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Resettlement outcomes on release from prison in 2003

Stephen Niven and Duncan Stewart

Following the first resettlement survey in 2001 (Niven and Olagundoye, 2002), a second survey was conducted in March and April 2003. In this survey, 1,945 prisoners in the last three weeks of their sentence were interviewed about their expectations concerning employment, training, education (ETE) and housing after release. Related factors such as previous employment, qualifications, housing plans and activities in prison were also examined. The key results from the 2003 survey are compared with those from 2001 and the main factors influencing ETE and accommodation outcomes for prisoners nearing release are discussed.

Key points

- There were no statistically significant changes between the two surveys in the proportions of prisoners with employment, training or education arranged on release (30% for both surveys) and with accommodation arranged on release between 2001 (67%) and 2003 (71%).
- Prisoners in employment, training or education in the four weeks before custody were much more likely to have ETE arranged on release (59%) than those who were not (17%). Accommodation arranged on release and receiving family visits were also both strongly associated with ETE arranged on release.
- The majority of ETE outcomes were arranged through family, friends and/or personal contacts in the community. However, agencies had a greater involvement in arranging ETE outcomes for those who had never been in work before custody compared with other groups.
- Living in private or rented accommodation before custody, receiving family or partner visits, not having a drug problem before custody and being in ETE in the four weeks before custody were statistically significantly associated with having accommodation arranged on release.
- Almost one-third (31%) of prisoners received no visits during their sentence. They were less likely to have jobs or accommodation arranged on release.
- Findings from this survey suggest that opportunities for involving families and/or partners in the resettlement of prisoners should be increased.

The survey aimed to measure the proportion of prisoners expecting to take up employment, training or education (an 'ETE outcome') and those with accommodation arranged on release. ETE and stable accommodation have been identified as key factors in the effective resettlement of prisoners (SEU, 2002). The Prison Service has introduced initiatives in recent years to increase the proportion of prisoners being released into accommodation and ETE. The research also aimed to identify and examine the

key factors associated with successful resettlement outcomes. All results reported are statistically significant unless stated otherwise.

ETE outcomes

In 2003, 30.4% (n=591) of prisoners had ETE outcomes arranged on release – slightly higher than in 2001 (29.5%). However, the difference was not statistically significant. A further 4% of all the prisoners had an interview arranged after release for ETE (3% for the 2001 survey).

By contrast, in the three months before the survey, Jobcentre Plus figures showed that, as a result of the 'Freshstart' project, 35% of all discharged prisoners had interviews arranged at their local Jobcentre to discuss ETE. These interviews are generally confirmed in the last few days of sentence and most were not recorded by this survey, which took place in the last three weeks of sentence. It is also likely that some prisoners arranged ETE after participating in the survey.

Different types of prisoners had different rates of ETE outcomes. Those who had ETE arranged according to age:

- young offenders (YOs), i.e. young men aged 18 to 20 – 46%
- adult men – 29%
- women – 22%.

Those with ETE arranged according to length of sentence:

- under 12 months – 29%
- between 12 months and 4 years – 34%
- over four years – 22%.

Of those with employment arranged (not including training and education):

- 76% expected this to be permanent
- 17% had casual or temporary jobs
- 7% were going to a job on a fixed contract.

Of those without ETE arranged after release, 24% were not looking for ETE on release (no statistically significant difference from the 2001 survey). Half of those not looking for work (8% of all respondents) said this was due to long term illness/incapacity.

How ETE was arranged

Of those with ETE arranged (n=591):

- 51% arranged this through friends, family or personal contacts
- 28% through direct application to the employer (including their previous employer)
- 15% used a voluntary or statutory agency, including the Prison Service.
- 6% expected to be self-employed on release.

Of prisoners with employment (not including training or education) arranged on release, 66% (n=323) claimed to be returning to the same job as before custody.

Of those finding new ETE outcomes, 85% (n=184) said it was arranged through family, friends or other personal contacts outside the prison. The other 15% used a voluntary or statutory agency. Even among those who attended a formal programme during custody (such as education, resettlement course, offending behaviour programme or drugs programme) and who had ETE arranged (n=455), the majority (81%) arranged this through family, friends, contacts or previous employer. It should be noted that no conclusions can be drawn about the effectiveness of formal programmes in prison, as some were not aimed at assisting prisoners into

ETE. However, this finding highlights the value of personal contacts and support networks in helping prisoners into ETE, even for those prisoners receiving substantive interventions.

Factors associated with ETE outcomes

Logistic regression analysis was conducted to assess the association of a number of key variables with ETE on release. These key variables were: in ETE four weeks before custody; accommodation arranged on release; receiving visits from partner or family; whether serving under 12 months or not; whether attended any programmes in custody; and whether a drug problem before custody.

Three were statistically significant predictors of positive ETE outcomes on release:

- ETE in the four weeks before custody increased the odds of having ETE arranged on release by almost seven times
- prisoners who had accommodation arranged on release had odds over four times higher
- if a partner or family member had visited, the odds were over twice as high.

ETE before custody

Being in ETE immediately before custody not only suggested that the prisoner was 'job ready' but also indicated that s/he may have had contacts through which to arrange future ETE. 32% of prisoners were in ETE in the four weeks before custody and 59% of these prisoners had ETE arranged on release, compared with 17% of those not in ETE immediately before custody. A high proportion (86%) of those in ETE in the four weeks before custody and who had a job arranged on release were going back to the same job.

The proportions in ETE before custody varied according to prisoner groups: women – 14%; YOs – 41%; adult men – 34%. Of these jobs, 65% were permanent; 25% temporary and 9% under a fixed contract. 62% of those prisoners not in ETE immediately before custody but having ETE arranged on release (n=125) relied on friends, family or contacts outside to help arrange this. 23% used formal agencies to help arrange this.

14% of prisoners (n=263) said they had never had a paid job before custody – 26% of women; 25% of YOs; 11% of adult men. Even so, 11% of this small group claimed to have ETE arranged on release, with a relatively high proportion of these (42%) relying on formal agencies for assistance (compared with 15% of all prisoners who had arranged ETE). Those who have never, or rarely, worked are less likely to have the skills and contacts necessary to help themselves into ETE and are therefore more likely to require assistance from formal agencies than those with a more established work history.

The ETE arrangements recorded in the last few weeks of sentence (30%) cannot be reliably compared with those for the four weeks before custody (32%). The former refers to the expected outcome only – ETE arrangements may have

Table 1 Type of accommodation expected after release (% of prisoners with accommodation arranged)

Accommodation arranged	Women (n=105)	Young offenders (n=183)	Adult men (n=1,091)	Total (n=1,379)
	%	%	%	%
Rented or owned where you or your partner is householder	35	13	43	38
Rented or owned property with parents/parents-in-law	30	66	33	37
Rented or owned property with other family members	15	16	10	11
Rented or owned property with friend or friends	11	1	6	6
Hostel (Bail or DSS)	4	2	4	4
Supported accommodation (e.g., refuge, Foyer, rehab)	1	1	2	2
Other temporary accommodation (e.g., B&B, hotel, shelter)	1	0	1	1
Other	4	2	1	1

changed in the last few days of custody and would not, therefore, have been recorded in the survey.

Family visits and ETE

Family and/or partner visits appear to be associated with successful resettlement. Overall, 37% of those who had at least one visit from family or partner had ETE arranged on release compared with 16% of those not receiving any visits. This relationship held for YO's, women and adult men and was independent of whether accommodation was arranged or not. Looking only at prisoners with accommodation arranged, a greater proportion of prisoners who received at least one family or partner visit (42%) had positive ETE outcomes compared with those who did not receive a visit (25%). Family and/or partner visits here should be seen as a proxy measure of community/family ties rather than a direct factor causing improved outcomes.

Furthermore, the frequency of visits appeared to increase the likelihood of prisoners having ETE arranged on release – 40% of those receiving visits at least once a month had ETE arranged, compared with 27% of those receiving visits less often, but at least once.

Accommodation outcomes

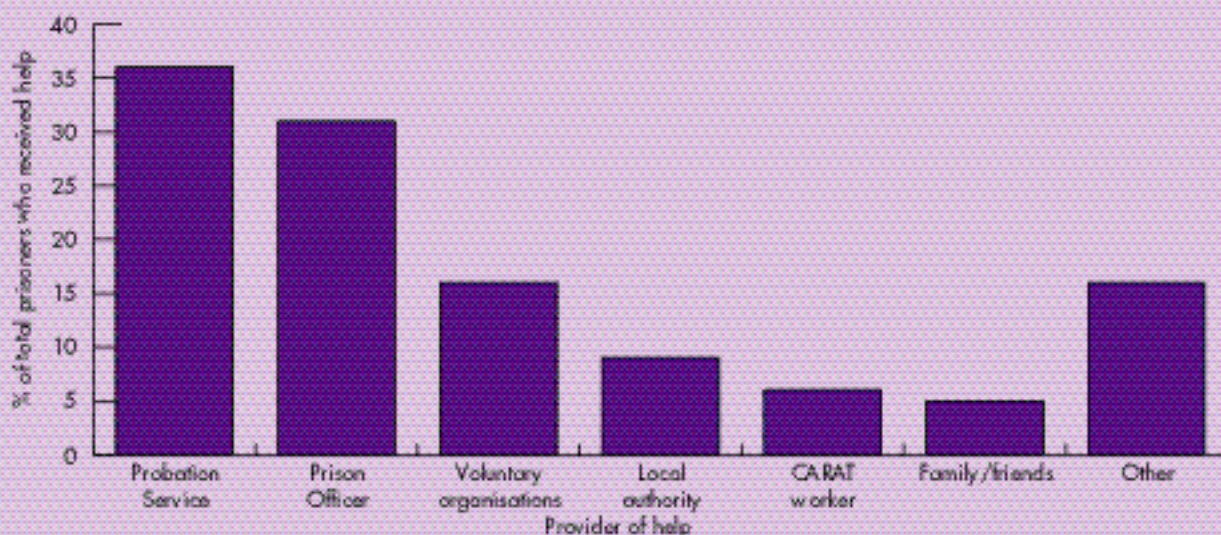
In the 2003 survey, 71% of the sample said they had accommodation arranged on release, compared with 67% in 2001 (not statistically significant). The likelihood of having accommodation varied between the prisoner groups:

- women – 62%
- men – 69%
- YO's – 90%.

For those with accommodation arranged, YO's were far less likely to be going into rented or owned property where they or their partner were the householder (13%) than were women (35%) or men (43%) (Table 1). More women than YO's and men were going to live with friends; 66% of YO's were going to live with their parents or parents-in-law.

Receiving help with accommodation

It was evident that agencies work with only a minority of those prisoners who have accommodation needs – 19% of all prisoners received help and 33% of those with no accommodation arranged on release received help looking. The largest providers of help with accommodation were probation and prison officers, followed by voluntary

Figure 1 Main sources of help with accommodation for those prisoners who received any help

Note: Percentages total more than 100% as respondents were asked to indicate all sources of help.

organisations such as NACRO and SOVA (Figure 1). However, as prisons are increasingly developing team-based approaches to resettlement, firm conclusions cannot be drawn from this finding. In contrast to help finding ETE, few prisoners cited family and friends as providers of help in finding accommodation, perhaps because prisoners may have seen 'help' as referring to that received from formal agencies.

50% (n=366) of all those receiving some form of help in looking for accommodation had an address to go to on release. Of those receiving help and having accommodation arranged on release (n=183), two-thirds were moving into rented or owned property, the remainder were moving into temporary accommodation. Of those receiving help and having accommodation arranged, 35% were going back to their previous accommodation.

Those who were homeless or in temporary accommodation before custody (n=277) were likely to be the most in need of help finding accommodation on release, and 32% of them received help looking for accommodation during custody. However, there was no statistically significant difference between those who received help (33%) and those that did not (35%) in the proportions having accommodation arranged on release. No conclusions can be drawn as to the effectiveness of the help offered as those receiving help may have had greater need. However, it does suggest that many prisoners with housing difficulties before custody are able to help themselves arrange accommodation on release.

39% of prisoners who did not receive help (81% of the total sample) said they would have liked assistance with looking for somewhere to live. 47% of those prisoners who received help felt that they did not get enough and 61% of this group did not have accommodation arranged on release. These findings suggest that accommodation remains a substantial problem for many prisoners nearing release and that many would like help looking for accommodation but do not receive it.

Factors associated with accommodation outcomes

Accommodation is strongly predictive of having ETE arranged on release but is also an important factor in the successful resettlement of prisoners (SEU, 2002). Analysing the key factors which influence the likelihood of prisoners finding accommodation can help to identify those likely to need assistance and the most appropriate form of assistance.

Logistic regression was used to assess the association of key variables with 'having accommodation arranged on release'. The key independent variables used in the model were: ETE before custody; receiving a family or partner visit; whether serving under 12 months; whether in owned or rented accommodation before custody; whether attended any programme while in custody and whether had a drug problem before custody. Four were statistically significant predictors of having accommodation on release:

- prisoners who were in owned or rented accommodation before custody (not necessarily their own) – odds over four times higher
- prisoners who had received family/partner visits during custody – odds nearly three times greater
- those with no drug problem before custody – odds over twice as high
- those in ETE before custody – odds nearly one and half times higher.

Living arrangements before custody

A lower proportion of women (80%) than YOs (90%) or men (86%) were living in rented or owned property before custody. The remainder were in temporary accommodation (hostels, squats, Bed and Breakfasts, supported accommodation) or were sleeping rough before entering custody. The lower proportion of women having an address arranged on release may be explained, partly at least, by their less stable accommodation before custody.

Looking only at prisoners who were in rented or owned property before custody, there were differences in the proportions of those in such housing on release: women – 69%; YOs – 91%; men – 76%. One possible reason for the women's lower rate is that, of those prisoners previously in rented or owned property, a lower proportion of women (72%) said this accommodation was 'permanent' compared with YOs (87%) and men (78%). A quarter (25%) of women previously in owned or rented property had been there less than three months compared with 16% of YOs and 17% of men (not statistically significant).

34% of prisoners in temporary accommodation or homeless before custody had an address arranged on release – 73% of these were going to new accommodation. Of those homeless or in temporary accommodation before custody but with a new address arranged on release, 42% were going to live with their parents, 16% were moving in with their partners, 11% with other family members and 10% with friends. The remaining 21% were moving into temporary accommodation again. These findings suggest that family members and partners can be a useful resource for accommodating prisoners on release even though not necessarily living with them before custody.

Many prisoners, women in particular, did not have stable accommodation before custody – this might partly explain the numbers without accommodation arranged on release. While fewer prisoners overall had stable accommodation arranged on release (71%) than before custody (86%), the two measures cannot be reliably compared for the same reasons given for pre- and post-prison ETE arrangements (see 'ETE before custody section' above). However, for a proportion of prisoners with the greatest housing problems before custody, prison appears to provide opportunities for finding more stable accommodation on release, with parents and partners being key providers. Nevertheless, two-thirds of this group did not have an address arranged at the time of interview.

Family visits and accommodation

The relationship between family visits, family living arrangements and accommodation on release varied for the three prisoner groups. 79% of male prisoners who received at least one family or partner visit had accommodation arranged on release compared with 51% of those who did not receive a visit.

Living with a partner before custody was an important factor in having accommodation arranged on release for men but not for women. Of those prisoners living with a partner before custody, more men (63%) than women (36%) were likely to be living with a partner on release. It is not clear why a prison sentence appeared to have a greater impact on partner relationships among women than men. However, this might offer a further explanation of women’s lower levels of housing on release (assuming that the vast majority of such prisoners are returning to the same partner they were living with before custody). Of all men with accommodation arranged, 25% were going to live with partners on release compared with 11% of women and 10% of YO’s.

75% of women receiving visits had accommodation arranged on release compared with only 35% of those not receiving visits. Although the numbers were small, a greater proportion of women who were living with parents/parents-in-law before custody (n=17) had accommodation arranged on release (94%) compared with those women not living with parents (58%).

Over nine out of ten YO’s who received visits from their partner or family had accommodation arranged compared with three-quarters of those not receiving visits.

26% of prisoners were planning to live with a partner (married or otherwise) on release; 21% for women; 13% for YO’s and 29% for adult males. Half of all female prisoners had dependent children (including step-children) under 18, compared with 20% of YO’s and 48% of adult males. Of those prisoners with dependent children, 46% of women were living

with at least one before custody compared with 25% of YO’s and 32% of adult males. However, only 57% of those prisoners who were living with dependent children before custody expected to be living with them on release.

Drug problems and housing

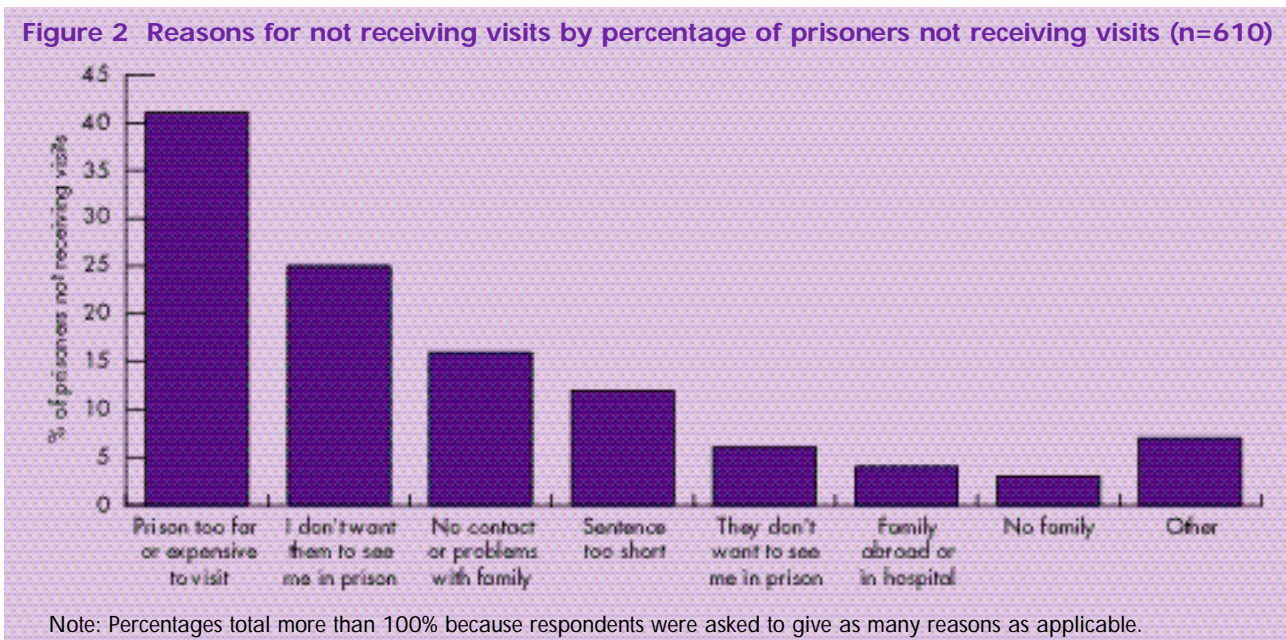
Prisoners who reported problems staying off drugs before custody were likely to have a range of other problems. Compared with those with no drug problem before custody, problem drug users were less likely to:

- have an address on release – 59% compared with 80%
- be in owned or rented accommodation before custody – 79% compared with 90%
- have been in ETE in the four weeks before custody – 15% compared with 44%
- have ETE arranged on release – 17% compared with 32%
- receive visits while in custody – 63% compared with 73%.

The importance of accommodation for this group was indicated by the finding that problem drug users who had an address arranged on release were much more confident of staying off drugs. Of those with an address arranged 50% thought they would not have a problem with drugs on release compared with 29% of those without an address.

Family visits

The above results indicate that family and partner visits were associated with more effective resettlement. The role of visits in improving resettlement outcomes is not clear and the relationship should not be viewed as causal. Receiving visits can be regarded as an indicator of more stable family relationships and a strong social network. Other forms of contact with family members, such as contact through letters and phone calls, may also have a role but these were not examined here.



69% of prisoners had visits from family or partners while in prison – for both women and adult men the proportion receiving at least one visit was 67% and for YO's 86%. Fewer of those serving less than 12 months had visits (60%) than those serving between 12 months and four years (80%) and those serving four years or more (81%). However, 48% of all women and 54% of all adult men had visits at least once a month on average, compared with 75% of all YO's. Only 41% of those homeless or in temporary accommodation before custody received visits from partner or family.

Distance and expense were cited by 41% of prisoners as the reason for not receiving visits (Figure 2). Many (25%) did not want their family to see them in prison but relatively few (6%) said their family/partner did not want to see them in prison. Only 3% of those not receiving visits claimed to have no family. Of the total sample, 3% claimed to have lost contact with their family during their current sentence.

Considerable work is already undertaken by statutory and voluntary agencies to promote family ties and visits. However, given the association between family/partner ties and more successful resettlement outcomes, resettlement strategies should encourage greater involvement of families and partners in the resettlement process. Family/partner visits to prisoners are a tangible demonstration of relatively strong ties and as such may be seen as a key objective of such a strategy.

In those cases where distance and expense are the main obstacles, temporary transfers of prisoners to prisons nearer their family/partner could be arranged or information sent to potential visitors about the provision of travel expenses. In other cases it might be a matter of encouraging telephone contact between the two parties as an initial step. However, initiating contact between families

and prisoners would require sensitive handling and would not be appropriate or possible for every prisoner.

Conclusion

While the importance of families in the effective resettlement of prisoners has long been recognised, there has been a lack of clear evidence. These results show that family and friends were the most common means of prisoners finding ETE on release. Moreover, family/partner visits during custody made it more likely that a prisoner would have ETE and accommodation arranged on release. If levels of ETE and accommodation outcomes are to be significantly increased, further efforts may be required to maintain and increase the frequency and quality of contact between prisoners and their families. Given the problems of poor literacy among prisoners and the expense of phone cards relative to earnings in prison (SEU, 2002), visits may offer the best method of facilitating meaningful contact in many cases.

Formal interventions in prison which assist prisoners in arranging ETE and accommodation also have a vital role, especially for those who are socially isolated or who have never worked before. However, where appropriate and applicable, programme and resettlement staff should explore further the opportunities for involving families and/or partners in the resettlement process.

Overall, the findings support the increasing evidence for the need for multi-modal approaches to resettlement. Prisoners tend to have more than one problem and the problems are often inter-related. Interventions, therefore, should not be made in isolation but should take into account the overall pattern of need.

Methodological note

NFO Social Research were commissioned to conduct the 2003 survey which was a stratified random sample of 74 prisons from 136 in England and Wales. The aim was to achieve an equivalent sample size as the 2001 sample of 2,000 prisoners – a sample size of 1,945 was achieved. Women's prisons were over-sampled to provide a robust sample size for this group. The number of women in the weighted sample was 170, there were 204 YO's and 1,571 adult men. The final data-set was weighted according to the proportion of discharges during 2003 from each of the three prison types sampled (females, young male offenders aged 18–20 and adult males). For the equivalent study in 2001, see Niven and Olagundoye (2002). All statistical significance tests used in this report refer to statistical significance at the 5% level.

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