



# ENDING THE REVOLVING DOOR

How the first generation of police and crime commissioners can cut crime by working in partnership to address multiple needs



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## REVOLVING DOORS AGENCY

**Revolving Doors Agency** is a charity working across England and Wales to change systems and improve services for people with multiple problems, including poor mental health, who are in contact with the criminal justice system. For nearly 20 years we have worked closely with the police and policymakers to build an understanding of multiple needs as a cause of crime, anti-social behaviour and repeat offending, and to create practical solutions to this issue. To find out more about our work go to:

[www.revolving-doors.org.uk](http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk)

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# Introduction

With nearly half a million crimes committed by former offenders in the year ending June 2010, repeat offending and anti-social behaviour is causing serious damage to communities, taking up valuable police resources, and placing a major burden on the public purse. A significant proportion of this crime is committed by people with multiple needs, who are falling through gaps in services and failing to get the help they need to stop offending.

This briefing highlights to police and crime commissioner candidates the importance of dealing effectively with this group of 'revolving door' offenders in order to reduce crime and maintain an efficient police force, and offers solutions for them to consider locally. The paper recommends that PCCs should:

- 1. Commission creatively to reduce crime and reoffending:** Jointly commission services that work in partnership with the police to tackle the multiple needs of many repeat offenders
- 2. Work with a range of partners to address multiple needs:** Take a lead role in bringing together a range of partners, including health. Hold other agencies to account to ensure partnership arrangements work effectively and the police can focus on their core role
- 3. Consult with all those in contact with the criminal justice system:** Include offenders as part of their commitment to engage with the whole community.



# Multiple needs and the police

People experiencing multiple needs come into frequent contact with emergency services, and are well-known to the police. These individuals are often repeatedly arrested, and their criminal and anti-social behaviour puts daily pressure on police resources and harms communities. Their multiple unmet needs can include mental ill health, drug and alcohol problems, unemployment and homelessness. These problems reinforce each other, and combined with ineffective contact with services, result in a cycle of crisis and crime.

Each contact with the police presents an opportunity to access interventions, such as mental health treatment and drug and alcohol services. Too often these opportunities are missed. Many end up serving costly short prison sentences, only to reoffend as they are not provided with support for their problems on release.

- 69% of arrestees test positive for at least one drug
- 72% of male and 70% of female sentenced prisoners suffer from two or more mental disorders. This compares with 5% of men and 2% of women in the general population
- A third of prisoners lose their home while in prison
- 61% of short-sentenced prisoners reoffend within a year.

The cost to public services is huge. As an emergency service, the police foot a large proportion of the bill when other services fail to offer support. Getting people the right treatment at the right time to address their multiple underlying problems and offending behaviour could seriously reduce the cost of the services they use. Early versions of our *Financial Analysis Model*<sup>1</sup> suggest that a national investment of £33 million per year in services for offenders with multiple needs could result in savings of £3 billion across public services.

Solutions to this problem are already tried and tested. They include initiatives which identify challenges in individuals' lives and help them to access support and treatment to address them. Closer working between existing local services can make a difference too.

# Recommendations

Police and crime commissioners (PCCs) can perform a vital role locally in driving forward these solutions; reducing crime and reoffending, freeing police officers for the frontline, and making their communities safer. In each local area, PCCs should:

## I. Commission creatively to reduce crime and reoffending

The most effective way of reducing crime and reoffending among offenders with multiple needs is through prevention, early intervention, effective liaison and diversion, and the provision of coordinated services in the community. With an un-ringfenced budget, including community safety and a proportion of Drug Intervention Project (DIP) funds, PCCs will be powerful local commissioners able to influence the provision of these solutions locally.

PCCs should explore opportunities to **commission community-based services** which work collaboratively with the police to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and rehabilitate offenders with multiple needs. Existing effective approaches to addressing multiple needs include link worker schemes and women's centres (see appendix for examples), which can navigate access to services and provide ongoing, holistic support.

These services can also work with the police to **encourage early intervention and diversion** where appropriate. While charging followed by a criminal justice sanction will be the correct action for some, in many instances of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour where the perpetrator has a range of health and social care needs, a referral into community services and/or a restorative solution can provide a more common-sense, effective intervention. The PCC will play an important role in highlighting these options, and ensuring that they are kept open to police on the frontline.

To ensure value for money, PCCs should also explore **pooling budgets** and **joint-commissioning services** for this group. Those with multiple needs are among the most costly to a range of community services. Improving outcomes for this group will save costs for a range of partners, and lead to safer communities with fewer victims.

1. [www.revolving-doors.org.uk/policy--research/policy-projects/economic-model](http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/policy--research/policy-projects/economic-model)

## 2. Work with a range of partners to address multiple needs

**Taking a lead in galvanising partnerships**, and ensuring that both criminal justice and community-based interventions are effective in reducing reoffending, will see benefits ‘upstream’ for the PCC through reduced crime, safer communities, and more effective use of police resources.

The police cannot cut crime alone, and PCCs will need to **work with a wide range of strategic partners** to reduce crime within their force area. Given that 26.4% of all offenders reoffend within one year<sup>2</sup>, it is clear that working with prisons and probation is essential. The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) approach already brings together a variety of partners to provide an effective, locally targeted approach to dealing with priority offenders<sup>3</sup>.

To address the multiple needs of many repeat offenders, however, PCCs will also need to engage a range of other agencies, including health partners:

- **Offender health:** The government recognises the need to improve offender health in order to reduce offending. Recent changes to the commissioning of offender health services have introduced new systems to improve health care in all custodial settings. The commissioning of **health care in police custody** is transferring to the NHS. Meanwhile, **liaison and diversion services**, which respond to detainees’ health and social care needs and divert away from the criminal justice system where appropriate, will be operating in all custody suites by 2014. PCCs will be a key partner for Offender Health commissioners who commission these services.
- **Health and wellbeing boards (HWBs):** Newly created Health and Wellbeing Boards will have a substantial overlapping interest in offenders with multiple needs as part of their responsibility for improving access to services and reducing health inequalities. They will also determine the content of Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs), and develop a joint health and wellbeing strategy. These will be an important source of data for PCCs to shape the commissioning of services locally, and will also require the PCC to work closely with the HWBs in their area. While currently offenders are often not included in JSNAs, the potential collaboration of PCCs and HWBs presents an opportunity to establish a more joined-up strategic approach.

- **Mental health trusts:** There are high levels of mental health need among the offender population, and PCCs will need to work closely with mental health trusts as part of any strategy to improve the health and wellbeing of many repeat offenders in order to enable them to lead crime-free lives.

Other key partners are drug and alcohol agencies, including Drug Intervention Projects (DIP), and voluntary sector agencies. These partnerships are vital to addressing the high level of health and social care needs among the offending population, and to reduce reoffending by those with multiple needs.

They are also important as effective partnerships can help reduce the amount of police time spent dealing with issues such as mental health. Police are not social workers, and PCCs will have an important role in **holding other local services to account** to ensure that partnership arrangements are working effectively, and police are allowed to focus on their core role.

### THE POLICE AND MENTAL HEALTH ACT

The police spend a large amount of time dealing with people experiencing mental distress. One problem often raised is the amount of time spent discharging responsibilities under the Mental Health Act. Section 136 of the Mental Health Act (1984/2007), for example, enables the police to detain individuals suffering an apparent mental health crisis in a public place who are in “immediate need of care and control”.

This responsibility requires close joint-working between police and mental health services to assess the individual in an appropriate place of safety. A recent study in the North East, however, found that often there was difficulty linking with mental health services, leaving police officers spending many hours waiting with a Section 136 detainee and sometimes detaining them in police custody<sup>4</sup>.

It is important that people in this situation are able to access appropriate care in a timely manner. PCCs will have an important role in driving forward local solutions to these issues with partners, and in doing so freeing police officers for the front line.

2. [open.justice.gov.uk/reoffending/offenders-in-the-community](http://open.justice.gov.uk/reoffending/offenders-in-the-community) | 3. For further information see Revolving Doors Agency (2012) Integrated Offender Management: effective alternatives to short sentences, available [www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/iom](http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/iom) | 4. See Revolving Doors Agency (2012) Big Diversion Project: current state analysis of diversion services in the North East region – final report (NEOHCU, pp. 53-71), available [www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/final-report-bdp](http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/final-report-bdp)

### 3. Consult with all those in contact with the criminal justice system

PCCs are expected to represent their whole community, **including victims and the most vulnerable.**

Citizens with multiple needs form part of this community, and are among the most vulnerable and excluded members. While they may come into frequent contact with the police as offenders, many will simultaneously be victims of crime. As recognised in a range of government publications, including the recent *No Health Without Mental Health: implementation framework*<sup>5</sup>, offenders are also often among the most excluded and vulnerable in the community.

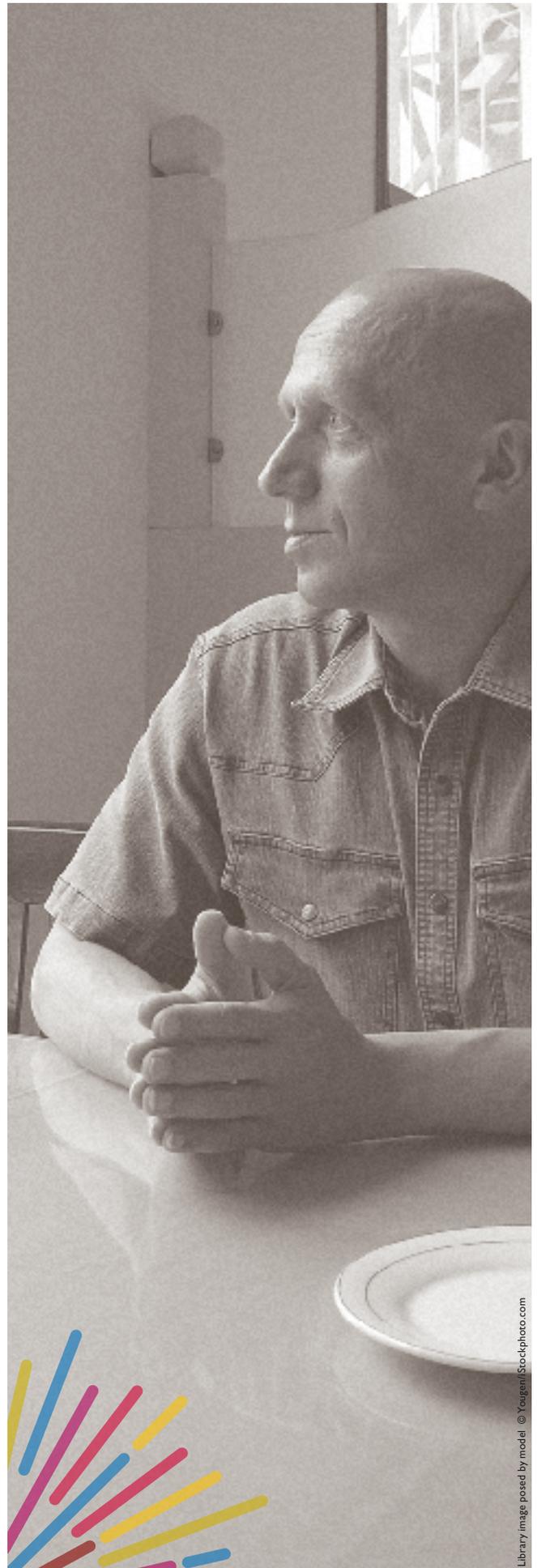
It is important that PCCs consult with this group as part of their duty to engage with the whole community. This may require a special effort, as people suffering from multiple needs can be among the hardest to reach due to their chaotic lives and difficulty engaging with services. The rewards, however, are clear. **Involving people with direct experience of multiple needs** and the criminal justice system can play a key role in improving services, and can help reduce reoffending.

Police and crime commissioners should **work with local agencies** such as women's centres, homeless hostels, probation and drug and alcohol services to facilitate this engagement. Many organisations, including voluntary sector organisations, will already have **established service user forums** locally with which the PCC and their office could work.

#### HOW CAN WE HELP?

**Revolving Doors Agency** has experience working in a range of localities to improve systems and services for people with multiple needs in contact with the criminal justice system. We work with a range of policy makers, and continue to expand the evidence base for effective approaches to reducing crime among the 'revolving doors' group. If you have any enquiries about the content of this briefing, please contact:

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Library image posed by model © Yougen/istockphoto.com

5. Department of Health (2012) No Health Without Mental Health: implementation framework, available [iapdeathsincustody.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/No-Health-Without-Mental-Health-Implementation-Framework.pdf](http://iapdeathsincustody.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/No-Health-Without-Mental-Health-Implementation-Framework.pdf)

# Appendix: Examples of services working with multiple needs

## New Directions – Warrington

New Directions in Warrington provides a link between neighbourhood police and mental health services. As an early intervention service, it identifies individuals with low-level problems who are at risk, but would not normally be helped until their condition had deteriorated much further. All of the person's needs are assessed by one of two full-time workers, and they are offered support and signposted to a range of community services.

The scheme has had a substantial impact on those it has worked with, achieving:

- A 78% drop in reported crime compared to the pre-intervention rate
- A 71% fall in 'Vulnerable Adult' reports – after an initial fall of 54%
- A 30% reduction in anti-social behaviour in the first year of operation.

This highlights the potential for partnerships between the police and community services which intervene early to help people access services and tackle offending behaviour.

## Milton Keynes Link Worker+ service

The Milton Keynes Link Worker+ project is a partnership between Milton Keynes Community Safety Partnership and charity P3. The scheme focuses on people who are in crisis because of a combination of problems, including mental health needs, accommodation problems, substance misuse, and offending and anti-social behaviour. It facilitates the engagement of clients with services which can maintain their long-term wellbeing. The project works closely with the police and other partners in the city.

## WomenCentre – Calderdale and Kirklees

WomenCentre is a community-based organisation in West Yorkshire, aiming to serve the needs of some of the most vulnerable women in the community. It recognises the need for a specific approach to women, and works with women who have multiple needs and who are poorly served by existing services. By adopting a holistic, person-centred approach, the WomenCentre empowers women and families to solve their own problems in every aspect of their lives including:

- Justice – working with victims of domestic violence and rape and reducing reoffending rates for women offenders
- Health – tackling mental illness, drug and alcohol problems, improving healthcare
- Welfare – helping women into work, helping them to access education and a basic income.

This approach has proved highly successful in reducing reoffending, with an evaluation by NACRO finding that the reoffending rate of women engaged with WomenCentre's Evolve programme was 3.2%, compared with a national average of 47%.

## Anawim Women's Centre – Birmingham

Anawim women's centre in Birmingham is a day centre for vulnerable women. It acts as a one-stop shop into services for women with multiple problems such as substance misuse, poverty and homelessness, as well as victims of domestic violence and women offenders.

The centre provides food, clothes, social activities, educational classes and a crèche for children while the women engage. It also provides links into mental health services, and following positive evaluations has been selected for funding by the Department of Health to develop a mental health project as an alternative to custody for women offenders.



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