The Impact of Prisons & Offenders on Kent’s Public Services

Peter Gilroy, Chief Executive, Kent County Council
Chair – Safer & Stronger Communities Group

4th March 2010

www.kent.gov.uk/prisonsreport
• Comprehensive research report commissioned in May 2009
• Unique “helicopter” view of the issues affecting Kent
• Examines each stage of the offender journey

• Identifies:
  – *What do we already know about the impact of offenders & prisons on our public services in Kent?*
  – *What don’t we know (i.e. establishing any gaps, barriers or challenges that prevent us working as a seamless family of services)?*
  – *What are the public policy questions that could lead into further policy reviews?*
Setting The Scene

- 10 Prisons in Kent & Medway – more than any other local authority area
- Rising prison population year on year since 1997
- Expansion by 900 prison places by May 2010
- 3200 people directly employed by prisons - significant contributor to Kent economy
- Nearly £100M spent on prisoners & prison estate in Kent & Medway
- Very diverse prison population – with complex needs
What we do well in Kent

- **Nationally recognised community sentencing schemes** – Kent community sentencing schemes have been successful in reducing reoffending rates by almost 50%

- **Customised support services** – meeting the unique needs of the prison population in each of the 10 diverse prison establishments

- **Dedicated and passionate frontline staff** – working effectively within challenging prison environments, with a strong commitment to effective resettlement and partnership working.

- **Integrated Offender Management** - national model of best practice where resettlement resources and expertise are intensified around the most prolific offenders

- **Public protection and risk management** – MAPPA process has received national praise for the management of the most serious and prolific offenders

- **Continual improvement** – commitment to regularly reviewing our practice and identifying opportunities for improvement

This should not make us complacent..
Wicked Issues for Kent

- Co-ordinating discharge arrangements across Kent
- Suitable and sustainable accommodation for offenders on release
- Rising adult reoffending rates for those under supervision of Probation
- Dealing with the impact of Young Offenders
- Increasing case load for professionals of offenders in custody and under the remit of Probation year on year
- One of the largest concentrated prisoner populations in the country at HMP Sheppey Cluster
- Continuity of services into the community on release
- Engaging a difficult group who have very complex needs which span multiple services
- Supporting offenders into sustainable employment

Three critical success factors: Competence, Employment, Housing
Wicked Issues for Kent - Margate

- 25 year failure of public policy – most deprived district in Kent
- Migration and placement of vulnerable and disadvantaged people
- Over 30% churn of population in some wards
- Both from outside and within Kent
- Cliftonville has 39.0% on benefit - worst in Kent (Kent Average 9.8%); 9.4% on Disability Living Allowance (Kent Average 4.2%) and 18.5% on Incapacity Benefit - 2nd worst in Kent (Kent Average 6.0%)
- In Kent, Thanet has the highest percentage of young people known to the Youth Offending Service
- Mainly concentrated in three wards in Margate and Cliftonville
- Thanet also has the highest number of police recorded crimes in Kent
Q.1 Preventative Services

How can public services better target preventative services and intervention for young people at risk of offending before they have the initial contact with the criminal justice system?

Kent’s 2 Youth Offending Institutions & Secure Training Centre are the only ones in the South East region.

Nationally, 43% of prisoners have had a family member convicted of a criminal offence (35% had been in prison)

In Kent, 31% of young offenders in custody reoffend within 9 months

Despite the rising level of investment in intervention services, there are still increasing numbers of young people entering the criminal justice system

Need targeted support to equip young people with self-esteem, coping strategies and confidence to make the right choices

Much more dynamic use of the creative industries, especially film, linking with apprenticeships

Link to early years – generic access – different use of Gateways?
Q.2 Education, Training & Employment

How could public services better co-ordinate to provide continuity and wraparound support for offenders whilst in custody and on release, to improve their learning and skills levels, linked to employment?

Nationally, 65% prisoners have literacy & numeracy levels of less than an 11 year old and 67% are not in employment or training before prison and 76% do not have paid employment to go to on release.

The initial education, training or employment opportunity can be “make or break” for offenders – domino effect on reoffending chances if not in ETE.

Need contemporary qualifications whilst in custody that match the skills gaps in the local labour market.

There needs to be continuity of ETE for offenders throughout the offender journey.
How could public services work better together to provide suitable and sustainable housing and accommodation, as one of the key triggers to reducing reoffending?

Nationally, 32% of prisoners are not in permanent accommodation prior to imprisonment.

We don’t know enough about the continuity, sustainability and suitability of offender accommodation choices over time.

Disproportionate impact on some areas of the county – offenders tend to migrate over time towards poor quality, private sector rented accommodation (e.g. Thanet).

Accommodation planning & support needs to take place much earlier (whilst still in custody) and agencies need to co-ordinate better with collective responsibility.

Settled accommodation can reduce reoffending by a third.

Total Place will assist through “Deep Dive” to understand the private landlord market.
Q.4 Reducing Adult Reoffending

How could public services work creatively to provide intensive support for those being released from prison to reduce the burden of high volume, low level reoffending?

Kent is one of only 13 local authority areas with a statistically significant increase in the rate of adult reoffending under probation supervision (8.45%)

The most significant volume of reoffending lies with low level crime – we need all public agencies to support enforcement agencies to reduce this

What could Kent do differently to reprioritise resources on preventative and rehabilitative work if we gained control of the local custody budget?

From April 2010, the Crime & Disorder Act places a new statutory duty for CDRPs to formulate and implement a strategy to reduce reoffending
Next Steps

• Report launched today to open up the debate with partners and Central Government

• Starting point for action with partners working together on the Reducing Reoffending Strategy

• “Total Place” style approach – we need to build on this in Kent

• Recommendations from report taken forward by the Community Safety Unit (KCC), working with partners

• Bringing prisons into a more transparent process integrated into the public sector family

• “Deep dive” work should be a rolling programme targeted at high risk communities

• Seek a research partner to move these public policy questions forward