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**Chapter:** Residential Work with Sex Offenders - Places of Collusion and Segregation or Preparation for Resettlement and Reintegration

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**Abstract**

This chapter explores the work and interactions of both staff and residents within probation approved premises, placing this in the wider context of risk management and rehabilitation. Drawing on two ethnographic studies undertaken within approved premises, it is argued that current practice fosters a working culture which promotes the social segregation and isolation of sex offenders which is counter-productive to resettlement and rehabilitation work. The chapter concludes by suggesting an alternative, constructive regime for residential work with sex offenders, which aims to holistically manage sex offenders' risks whilst supporting them to address their offending behaviours and attitudes.

This chapter will explore the growing and sometimes publicly contentious use of probation approved premises<sup>1</sup> as a resource for both protecting the public and resettling adult sex offenders. It will draw on two separate ethnographic studies as well as a literature review and engagement with official policy and practice reports. The first study was undertaken by Reeves as part of her doctoral study<sup>2</sup> (see Reeves, 2009, 2010 and in

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<sup>1</sup> Hostels are the more common name for 'approved premises' and throughout the term hostel will be used as it has more common parlance with a wider readership.

<sup>2</sup> The fieldwork by Reeves in study 1 was undertaken between March 2003 and December 2004 and involved participant observation of staff and resident interactions and hostel working practice.

press) into how adult sex offenders being released from prison experienced life within criminal justice institutions. This research involved a case study of a probation hostel during which time the interactions of sex offender residents, other residents and staff were observed and interviews were conducted relating to the role and significance of hostel accommodation for risk management and reintegration. The second study discussed here was conducted by Cowe (Cowe 2008<sup>3</sup>) and involved an ethnographic study of residents and staff in two hostels in 2002 and then again in 2007-8. The research explored the role and purpose of the hostel and whether this was changing. This was followed up by questionnaires and meetings with hostel managers and deputies from a further 32 hostels between 2008 and 2010.

Through a consideration of relevant literature and the findings from the above studies by Reeves and Cowe, this chapter will explore the potential risks and opportunities that hostel accommodation offers and consider the potential good practice mechanisms and approaches that might make best use of this resource, both in relation to containing and monitoring high risk sex offenders being released from custody and in preparing them for eventual move on into the community. It will critically consider some of the hidden and unintended consequences of grouping adult sex offenders together for both staff and offenders. Particular attention will be paid to mechanisms that promote interaction between such offenders and implications of this grouping. The concept of a constructive

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Approximately 1 day per week (including overnight on occasion) for 20 months was spent in participant observation. In conjunction with this 12 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committees were observed and repeated interviews were conducted with 24 hostel residents and 17 staff.

<sup>3</sup> The fieldwork by Cowe involved semi structured interviews with 24 staff and 24 residents in 2002 and 24 staff and 30 residents in 2007-8 augmented by observation of staff and resident interactions and interviews with senior probation service staff. Approximately one day per week for two 6 month periods was spent in participant observation.

regime will be considered alongside whether such premises are now functioning as places of containment or resettlement.

### **Background to Probation Hostels**

Probation approved premises for adults are traditionally seen as having their roots in the introduction of the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) which legislated against the use of;

*‘approved schools, remand homes, approved probation hostels or approved probation homes within the meaning of the Criminal Justice Act of 1948...’*

(Part II, Section 46, CYPA 1969)

Burnett and Eaton (2004) present the history of hostels as relatively recent and of little interest to current policy makers and practitioners. However Wincup (2002), Barton (2004), Vanstone (2004), Cowe (2008), HMIP (2008) and Cherry and Cowe (2010) suggest that hostels for adults in the Criminal Justice System have a longer and potentially richer history than is traditionally suggested, and from which considerable learning may be derived.

Within a more recent time frame hostels have been used for a range of offenders, those charged with offences or those deemed at risk of offending with a view to developing both (re)integrative and rehabilitative possibilities for the residents. A detailed examination of hostels’ history (Cowe, 2008) reveals that, until relatively recently,

hostels were primarily constructed as places of transformation, (re)socialisation and (re)integration into the community. Their prior clientele has included offenders who were: homeless, misusing drugs or alcohol, experiencing mental health problems, at risk of custody, being assessed by the courts, on bail, in need of support and assistance in stopping offending or experiencing other ‘offending’ related social problems.

### *The purpose of probation hostels*

Cowe and Cherry (2010) note a clear shift in hostel focus and practice that differentiates their purposes from that during the late 1960s to the late 1990s and that from the late 1990s to the early twenty first century. The latter trend has been for hostels to focus more on public protection and containment than rehabilitation and reintegration. This shift mirrors wider changes in probation practices and policy (National Standards 1989, 2001, 2005, PC 37/2005, PI 04/2011) and parallels a range of legislative and public policy shifts (Criminal Justice Acts 1991, 2003 & Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, Offender Management Act, 2007) that may be seen as less concerned with assisting those at risk of (re)offending and more strongly located within a public protection and punishment focussed paradigm. Such a shift has become more generally associated with a repositioning of the service as more focussed on public protection and managerialism than social work or social care<sup>4</sup>. For example, the 1991 Criminal Justice Act, which transformed the probation order into a community punishment, stated the primary

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<sup>4</sup> It is of note that within the UK probation has continued to operate within and alongside a social work context in Scotland and that the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2005 creation of eight Community Justice Authorities focussed on greater partnership working and the monitoring of (but not bifurcation of) criminal justice social work agencies.

purpose of a probation intervention as securing the rehabilitation of the offender and then secondly introduced public protection.

By the time of the 2003 Criminal Justice Act, the rehabilitative purposes of probation had been relegated to one of a range of possible purposes for a 'community sentence'. The five possible purposes of a sentence (CJA 2003:s.142) are listed as:

- The Punishment of Offenders
- Reducing Crime
- Reform and Rehabilitation of Offenders
- Protection of the Public
- The Making of Reparation by Offenders to Persons affected by their offences.

Parallel to this, the wider official policy purposes of hostels have mirrored the relegation and potential sidelining of resettlement and rehabilitation in their stated purposes. PC 37/2005 redefined the 'Role and Purpose of Approved Premises'

*'The core purpose of approved premises is the provision of enhanced supervision as a contribution to the management of offenders who pose a significant risk of harm to the public. Admissions criteria and referral processes need to reflect this focus on public protection. The delivery of enhanced supervision encompasses security, staffing arrangements, restrictive measures and rehabilitative components'. (Home Office 37/2005:1)*

It is of note that historically policy makers (and many practitioners and researchers) have tended to juxtapose public protection and treatment or rehabilitation focussed practice rather than exploring the very real potential for them to be both related and complimentary, perhaps even integrated, approaches to working with offenders.

Today ‘approved premises’ remain as defined under Section 13 of the Offender Management Act 2007. The term currently applies to 100 former Probation and Bail Hostels, providing over 2000 bed spaces, managed by the Probation Service or by Voluntary Organisations. Their official purposes are set out as:

*Approved Premises offer residential provision to selected offenders and some bailees in order to provide enhanced levels of protection to the public and reduce the likelihood of further offending. Approved Premises work to National Standards and Approved Premises Regulations 2001. They provide enhanced residential supervision by:*

- *Working closely with offender managers and MAPPA*
- *Providing 24hr staff oversight*
- *Monitoring curfews and ensuring compliance with rigorously enforced rules*
- *Undertaking ongoing observation and assessment of attitudes and behaviour*
- *Providing programmes of regular supervision, support and monitoring aimed at reducing offending behaviour and risk to the public*

( National Association of Probation and Bail Hostels - NAPBH, 2010)

There are limited places within this 'estate' for female offenders and since 2008 (HMIP 2008) there has been clear recommendation that mixed sex hostels should be converted to single sex establishments. As will be noted in chapter (?) there is a tendency to construct sexual offending as an exclusively male phenomena and as a consequence to construct interventions exclusively for male sex offenders.

### **Sex offenders and Probation Hostels**

As can be noted from the above, the rehabilitative and resettlement focus in the officially stated purpose of hostels now appears secondary to their public protection role. Increasingly researchers, practitioners and policy-makers acknowledge that the nature, type and location of accommodation for high risk offenders are vital to the aims of public protection. Due to this recognition hostels and hostel staff are now constructed as part of the wider 'offender management' framework with an explicit role in the 'observation and monitoring of offenders' (NOMS 2006). An outcome of this prioritisation of 'high risk', 'observation' and 'public protection' has been a more focussed use of hotels for 'sex offenders'. Farmer and Mann (2010: 18) note that:

*'in public parlance, the term 'high risk' has come to be synonymous with the label 'sex offender' used to describe a group of individuals feared by the public at large and beloved of tabloid headline writers'*

*Use of probation hostels with sex offenders*



The role of hostels in providing targeted accommodation for sex offenders was set out in *Exercising Constant Vigilance* (HMIP, 1998: 72), a thematic inspection into the supervision arrangements for sex offenders, which concluded that:

*There was convincing evidence that approved hostels were better equipped to manage the risks posed by sex offenders in the community than other community-based arrangements. Those hostels inspected who were accommodating sex offenders demonstrated an ability to provide a constructive, supportive and restrictive regime as part of an enhanced level of supervision.*

More recently, the Ministry of Justice (2010: 12) notes that (sex) offenders may be accommodated: ‘... in approved premises where this is necessary to manage his or her risk.’ However, as can be inferred from this statement, the use of hostels for sex offenders within probation practice is not straightforward. This is reflected in the position of the National Probation Service (NPS) in 2004, which recognised that hostel accommodation may not be appropriate for all sex offenders (or indeed, all high risk offenders). In addition, the use of the hostel as a community protection mechanism can only be of use for a few offenders within a relatively small resource budget proportionate to the prison or more generic probation populations.

Possible purposes of hostels for sex offenders include:

1. A ‘community based’ containment function
2. A site for treatment or intervention
3. A transition mechanism for those moving from custody to the community

4. A place for monitoring behaviour
5. An alternative to custody for some offenders.

None of the above are necessarily mutually exclusive, however if one is the primary aim there is a risk that hostels appear in the guise of a community based intervention but become in fact an alternative form of custody or incarceration. Currently hostels appear not to be used as the primary site of treatment or intervention in the way that therapeutic communities or residential settings associated with sex offenders or other offender typologies have in the past. The current model appears to include the option of attending community based programmes such as SOTP (Sex Offender Treatment Programme), but these are usually delivered by non hostel staff and usually not on the hostel premises.

Moreover the use of hostels as places of residence as a condition of a community order appears to have dramatically declined and most of the hostel residents in the studies that the authors undertook were either on some form of pre or post custodial release license. In a limited number of cases hostels were being used to 'voluntarily' house offenders who were not able to find suitable accommodation in the community even after their licence period had expired (PC 37/2005)<sup>5</sup>. This meant that a small number of residents may have been located in the hostel longer than some of the core staffing team and longer than offender's risk management plans suggested were helpful to the reduction in their

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<sup>5</sup> More recently regulation 5(1) of the Offender Management Act (Approved Premises) Regulations 2008 sets out the statutory basis for taking residents who may be a) on bail; b) subject to community sentences; c) on licence release; d) anyone who should be accommodated for public protection reasons and e) anyone who should be accommodated to receive supervision or treatment. Admission under d) or e) still requires the individuals consent.

risk of reoffending; this signals a shift in function for both hostels and the probation service in providing this type of provision.

The transition function of hostels between prison and community accommodation appears alive, but perhaps not well, as the punitive context of both wider legislative changes and a determination by the probation service to be seen as a key player in 'public protection' has refocused activity on surveillance and monitoring type functions with a decreased focus on longer term resettlement in the local or any other community. This shift may be self defeating if it encourages offenders to rely on external control mechanisms to prevent re-offending. A transition function that is effective in reintegrating offenders and reducing re-offending may require greater 'public' and probation service ownership of both the necessary support and monitoring of offenders when they are relocated in the community.

The fourth purpose of monitoring appears to be the stated and predominant model of activity that hostels and their staffing roles and structures now reflect. Policy and practice have taken on this dominant mode with the sex offender category of offenders. The purposes of this monitoring may be aligned to staff or organisational values and approaches which variously align with the other three models stated above. Both studies reported here found that Sinclair's (1971) research findings of the dominant role of the deputy or warden shaping the hostel ethos remain true today. Given a clear policy shift and visible changes in practice since Sinclair's observations it begs the question what impact this has on hostel residents and whether this impact is likely to lead to long term

resettlement and rehabilitation of such offenders. In both Cowe's and Reeves' studies (c.f. Reeves, in press) Hostel Managers and Deputies had begun to clearly understand the primary functions of their role within a revised 'risk management' framework:

*'Our main duties and responsibilities are around managing high risk offenders in our approved premises, completing risk assessments forms, notification of risk to partner agencies and protecting staff, victims and the public from further offending. It's about good monitoring and working with the offender managers.'*

*(Deputy Manager of a Hostel, Cowe Study 2)*

Most tended to speak first of their public protection role and then after further exploration disclose whether they saw this as extending to other activities or longer term goals;

*'It's my role, with the staff, to keep them safe in the community , to assist them to reintegrate and support their progression and move on, however it's important that you enforce the rules and do this equally to all as well as listen and support'*

*(Another Deputy Manager, Cowe Study 2)*

A focus that is too risk orientated may discourage wider partners in the community from engaging with hostels to provide rehabilitative and resettlement links. HMIP (2008: 9) reported that:

*...in most areas, local housing authorities had failed to recognise the need to establish joint working arrangements to ensure the effective resettlement of offenders residing in probation hostels, under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998.*

Burnett (2005:7) notes a diminished role for rehabilitation and reintegration in modern hostel policy and suggests that this may have a detrimental impact on staff and ultimately undermine public confidence in hostels as a useful criminal justice resource.

*'These aspects have a very low profile. This is likely to be demoralising for staff working closely with offenders, and may ultimately detract from efforts to build up public confidence in the value of approved premises.'*

The responses from staff in the studies by the authors mirrored the ordering of purposes for hostels in the new legislative and policy frameworks, however unlike the CJA 2003, resettlement and rehabilitation were, for many staff, still seen as core purposes of their intervention albeit played down in their discussions and discourses both within the hostel and within their explorations with other managers<sup>6</sup>. Of note, almost all hostel staff believed that hostels would be opened up to privatisation and contestability and wondered to what extent this would further diminish their reintegrative focus.

#### *Effects of using probation hostels with sex offenders*

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<sup>6</sup> Between 2008-2010 Cowe followed up 32 hostel managers and facilitated discussion sessions between managers and deputies on national training programmes for hostel managers. For many managers rehabilitation was still a clear aim however for most this was at best second place to and in some instances disjointed from discussions around hostels' public protection roles.

As a short-term measure for accommodating high risk sex offenders being released from prison, hostels may offer considerable advantages over other options (such as release to less secure, less stable, charitable or private hostels, or into the community). In hostels sex offenders can be subject to a high level of supervision and monitoring, be ordered to attend treatment programmes that can be administered through the hostel, and hostel staff can liaise closely with other criminal justice agencies (Scottish Executive, 2003). However, how this accommodation is managed remains problematic. Accommodating different categories of offenders together may be inappropriate for targeting offence-based interventions, and could result in conflicts between different groups of offenders (Wincup, 2003; Reeves, 2009), although having sex offender-only hostels raises further concerns about the potential for offender networking or establishing ‘rings’ (Scottish Executive, 2003). More fundamentally, the structures of hostel regimes have been questioned in terms of the perpetuation of ‘prisonisation’ through institutional accommodation, social stigma and social exclusion: issues which have been related to escalations in the risk of re-offending (Baldry *et al.* 2002).

The majority of research available on the issue of accommodating sex offenders focuses on the value of secure forms of accommodation to risk management and public protection through monitoring and surveillance (*c.f.* Cowen *et al.*, 2001 and 1999), with little research being undertaken into the effects of place and location on sex offender reintegration. Nor has research thoroughly considered the opportunities offered by running (accredited) programmes to ‘treat’ sex offenders in hostels where offenders’ movements and behaviour can be monitored across the day. The current practice of such

programmes being delivered in other sites risks a disconnect for staff and offenders between the intervention and the rest of their day to day lives, a potential opportunity for hostels could be to make use of the Good Lives Model (GLM) and link this to a programme of building social skills and wider resettlement aims. Much of the literature on programmes focuses on content and methodology as opposed to the potential impact of the location of where such programmes run and the wider context of offenders' lives at the time of delivery. As Burnett notes:

*'... it would be a pity if this stress on the public protection role of approved premises is allowed to overwhelm the agenda for promoting rehabilitation and community reintegration.'* (Burnett, 2005:7)

McAlinden (2009) argues, however, that it is not necessarily the nature of the accommodation itself that is significant, but the social connections that the location of the accommodation affords. In a review of academic work into sex offender resettlement and desistance from offending she concluded that some locations affirm an offenders' identity of offender (through connections to illegal or deviant activities and/or lifestyles), whilst other locations support safe reintegration through community engagement in lawful social activities termed 'social capital networks' (such as employment, religious or community organisations; McAlinden, 2009: 53). Probation hostels occupy a unique role within this consideration of place and location, being simultaneously a semi-secure criminal justice institution and a mechanism for supporting offenders to develop the social networks required for safe resettlement and reintegration. The hostel, thus, occupies an ambiguous social ground which requires resident offenders to understand

themselves in terms of their previous offending identity yet aim to develop an alternative future identity.

Traditional theories of desistance have a strong focus on creating new non offending identities and roles (Maruna 2000; Farrall 2002; McCulloch 2005; McNeill and Whyte 2007). Such theories appear to have a research base that is silent about sex offender populations and more work is required to explore the mechanisms and limits of desistance approaches with this group of offenders. Hudson (2005: 56) explored sex offenders' concepts of their personal identities, noting that they were unable to differentiate their understanding of themselves from a wider social sense of themselves as sex offender, although this 'extended social identity' was just one aspect of multiple personal identities that individuals attribute to themselves. Hudson, and the offenders she interviewed, were concerned that this social identity would make it difficult for them to establish any identity that did not include this label.

More recently Laws and Ward (2010) have begun to develop a Good Lives Model that includes findings from desistance models which they call a 'GLM-D' model specifically focussed on work with sex offenders. This approach emphasises the need to develop intervention work that is not solely focussed on the risk management and deficit aspects of an individual but requires a more holistic focus on social structure, processes and offenders plans for their own future lives in society. Interventions with such offenders, it is argued, require a focus on positive identities and primary goals that are pro social and forward looking. Such an approach may be useful in hostel settings.



### **Hostels as sites of social reintegration or social segregation**

Over the past decade the role of controlled accommodation for sex offenders as places to socially isolate or integrate has been debated (*c.f.* Etzioni, 1999; Cowen *et al.*, 2001; Silverman and Wilson, 2002). It is largely accepted that social integration is necessary for rehabilitation and that stable and secure accommodation is fundamental to such offence work (*c.f.* Willis and Grace, 2009; Levenson and Cotter, 2005). However, where public policy and practice become shaped and defined by a new penology approach (Feeley and Simon, 1992) it is more likely to emphasise the social exclusionary and public protection aspects of hostels and their regimes without necessarily considering whether the practice that falls out of this actually reduces risk or protects the public more effectively than other available resettlement focussed approaches. Moreover, there is little research that demonstrates that a period of hostel residence constructed within a ‘new’ risk/public protection dominated framework is the best approach for reducing risk of reoffending during residence or for the longer term. Cowe (2008) and Reeves (2009) found evidence that there was a reduced focus on longer term outcomes and a reduction in external links for offenders as pressure to protect the public in the short term shaped practices, which meant less of a focus on move on and long term resettlement within a community.

In all the hostels studied by Reeves and Cowe, day to day practice within hostels appeared to be becoming shaped by a range of practices alleged to have a public

protection focus. These included: additional signing requirements<sup>7</sup>, increased and specified curfews for individual residents, a greater use of CCTV and electronic monitoring and a reduction in the extent to which hostel residents were engaged in external links with the local community around broad social skills and resettlement type activity. More residents were spending longer periods of time within the hostel and the focus of staff interventions and shift of policy focus (as well as creeping privatisation of service contracts) reduced internal involvement of residents in what may have previously been seen as ‘normal’ social skills development and domestic chores, for example, in several instances cleaning, gardening, cooking and informal repairs and decoration activity had become closed to residents. As one resident noted;

*‘It’s not a normal life here, getting up not having a job or being encouraged to get one because they are scared I’ll offend – I could do that anytime if I wanted, you watch TV, play pool and have your meals made for you – it doesn’t prepare you for life outside. I had more freedom in prison. Apart from keeping me in, I am not sure what the purpose of being here is for.’ (Cowe, study 2)*

Prior to the introduction of the facilities contract cooks and cleaners were ‘probation employees’ and would often use chores, housekeeping and gardening activities as a way of getting alongside offenders and providing them with skills for independent living. Post contracting out, although in many cases the same staff such rehabilitative opportunities were being actively avoided:

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<sup>7</sup> HMIP(2007, 62) found that alongside signing often little else was down with residents and that a focus on this type of practice could prevent engagement with constructive activity and offer little more than periods of confinement.

*'I used to have them in the kitchen with me or get them to help cleaning up. It was a chance to get to know them and see if they could cook for themselves before they left here. We can't do that now it's not our job. The facilities contract means that we are not supposed to do any direct work with the residents. The food is ordered in and you have no choice over the provider so you can't send the residents out to shop for food or stuff anymore...you still try and get to know them but it's not the same...'*

*Ancillary Worker (Cowe Study 2)*

There appear to be real shifts in practice that signal a primacy of emphasis on the 'panoptic gaze' (Foucault, 1980) of the hostel on the resident, however, it is argued that unless accompanied by a more complex and longer term strategy this approach risks limiting that gaze to a short term internalised self watching, more focussed on getting through the current period of residence without recall than longer term internal and external controls and support for a non offending identity. Conformity gained within the hostel setting may be impressive but the long term impact of this has the potential to lead to avoidance and subterfuge if a resettlement focus fails to accompany this. Farmer and Mann (2010, p23) argue that 'an offender who is alienated without a stake in society will consequently be more likely to reoffend.'

Within study 1 by Reeves, both hostel staff and residents felt that the physical and symbolic boundaries of the approved hostel isolated them from the local community as well as from wider society. Both groups conceptualised the hostel in terms of social

segregation, resulting in social isolation, whilst acknowledging specific efforts or interventions to promote controlled community (re)integration as part of risk management and resettlement plans. Hostel staff talked about this social exclusion in terms of their role within probation work; noting that other probation staff do not understand the nature or rigours of the work undertaken in hostels. They also commented that the work was stressful because of the inward-looking, insulated nature of hostels:

*[probation officer] said how the job could get to you. You have to do long shifts, especially at weekends, and you cannot have breaks, for example, lunch hours. Sometimes [he] feels envious of others [probation officers] in the offices who can go into town for an hour or so and get away from it all. (Reeves, study 1)*

Sex offender residents also understood hostels in exclusionary terms such as ‘warehousing’ high risk sex offenders. They talked about hostels as controlling residents and as alternatives to remaining in prison. In particular, there was a consensus that hostels did not support probation work into reduction of reoffending, other than to provide supervised accommodation during which offence-based work could be undertaken: ‘They just want to put us somewhere so we can do these courses.’ (Convicted sex offender against children. Reeves, study 1).

The connections with the community that both staff and residents fostered were mainly in respect to building up family networks and gaining employment. Due to the nature of

their offending, sex offenders often find that their family relationships are damaged or broken (Zevitz and Farkas, 2000), hostel staff were clear that developing positive family links was essential to the safe reintegration of sex offenders: 'if he feels abandoned he is more likely to be a risk problem in the long term' (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee, MARAC 4, Reeves, study 1). However, they needed to remain in control of this process in order to monitor offenders' contacts and to assess the extent to which the relationships were supportive of offence work. This indicates that isolation of hostels from the local community can be useful to the work undertaken within the hostel setting: the segregation allows staff to control the extent and rate at which resident offenders are reintegrated. This results in hostels being exclusionary, but moving the offender towards social inclusion, and preparing them for this; suggesting that, at least at the start of an offender's hostel residency, social segregation and reintegration are not necessarily conflicting practices.

However, both authors question to what extent the lived experiences of sex offenders in hostels prepares them (and by implication wider society) for their eventual reintegration into the community. As Kemshall and Wood note in **chapter 7** promoting active self risk management may be both practically and financially prudent in securing the longer term reintegration of such offenders into the community and a period of residence in a hostel can encourage residents to be active or passive in their own futures. However, an overtly control focussed regime may undermine the longer term change and monitoring focussed potential of any move on plans. Regimes which focus on the imposition of controlling and punitive external controls alone may miss and actually reduce opportunities to

engage offenders (and other public protection staff) with the inner workings, motivations and predilections of individual offenders and so fail to capitalise on an opportunity to explore the required balance of external and internal controls that may be appropriate for individual offenders.

### **Inside hostels**

The isolation of life for both sex offenders resident within hostels and staff working there can result in the internal relationships between hostel residents and staff being central to the effectiveness and effects of hostel residency on sex offenders. Within those hostels studied by the authors, a number of dynamics could be observed between staff and residents, residents and residents and staff and staff. As those who have worked or researched in prison settings will be aware, there can be very real and substantive demarcations between those who are working in an institution but whose 'lives' are in the 'real world' and those inmates or residents who may aspire to a real world existence but whose being is very much located within an institutional world and whose reference points define them by their essential 'otherness' from the staff, i.e. as captives or inmates (Cowe, 2008; Goffman, 1961; Reeves 2009)

### *Offender groups*

As part of a response to the social segregation noted in hostel structures and working so far, both Cowe and Reeves found that offenders had a tendency to group within the hostel. This may have been influenced by the prior shared experiences of custody that many sex offenders had undergone, the tacit need to present some kind of front or

alternative offending history to non-sex offenders within the hostel and a supportive peer group to support them through the challenges of hostel life.

These offender groups tended to be founded on a similarity of offence profile, but were also influenced by socio-personal characteristics such as age, ethnicity and gender. Sex offender residents were the most clearly marked grouping within the hostels observed. This was due to self-segregation and exclusion by other residents. This was observable through residents interactions with each other and was rarely spoken about, however when 'other' groups were referred to it tended to be in euphemistic terms of 'drug addicts' and 'others', where the 'others' were residents convicted of sexual offences and 'drug addicts' were residents not convicted of sexual offences, some of which (but by no means all) were convicted of offences related to prohibited drugs<sup>8</sup>. Part of this differentiation between sex offenders and drug addicts (however imprecisely applied) appeared to be related to many sex offenders' desire to present themselves, at least externally, as 'good residents' and so different from offenders who took drugs or had a history of violence.

The way in which sex offenders referred to their sex offender group status obliquely illustrates their desire to recast their offending identity in more neutral terms. Hudson (2005) commented that sex offenders attending treatment programmes present themselves in ways they judge will conceal their offending histories (following

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<sup>8</sup> The true meaning of the terms used to convey group identities was discussed by some of the sex offender residents within interviews when their talk could not be overheard, at these times the groups were referred to explicitly as 'sex offenders' and 'others' (wherein the 'others' did not include the interviewees; the talk of non-sex offender residents in interview tended to be constructed around 'our group' – not sex offenders, and 'others' – sex offenders).

Goffman's 1959 analysis of the presentation of self) and similar tendencies were noted in the study by Reeves reported here. A subtle difference, however, is the sex offenders' in this study strove to present themselves in ways they thought to be most favourable to their audience. What this meant in practice depended upon the individual's personal situation. For example, one resident entered the hostel initially on bail for an alleged abduction and indecent assault of two young children. During this period of residency the resident constantly discussed his case with all residents, but staff in particular, and did nothing to hide his offence status. The purpose of this was to try and persuade (primarily the hostel staff) that he was not guilty of these charges. However, he was subsequently found guilty of indecent assault, sentenced to an extended sentence for public protection and returned to the hostel after serving the custodial element of his sentence. In this second period of residency he behaved as noted previously: he only referred to his offences when in private and did not seek out non-sex offender residents or staff to talk to. His efforts to determine his public identity changed when the nature of this identity changed: in the first period he endeavoured to present himself as other than a sex offender, and in so doing was publicly active in trying to break down the case against him; in the second period he accepted his sex offender identity and endeavoured not to change this but to hide it. Through this second period he was a central character within the 'sex offender' group and appeared to relish the attention and status this gave him amongst his peers.

In every hostel observed by the authors, at times open antagonism from non child sex offenders toward child sex offenders was evident:



*Resident 47 (convicted of multiple rapes against adult women) was upset because someone called him a 'paedo'. He was sitting with Residents 39, 26 and 49 (all child sexual abusers) and said he was not interested in 'kids'. Later when Resident 51 (female, convicted of financially motivated murder) asked him what he was going to do tomorrow he said he was 'going to sniff glue and then go to the park to watch the kiddies.' R51 was shocked and said he shouldn't say such things because of the other three there. R47 said he 'didn't give a fuck about them' although he spends much of his time with them." (Reeves, field notes, study 1).*

This incident illustrated that 'other' sex offenders would also deliberately disassociate themselves from the 'known' child sex offender group either to assert that they are not an offender against children and/or in order not to be found out by the other residents. The use of additional structural controls or restrictions could, however, act as not so silent signals of an individuals' offending identity, for example, that someone was not allowed out of the hostel around the time that local schools came in and out or an offender's use of pre-arranged transport to sex offender group programmes (SOGP). Thus, both Cowe and Reeves noted that the structures and regimes of hostels can serve to reinforce the 'sex offender' identity on to groups and individuals through these practices, which may have longer term impacts through the identification of these identities by other residents.

*Supporting offender grouping through staff work culture*

The structures of the hostel in constructing and maintaining group and personal identities based on previous offending is reflected within the working culture of hostel staff. When discussing residents staff routinely use their offence status as their primary identification or master status (Goffman, 1963) (even more so than the residents name) and referred to the sex offender group as 'those paedophiles' (Reeves, study 1). For the most part this status was not translated into abuse and staff used forenames in the earshot of residents, however, it underlines the difficulty that residents, particularly sex offenders, have in trying to renegotiate their identity as part of the reintegration process.

This was further illustrated by the tendency of staff to talk (privately) about sex offender residents in terms that showed their scepticism that they could change their behaviour. These attitudes normally manifested through humour, for example, it was common to hear staff joking that all sex offenders should be killed or in some other way have a permanent record of their offence identity so that it equated to their personal identity and master status:

*They could be branded: they could be branded! No, that would be going too far... They could be pervert 1, pervert 2 and pervert 3!' He said this in great humour [.....] (Relief hostel worker, Reeves study 1)*

This use of humour was a coping mechanism for hostel staff, who commented that hostel work was emotionally stressful due to the often complex and volatile mix of high risk offenders that had to be managed on a day to day basis within a social climate that was

hostile to their work. However, the culture of referring to residents by their offence and joking about retributive punishments may shape and colour the interactions between staff and residents, although staff were keen to ensure that this was not the case. In study 1 by Reeves, residents routinely complained that staff treated them according to their offence type, with child sex offenders being treated the worst (for example, in terms of respect, time given to them by staff, being made to wait for requests to be met, being given warnings for behaviour or simply the way that staff talk to them). Cowe (2008) found that for some staff such differences in approach in part related to whether staff had worked in hostels for a longer period of time and had experienced more rehabilitative wavelengths of prior practice and culture. Some more recently appointed staff were more likely to describe their role as firstly if not mostly, public protection orientated. This could be interpreted as needing to be more punitive or closed in their interactions with sex offenders.

#### *Offender groups as mechanisms of collusion*

The interactions between staff and residents noted by the authors tended to segregate the sex offender population not only from wider society within the hostel setting, but also socially as a group through those relationships discussed above. The group identity that is forced upon sex offender residents has many functions for the members, the main ones of which have already been mentioned:

1. Support groups for coping within the challenges of hostel life, including sex offender treatment and group programmes.

2. Social networks of (like-minded?) people who have had similar experiences.

For the members the social environment of these groups may be essential to promoting mental well-being and practising social interaction (in readiness for community reintegration), however, this social isolation and segregation may undermine the work of the hostel in respect to developing new ex-offending identities and providing a safe transition from prison to the community. Reeves (in study 1) observed that the nature of the sex offender group was dominated by one or two leaders whose personal attitudes towards offence work shaped the majority of other members' views. In this study the leaders resisted efforts to challenge their offending attitudes or lifestyles, and encouraged other offenders to do the same. Thus a culture of resistance to change and to hostel work was fostered in which work undertaken in the hostel or treatment programmes was questioned and dismissed.

*We had them [offence-based work programmes] in prison as well. There were more psychologists than screws in there! There was one taking a group course and she was only 21! I walked in there and she looked so young, I asked her age, she said 21! She can't be fully qualified at that age. And she was taking this course with us all. (Reeves, study 1, interview with Resident 7, sex offender against children)*

These attitudes were not just significant for the individuals, but also to other group members.

*The thing is you listen to these men, they've been offending for years...what do you call it? ... Justifying it to themselves all the time. And they're much more convincing than the psychologists [...] and they are there all the time.” (Reeves study 1, interview with Resident 8, sex offender against children)*

This indicates that the attitudes of key residents in the hostel may serve to neutralise offence work whilst simultaneously normalising offending attitudes and behaviours. The internalisation of group values and shared normalisations is partially dependent upon offenders' identification with the group and the desire that they have to accept and believe the values. Haslam and Reicher (2006), who studied the effect of group support and identification on group members' ability to deal with stressors, found that members of a group are more likely to be influenced by other in-group members, primarily because of a shared sense of identity, trust and co-operation. This is particularly so in the case of groups that have little or no scope for movement into or out of them. This forces a group identity of 'them' and 'us' upon the broader groups, with conflict between the groups redefining and strengthening the distinction and power differentials between them. This 'othering' of groups was noted in the language used to describe the group identities discussed above.

However, there has been little research done that considers whether grouping such offenders might lead to deviance amplification (Wilkins 1964) and the normalisation by them of their views and attitudes to children. In more mixed regimes and settings<sup>9</sup> it may

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<sup>9</sup> In the study by Reeves the hostel studied averaged 75% of residents convicted or charged with sexual offences with the sex offender group of residents being the most cohesive.

be that such views are more likely to be both openly challenged and a range of possible life choices modelled. Hudson (2005) observed that active group engagement of offenders within community based Sex Offender Group Programmes (SOGP) positively enabled offenders to challenge each others' offence narratives. However, it may not be possible to liken behaviour and interactions evident in SOGP time with the less structured, directed and monitored group dynamics within hostels, bearing in mind that the groups in hostels interact during the 'free' time of offenders and with very little interference by staff.

### **Conclusions**

The title of this chapter questioned how hostels functioned in terms of providing sites in which reintegration work could be undertaken and as places in which high risk offenders were segregated and could potentially collude in promoting offence-related attitudes. It is evident from the two studies explored here that hostel work is complex and that there is a not a polarisation between these two aspects of hostel accommodation for sex offenders. Controlled and measured segregation of hostel residents from local communities and wider society is a valuable and necessary part of both risk management and early reintegrative work. However, continued segregation may be indicative of an over-reliance on external risk management and control mechanisms, and may lead to the social isolation and grouping of sex offenders. This is a cause for concern due to the potential for undermining the development of positive internalised self-risk management mechanisms, which are essential for successful reintegration. It may also lead to an

environment in which offenders are less likely to self disclose and explore their personal risks and concerns.

However, it was also noted that the negative potential of grouping was founded in the attitudes of those offenders who had led the groups, but that fringe members may be more willing to challenge offence-related attitudes and support probation work. That these offenders had little influence on the group values may be due to their (lack of) individual leadership qualities and charisma, but is also a consequence of many group members desire to resist personal attitude and behaviour change, and the difficulty that offenders have in engaging in an individual process to change their personal and social identities. Thus, grouping may not necessarily result in negative shared values, although this is what was observed in the studies by authors.

More broadly, this chapter has noted how wider changes in probation hostels towards housing sex offenders (as an example of focussing on the management of ‘high risk offenders’) has the potential to further shift interventions with individuals towards a risk driven approach that may be counterproductive to longer term rehabilitation. A policy appropriation of hostels for sex offenders has been both ambivalent<sup>10</sup> but also tangible over the last ten years. Below is an attempt to construct an ‘alternative penology’ developed from Cowe (2008) for hostels that both acknowledges their changed clientele but which asserts that the juxtaposition of old versus new penology may be both

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<sup>10</sup> PC26/2006 issued on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2006 brought in changes to the admissions criteria to hostels and ordered the transfer of offenders in ‘restricted categories’ and demanded that Chief Officers provide a list of such offenders within ‘restricted areas’ to submit details by ‘the close of business on 20.06.2006

theoretically oversimplified and antithetical to developing a new set of practices within the changed economic and social context that hostels find themselves.

<b>Hostel</b>	<b>Alternative Penology</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Individual and Community Risk and Needs Analysis Intervention and Integration Risk Reduction / Harm Reduction
<b>Themes</b>	Risk of Harm /Reintegration Change Focused /Public Accountability Desistance and Good Lives
<b>Practices</b>	Planned Re-integration Skills Focused Rehabilitation Risk Aware Multi Agency Working Offender Supervision / Keywork After Care/ Resettlement Focused Risk Management including 'offender' input.
<b>Workers / Staffing</b>	Co working with others Change Focussed Practice Pro Social Case Supervision / Management Skills Keywork Defined and Regulated Community Links Critical Realist Outlook Trained and Supported.
<b>Role of Institution</b>	Assist, Change, Instrumental Control , Monitor, Responsibility and Reintegrate Protect the Public, Protective Regime for the individual.
<b>Status of Individuals</b>	Active Social Agent Responsible for Prior Harms & Future Identity Social Capital To be monitored <b>and</b> worked with.



<b>Community</b>	Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. Resource and Customer. Victim and Locale / Domain Protected within limits and 'responsibilised'.
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If sex offenders are to re- negotiate a changed identity and have a place in the community a more complex and holistic approach to working with such offenders seems to be required. As well as maintaining a risk focus this will include a focus on longer term resettlement and re-integrative aims. Both studies suggest that this may need to be more explicit in the purposes and regimes of hostels. Staff may need permission and, in some instances, skills development to enable a structured and change-orientated practice which is more purposefully focussed around developing residents' relationships and connections with those who are not sex offenders. A risk appears to be the development of a set of supportive relationships (whilst in the hostel) with staff who are primarily tasked with monitoring them and with peers who may be more likely to neutralise or empathise with their sexual offending than challenge it and the harm it causes. Currently it is not the role of hostel staff to retain links with offenders once they have left the hostel and moved on. There may be a weakness in not using the hostel as a reference point or potential 'refuge' for those who feel that they are at risk of reoffending. Little or no research has been done on whether offender groupings formed within hostels continue in the communities to which they are released. Chapter x explores one model of offender intervention that seeks to provide a positive 'wrap around' of support, monitoring and challenge, by those other than offender peers and probation staff. There are examples in the UK and Canada

of Circles of Support and Accountability<sup>11</sup> being used in this way and it would seem that a more explicit link is required between interventions and interactions focussed on the period of residency and those focussed on longer term support and accountability. It appears necessary in a risk driven context to emphasise how getting along side such offenders is good for risk assessment as well as rehabilitation. The financial and risk management benefits to society owning its offenders and taking them back may have more resonance in punitive climates than appeals to human rights, morality and offender autonomy. Research which demonstrates that such approaches are not only humanitarian but result in better risk assessment, greater offender engagement and more openness and transparency both during and post supervision should lead to a valuing of hostels potential contribution to public protection as a useful, humane and meaningful resource for the resettlement and reintegration of such offenders.

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<sup>11</sup> It may be helpful to resist the temptation to shorten this to Circles of Support. Offenders, the public and policy makers may need to hear the accountability role as, if not more, loudly in some instances in order for such practice to be heard as a meaningful part of the public protection role.

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