IMPACT

(Innovation Means Prisons and Communities Together)

www.equal-impact.com

IMPACT developed a wide range of employability support packages with doubly disadvantaged ex-offenders in the North West

NIACRO

www.niacro.co.uk

NIACRO developed extensive work to support ex-offenders in Northern Ireland. They developed strong employer engagement projects.

RESET

www.reset.uk.net

Focusing on young offenders, the RESET project developed a range of resettlement tools specifically for young people.

PS Plus

www.psplus.org

PS Plus delivered employment support interventions in prisons and probation across England

SOVA

www.sova.org.uk

SOVA focused on developing employment opportunities for women in the London area

CESI

www.cesi.org.uk

Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion. Facilitation, dissemination and mainstreaming of key NEON messages