

Offenders

Headlines

Offenders and released prisoners are a socially excluded group. Offenders are far more likely than the general population to have mental illness, learning disability, substance misuse, alcohol misuse, homelessness, poor educational achievement and unemployment.

- In Kirklees there were 1,880 people supervised by the Probation Service on 1st April 2012. There were a further 200 people from Kirklees that are in prison but do not receive supervision from the Probation Service. There were also 414 Orders imposed on young people under 18 supervised by the Kirklees Youth Offending Team (YOT).
- Women offenders have higher levels of mental ill health and higher levels of alcohol and drug problems than male offenders. Furthermore, 2 in 3 (68%) women offenders were experiencing or had experienced domestic violence.
- Children who have experienced the incarceration of a parent are more likely to become involved in offending themselves and experience more mental health problems.

Why is this issue important?

Offending behaviour is damaging for not just offenders and their victims, but also their families and the wider community. It is closely linked with deprivation, [drug](#) and [alcohol](#) misuse, [mental health](#), loss of accommodation and employment as well as affecting outcomes for families and children. Improving the health of offenders reduces the chance of their re-offending, which in turn reduces the future impact on both victims and the families of offenders^{1,2}.

In April 2012, the total Probation Service caseload was 1,880, of which 928 were subject to a community sentence, 378 were supervised on post release licence and 574 were in custody. Overall 1 in 10 of the caseload were women, 34% were aged 18-24 years, 48% were aged 25-40, and 18% were aged over 41 years³. In addition, at any one time there are at least a further 200 offenders from Kirklees who are serving prison sentences of less than 12 months and are not subject to any form of statutory supervision on release^{3,12}. There were also 414 Orders imposed on young people under 18 supervised by the Kirklees Youth Offending Team.

Of the 1,880 offenders under supervision, 765 have a total of 1,438 children, the majority of whom are under five. Of the 765, 208 are in prison and have 391 children¹³.

What significant factors are affecting this issue?

There are nine key factors that can influence re-offending:^{5,6}.

- Accommodation.
- Education and employment.
- Finance.
- Relationships.
- Lifestyle.
- Drug and alcohol misuse.
- Mental and physical health.
- Thinking and behaviour.
- Attitudes.

Unless these factors are addressed, the risk is high of re-offending soon after release. Ministry of Justice estimate the re-offending rate for released prisoners at 47%, for those serving sentences of less than 12 months, this figure increases to 57%⁴. Community sentences are more effective with re-offending rates of 37%.

Local data shows that offenders in Kirklees, not just those in prison, experience the following³:

- Mental illness 40%
- Drug misuse 37%
- Alcohol misuse 48%
- Homelessness 34%
- Poor employability 46%

Nationally, the risk of death for men recently released from prison was 8 times higher than the general population with suicide a major factor. Women were 36 times more likely to take their own life⁵. In Kirklees, between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2012, there were 5 deaths of offenders on statutory supervision, including 3 suicides¹⁴.

Which groups are most affected by this issue?

Young Offenders

Young people under 18 who offend have complex health and support needs, and the needs of this group are particularly apparent for those who receive a community order¹⁸. These needs include mental health, substance misuse, [learning disability](#) and serious difficulties with literacy. The broader prevention based approach, Targeted Youth Support, has worked with over 1,200 people in 2011/12 and this, coupled with a fall in young people going through the criminal justice system, has meant the total number of young people referred to the Kirklees Youth Offending Team has decreased from 703 in 2007/08 to 414 in 2011/12. Despite this, the number of referrals to health and substance misuse specialists within the YOT team has remained constant.

Women offenders

Women offenders make up approximately 1 in 10 of the statutory caseload in Kirklees. In addition to the problems already outlined over half of women offenders said they have suffered [domestic violence](#) and one third said they have experienced sexual abuse. Women Centre Kirklees works with some of our most vulnerable female offenders, with 2 in 3 (68%) having experience of domestic abuse and over half (55%) presenting with mental health issues⁷.

Families

Over 200,000 children in England and Wales experience the imprisonment of a parent each year¹⁵. Prisoners' families often experience increased financial, housing, emotional and health problems during a sentence¹⁵. Nearly 30% of children with a parent in prison experience mental health problems, compared with 10% of the general population. Children of prisoners are also more likely to take part in anti-social behaviour and have a greater risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).¹⁵

Where is this causing greatest concern?

Offending behaviour is an issue across Kirklees. Offenders as a group tend to live in the postal districts of greater deprivation, namely [Huddersfield](#) North, South, [Dewsbury](#) and [Batley](#)³

Views of local people

While crime has reduced in Kirklees, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour is still a real concern for local communities⁹.

Young offenders felt that they suffered more than any other group from issues surrounding unemployment. They felt that being unable to find work increased the risk of them re-offending.¹⁰

“Yeah it is right to find a job, but when you go to so many job interviews and everyone turns you down, it just doesn’t give you much motivation”.

They were also aware that health related behaviour, particularly drinking and [smoking](#) cigarettes and cannabis, were issues for themselves and other young people.

“Yeah but these young kids take drugs and smoke. They drink and how many old people do that or get out and about and stuff, they don’t, do you know what I mean, yeah?”

What could commissioners and service planners consider?

Reducing re-offending through effective, integrated working by key partners can improve outcomes for offenders, their children and the wider community¹⁷. In this regard effective offender services can support the Kirklees Stronger families programme. The drug and alcohol intervention programme have been successful in reducing drug use among offenders in Kirklees and the Bradley Review has recommended a similar approach be taken to mentally disordered offenders¹¹. Addressing basic needs and achieving stability through housing and employment can be a key factor in reducing re-offending. However, the new Welfare Reform Act (2012) will make major changes to the benefits system, including [housing](#) and it is necessary to monitor the impact on the offender population. Other important services required for offenders include:

- Access to mental health, substance misuse, learning disability and social care services.
- Access to accommodation, education and employment services.
- Gender-responsive provision for women and support for families.
- Ensuring young offenders receive health based support and establishing the health needs of young people receiving targeted youth support.

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