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Dear Partners

Working in partnership to prioritise risk and protect the public

MTC's priority continues to be to protect the public and deliver a safe and effective probation service while safeguarding our teams, the partner organisations we work with, the people we support, and the communities we serve. And this remains a key focus for us as we continue to work in partnership to ensure our service users are safely managed by London Community Rehabilitation Company during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

I'd like to take this opportunity to update you on how MTC is responding to two current 'leaving custody' related initiatives.

End of Custody Temporary Release

As mentioned in our recent Partnership Newsletter, MTC has been working closely with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), including the National Probation Service and prisons to agree local prisoner releases under the new End of Custody Temporary Release (ECTR) licence that was introduced in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Since its introduction, our Home Circumstance Assessment Team – in consultation with partner organisations including the police and social services – have carried out nearly 400 risk assessments of individuals nearing the end of their custodial term, to determine their eligibility for early release.

To strengthen our risk assessments, we have also introduced a number of additional measures:

- Working with the London-wide MASH Stakeholder Partnership Group, we have agreed a new process for prioritising safeguarding checks presented to local borough MASH teams. If this process identifies safeguarding risks associated with the household the individual is due to be released to London CRC recommends that the referring prison does not release the individual early.
- With a clear focus on safeguarding victims, we are reviewing both service users' index and historical offences for signs of domestic abuse risk. We are also liaising with the police and social services to add additional intelligence to our risk assessments, and where we identify any risks, we recommend the individual is not released under ECTR.
- To ensure the robustness of all our ECTR assessments and recommendations to prisons, our Quality and Performance Team continues to audit them.

As a result of our assessments, to date, 35 individuals have been released early to be supervised by London Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). Our teams continue to carry out rigorous assessments and information sharing prior to any ECTR decisions.

Additional accommodation support for prison leavers

You may be aware that, also in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, MoJ has introduced a new scheme to fund emergency/temporary accommodation for individuals leaving prison between 11 May and 31 July 2020. Funding is available for those who are:

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- At risk of homelessness following release from custody.
- At risk of homelessness following move-on from Approved Premises and Bail Accommodation and Support Services (BASS), and who have been risk assessed as suitable to move on.

The funding is to pay for temporary/emergency accommodation for a maximum of 56 nights. Or alternatively, it can be used towards the costs of a property in the private rented sector – subject to certain conditions.

Bearing in mind the stringent criteria for this funding, London CRC, in partnership with St Mungos, continues to work to the 'duty to refer' homelessness guidelines for all custody leavers which remains paramount to our engagement with local authority housing partners. We will ensure that a DTR assessment has been completed prior to accessing the MoJ emergency funding and will continue to work with local authority housing options teams to ensure an appropriate move on plan is in place for each individual at the of the MoJ funded period. As the funding is available for a limited period of time, and a key priority for your organisation and ours is to prevent homelessness wherever possible, I'd welcome an opportunity to talk to you about how we might work together to access the funding to support eligible service users in your borough.

Any questions?

I trust the above gives you a good insight into the approach we are taking to the new initiatives. However, if you have any questions or would like to discuss how we might work collaboratively to support homeless service users, please contact your local Contracts & Partnerships Manager or myself via email on aj.brooks@londoncrc.org.uk or alternatively via phone on 07464647701.

Yours sincerely

AJ Brooks
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