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FROM THE INSIDE: THE PURPOSE OF PROBATION HOSTELS

This presentation explores the attitudes and opinions of people either working or residing in a Probation Approved Premises (hostel) regarding the purpose of such premises. This includes the views of different categories of staff (Probation Officers, Probation Services Officers and relief staff) and those of offenders resident in the hostel. The opinions expressed are placed in the context of hostel policy, guidance and inspections.

Findings are drawn from a case study into how people live out their lives in a hostel on a daily basis. This study focused on sex offenders, but considered wider issues relevant to all offenders as part of the analysis. Data was collected through participant observation undertaken over 21 months, and through interviews with 24 staff members and 17 residents. In addition, 12 (over 1 year) Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels were observed. Very little research has considered the daily lives and views of front-line staff or residents in hostels; the research presented here has addressed this gap.

The key findings presented relate to the variety of perspectives relating to the purpose and role of probation hostels. Some differences in opinion were noted between all groups identified, although staff were less critical than residents. The opinions are discussed in respect to surveillance and supervision, management and control, reintegration and public protection.