



## Draft Interim Report

# Evaluation of the Prolific Offenders Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing (PORCH) Project

April 2007

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Commissioned on behalf of:  
Exeter Community Initiatives

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## Executive Summary

### **Introduction**

To follow once report is finalised.

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## Evaluation of the Prolific Offenders Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing (PORCH) Project

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background to the Project

The Prolific Offenders Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing (PORCH) Project was launched, following a six month developmental phase, in the Summer of 2006 as a pilot project. It aims to create a '*floating support service*' for dealing more effectively with prolific offenders in Exeter, East and Mid Devon who are supervised by the Prolific and Priority Offenders Unit (PPOU) in Exeter. The pilot, which is due to run until January 2008, is an Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI) Project, in partnership with Exeter City Council, the National Probation Service, HM Prison Service, Devon Partnership NHS Trust and Devon and Cornwall Constabulary.<sup>1</sup> It intends to develop an offender focussed and holistic approach to prolific offenders that co-ordinates housing with criminal justice and treatment pathways. The primary aim of PORCH is to reduce the number and seriousness of crimes committed by prolific offenders. Secondary and tertiary aims are to maximise the effectiveness of existing housing services; and to intervene more proactively at key points including arrest, remand, sentencing and release from prison to ensure that housing needs are addressed.

The premise of the project is that the provision of appropriate accommodation and support for prolific offenders will have a positive effect on reducing their offending behaviour. Housing advice and assistance are provided through individual casework, together with practical help, tenancy support and sign-posting to other relevant agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> The project is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Safer Devon Partnership, the Home Office, Government Office of the South West, Exeter City Council, Devon & Cornwall Probation Area, Tudor and Lankelly Chase, the Worshipful Weavers Company and the National Council for Social Concern.

## 1.2 Some Definitional Issues

It is worth stating at the outset that the definition of a '*priority prolific offender*' (PPO) is not clear cut. Whilst several attempts have been made to identify persistent offenders and the volume of crime for which they are responsible, community programmes tend to adopt different definitions and no two definitions of persistence lead to the identification of the same individuals (Newburn and Hagell, 1994, cited by Moore et al 2006). Amongst a number of definitional issues is the fact that eligibility is defined locally within the Prolific and other Priority Offender Strategy with legislation requiring each Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to identify the 15-20 most prolific offenders within their area, relating to the types of crime most prevalent within that particular area.

It is the understanding of the evaluation team that potential offenders that are suitable for referral onto the PORCH Project are determined by a multi-agency Steering Group, which forms part of the CDRP. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.1 of the report.

It is also important to note the distinction between persistence and seriousness. Persistent offenders are not necessarily committing the most serious crimes (Moore et al, 2006) and the PORCH Project typically works with offenders who commit what might be termed '*nuisance*' crimes. Nevertheless, these crimes can have a considerable impact on their victims and the wider communities.

All offenders that are referred to PORCH are adults and the project works with both men and women, including those in custody as well as those in the community.

## 1.3 Aims of the Research

In October 2006, the Social Research & Regeneration Unit (SRRU) was commissioned, in conjunction with Dr Jill Annison from the Criminal Justice Team at the University of Plymouth, to conduct an external evaluation of the PORCH Project. The evaluation follows the lifetime of the project and will conclude in January 2008.

The over-arching aim of the evaluation is to establish a robust evidence base from which to demonstrate any benefits deriving from the approach developed through PORCH for dealing with prolific offenders. As such,

the emphasis is very much on impact. However, because the project has chosen to commission a rolling programme of evaluation throughout its lifetime, the process can also be used to inform project development (i.e. containing both formative and summative elements). Further, it has always been the intention of the research team to work closely with the PORCH staff in conducting the evaluation and to develop, with them, appropriate methods for future self-evaluation that can be embedded within the core staff team and utilised beyond the period of external evaluation. This report presents the key interim evaluation findings.

#### **1.4 Structure of the Report**

The first two sections of the report provide the contextual backdrop to the evaluation project. Specifically, Section Two discusses the methodology underpinning the evaluation, together with the evaluation plan and specific data collection methods being used; and Section Three provides a brief overview of the policy context within which the PORCH Project sits. Sections Three and Four present the interim findings from the primary research, focusing on the progress that is being made in relation to the project's performance indicators (Section Four) and the case studies that have been conducted (Section Four). The concluding section of the report draws together the evaluation findings to date, offering some developmental suggestions for the PORCH team's consideration, and it also outlines the next steps in the evaluation process.

It should be borne in mind whilst reading the report that PORCH has only been fully operational for eight months and that the full impact of this type of initiative takes much longer to realise.

## 2. Methodology and Methods

Project and programme evaluations can be undertaken for many reasons and can serve different purposes. The individual requirements of any given evaluation, together with the policy context, usually determine the evaluation approach taken and the specific methods used. As highlighted in the introduction to this report, the over-arching aim of the present evaluation is to establish a robust evidence base from which to demonstrate any benefits deriving from the approach developed through PORCH for dealing with prolific offenders. As such, the emphasis is very much on impact and this section of the report describes how the project's success will be determined.

### 2.1 The Evaluation Approach

The PORCH Project lends itself to the conceptual framework used for the national evaluation of Health Action Zones. This combines '*realistic evaluation*' with a '*theories of change*' approach. A '*realistic*' approach to evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 2004) recognises that a particular kind of strategy is required for programme or policy evaluation - one that does not aim to produce a causal account of the effectiveness of an intervention by looking to isolate the impact of various project or programme interventions from the effect of other factors. This is because there are likely to be too many interventions taking place, both outside and within the programme in question, to be able to state with any authority what causes a measurable impact. Rather, a realistic approach to evaluation seeks to develop an understanding of '*why a programme works, for whom and in what circumstances*'. Pawson and Tilley (2004) have also demonstrated how this approach can be used within a Criminal Justice Setting, with specific reference to a range of crime prevention initiatives.<sup>2</sup> Whilst many evaluations judge the success of such interventions primarily in terms of any reductions in the levels of custodial sentencing and/or reconviction rates (Moore et al, 2006), Pawson and Tilly's approach looks beyond the hard data to assess the processes underlying any change and also allows for measures of success to include '*softer*' outcomes such as new ways of working.

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<sup>2</sup> These include Laycock's (1985) evaluation of property marking as a means of reducing vulnerability to theft; Hope and Foster's (1992) evaluation of the Priority Estates Project's impact on crime; and, Pawson's own evaluation of an American Prison Education Programme.

*'Theories of change'* is the name given to an American approach to the evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives. It takes for granted that social programmes are based on: *'explicit or implicit theories about how and why the programme will work. The evaluation should surface those theories and lay them out in as fine detail as possible, identifying all the assumptions and sub-assumptions built into the program'* (Judge et al 1999). A key element of this approach is that it encourages stakeholders involved in an intervention to make connections between the different components of their programme and how it works.

These approaches, which complement each other, have been developed to guide the assessment of social programmes operating in complex, open systems where it is considered inappropriate to use more rigorous, *'scientific'* methods of evaluation - such as randomised control trials - which seek to determine cause and effect.

## **2.2 The Evaluation Plan**

Within this framework, during the autumn of 2006 an evaluation plan was drawn up for the project, utilising both primary and secondary research methods. The plan was developed through an iterative process in conjunction with the PORCH staff, and in a format that could be continued beyond the period of the external evaluation. The plan included the development of a set of performance indicators against which the progress and impact of the project could be measured over time (see Section 2.2.1); together with an in-depth evaluation in the form of case studies of a selection of PORCH beneficiaries (see Section 2.2.2). In addition, the research team is engaged in an on-going review of relevant documentation and research in this area to help contextualise PORCH and learn lessons from other interventions.

### **2.2.1 Performance Indicators and Baseline Setting**

Working with the PORCH team, and utilising the work-plans and milestones that had already been established for individual members of PORCH staff, the research team has developed a set of performance indicators against which the success of the project can be judged. Consistent with Pawson and Tilley's (1994) approach, these include both *'hard'* and *'soft'* indicators which can be evidenced through a variety of sources. Specifically, the team are utilising valuable local data sources

such as police data and probation records together with internal PORCH files to capture hard data; and an *'exit questionnaire'* has also been developed to capture any changes in the circumstances and views of project beneficiaries towards the end of their involvement with PORCH.

This is being supplemented with the findings from a series of stakeholder interviews in order to capture the *'softer'* accounts and perspectives of those involved, highlighting what is working for whom and in what circumstances. To date, this has included:

- ❖ PORCH Project managers/delivery staff (3);
- ❖ PPOs (through the case studies – see below) (3);
- ❖ PPOU/ Probation Staff (2);
- ❖ Liaison Officer, HMP Exeter (1); and,
- ❖ Accommodation Providers (3).

A baseline position has been established for each of the indicators selected, providing the research team with a clear *'starting point'* for the project against which to chart any distance travelled over time. The *'hard'* indicators were updated in January 2007 and will be updated again at set intervals in April, July and October 2007 with a final assessment at project close. Progress against the *'softer'* indicators will be determined through the interview process as the project progresses.

### 2.2.2 Case Studies

In order to more fully understand the impact of the project from the point of view of the offenders engaged, it has been agreed that the research team will conduct a series of in-depth interviews with a selection of seven – eight project beneficiaries, which is 10% of the projected number of beneficiaries to be assisted through the project.

This qualitative aspect of the research focuses on their expectations of and satisfaction with, the project and the level of intervention received; together with the perceived outcomes (positive or negative) that they have experienced as a result of their involvement. In order to triangulate the findings from this element of the research, a thorough analysis of their personal files will also be undertaken and the views of the relevant project workers will be garnered.

### **3 Policy Context**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As recently highlighted by Maguire, Hutson and Nolan in their draft report on accommodation for ex-prisoners in the South West Region:

*'...the whole topic of offender accommodation – like that of many other services for offenders – is currently very much a 'moving feast,' as the National Offender Management (NOMS) and the new organisational structures around the Reducing Re-offending Strategy find their feet'. (Maguire et al, forthcoming, 2007: 14).*

Hence it is also worth briefly outlining the context within which the PORCH Project sits.

#### **3.2 Accommodation and Reducing Re-Offending**

Driven by its goal of reducing re-offending, the Government has had a renewed concern with resettlement issues in recent years. This has helped to shape some of the organisational changes that have taken place including:

- ❖ The establishment of NOMS in 2004, which is responsible for the strategic oversight and commissioning of work with sentenced offenders;
- ❖ The responsibility of Regional Offender Managers (ROMs) for the commissioning of services at the regional level;
- ❖ The introduction of the NOMS Offender Management Model which standardises assessment and sentence planning processes; and,
- ❖ The development of national and regional Reducing Re-Offending Action Plans and Strategies. These have nine associated pathways which includes 'Accommodation' and 'Prolific Offenders'. (Maguire et al, forthcoming, 2007).

Accommodation has always been a core element of resettlement work: if an offender does not have a suitable place to live it is more difficult for that individual to obtain and/or keep a job; or to engage effectively with any rehabilitative interventions (Maguire and Nolan, 2007 in press; see

also Elliott Marshall, Ramsay and Stewart, 2005). Indeed, Maguire and Nolan go on to suggest that “attention to accommodation problems is a fundamental building block for efforts to reduce re-offending: a *necessary*, if not a *sufficient*, condition for the reduction of re-offending” (p 1). This is also reflected in the Home Office (2005) review of ‘what works’ (Research Study 291 edited by Harper and Chitty) and has become increasingly accepted within policy circles. Prison service targets have been strengthened in this area and accommodation targets having been proposed for the Probation Service (Maguire et al, forthcoming, 2007) and this recognition forms part of the underlying rationale for the development of PORCH.

### **3.3 The Scale of the Problem**

Although fully accurate data about where prisoners go on release from prison is unavailable, Home Office surveys indicate that around 30% of discharged prisoners return to the community without any accommodation in place, except perhaps a bed for the first few nights and that over half do not return to ‘permanent’ accommodation (Niven and Olagundaye, 2002; Niven and Stewart, 2005 cited by Maguire et al, forthcoming, 2007). Based on data from a range of sources, Maguire et al estimate that there are over 2,000 prisoners released into the South West that are in need of (and would welcome) greater assistance with housing, and that at least 600 of these would be keen recipients of accommodation linked with support services.

These statistics should be viewed in light of the crisis of available housing. The number of homes available for social housing has decreased over recent years as a result of Government Housing Policy at the same time as prices have risen dramatically within the housing market. Affordable housing is particularly problematic in the South West. As highlighted in the recent affordability and supply 2006 – 2011 document, entitled ‘the South West’s Housing Time Bomb’ (National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing, undated) the Region is the only one in the country with above average house prices, but below average incomes, a problem that is compounded by the continued growth of second or holiday homes.

Whilst these issues affect many vulnerable groups, there are particular problems facing many ex-prisoners which limit their access to housing, not least of which are the rules surrounding Housing Benefit

applications which mean that benefits will only be paid up to 13 weeks from when they enter custody; local definitions of *'priority need'* and the fact that private rented tenancy usually requires a deposit, together with rent in advance. These factors can also be compounded by the stigma of having been in prison, as well as the discrimination of providers towards ex-offenders (Maguire et al, forthcoming, 2007, Maguire and Nolan, 2007 in print).

Further, these issues may be particularly significant for PPOs whose accommodation needs, according to a recent Home Office study based on OASys data, appear to be more strongly linked to their offending behaviour than is the case for other offenders (Dawson 2007). It is precisely these sorts of issues that the PORCH Project seeks to address and its successes to date are discussed in the following sections of the report.

## **4. Performance Indicators**

### **4.1 Introduction**

As highlighted in Section Two of the report, based on the work-plans and milestones that had already been established for individual members of PORCH staff, the research team has developed a set of twelve overarching performance indicators against which the success of the project can be judged. These include output, outcome and process indicators, as follows:

- ❖ (1) (a) Number of referrals allocated; and,  
(b) Agreed referral mechanism operating.
- ❖ (2) Increased stability in PPOs housing circumstances.
- ❖ (3) Effective combination of interventions delivered in a timely sequence to PPOs, including smooth processing of referrals.
- ❖ (4) Close match between housing need and accommodation provided.
- ❖ (5) Reduction in offending rates of PPOs.
- ❖ (6) Greater willingness by accommodation providers to offer tenancies to PPOs and so increase the pool of accommodation.
- ❖ (7) Early resolution of problems for accommodation providers - providers to receive prompt and constructive response to issues raised.
- ❖ (8) Development of a common housing risk assessment tool and referral document for wide use by accommodation providers.
- ❖ (9) Consolidation of the role of PORCH into PPO Unit with Staff and PPOU working co-operatively towards solutions.
- ❖ (10) Greater awareness of PORCH within the housing and criminal justice community.
- ❖ (11) PPOs benefiting from the introduction of CARD mentoring if considered helpful.
- ❖ (12) Project sustainability. The value of PORCH being demonstrated through the evaluation process and plans in place for its longer-term sustainability by the close of the funding period.

For each indicator, this section of the report discusses the project's progress against the baseline position (September 2006), according to data supplied to the evaluation team by the PORCH staff at the most recent data collection phase (January 2007). The information is contextualised with reference to the findings from a series of stakeholder interviews that were conducted during March and April 2007.

## 4.2 Progress to Date

### 4.2.1 Performance Indicator One

It is evident that progress is being made against performance indicator one, as can be seen from Table One.

**Table One: Performance Indicator One**

<b>Performance Indicator One:</b> Number of referrals allocated & agreed referral mechanism operating			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
(a) 70 referrals allocated over lifetime of project (30 PPOs managed at any one time).	PORCH files.	0 referrals at start of project.	As at 01.01.07. a total of 31 cases received.
(b) Appropriate and timely referrals coming through from the perspective of PORCH staff.	Stakeholder interviews and procedure documentation.	No mechanism in place at outset.	Comprehensive process for referral and assessment in operation.

Source: PORCH evaluation 2007

The project is already almost half way to its target of having 70 PPO referrals allocated over its lifetime with 31 cases having been received as at January 2007 (target (a)). However, the interview process revealed some interesting issues around the identification of PPOs for referral onto the project. As highlighted in the introduction to the report, potential offenders that are suitable for referral onto the PORCH Project are determined by a multi-agency Steering Group. This forms part of the CDRP and decisions are made on the basis of information supplied by a range of agencies including Probation, the police, health, social services and the Local Authority with a Home Office '*tracking tool*' used for benchmarking purposes. Whilst in many ways the multi-agency approach to offender identification is a positive one (see for example,

Dawson 2007), it was highlighted in interview that due to the '*nature of the beast*' decisions are not necessarily made on objective markers and the process was described by one interviewee as '*a bit of alchemy*.' Although these issues are, to some extent, superfluous to the effectiveness of PORCH as a project, they nevertheless raise interesting questions about whether the targeting is appropriate and effective.

Once prospective PPOs have been identified, the evaluation team were informed that a comprehensive process for referral and assessment has been drawn up and has been in operation since January 2007 (target (b)). Interviews with PORCH staff revealed that the process is considered, in principle, to be appropriate and effective as it allows for comprehensive information to be gathered on each offender. The process should also ensure that for those in custody meetings with PPOs are able to be held well in advance of their release date in order that the accommodation selection process is carefully considered and, therefore, more likely to be successful.

The success of the referral process in practice, however, relies upon referrals being received in adequate time to enable information to be gathered on individual PPOs and to allow accommodation selection procedures to be adhered to and, according to the stakeholder interviews, at present, this does not always occur. Information supplied to the evaluation team indicates that referrals can sometimes arrive with no definitive date of release which has meant that, on occasions, release has come suddenly meaning that PORCH staff are unprepared. This has, at times, been problematic particularly when staff are dealing with complex criminogenic needs. In extreme cases referral has sometimes taken place *after* release which leaves staff with an extremely limited time period within which to process applications. The evaluation team understands, however, that these problems have been raised at the appropriate meetings in order that a solution can be agreed upon. This issue will therefore be re-examined during later data collection phases.

#### **4.2.2 Performance Indicator Two**

Progress against this performance indicator has been less easy to establish at this stage of the project's lifespan. Only a limited number of PORCH '*cases*' had been closed as at January 2007 (Table Two) and all of these occurred prior to the development of an exit questionnaire

meaning that distance travelled is more difficult to capture. Added to which, the evaluation team has not, as yet, been able to access some of the other relevant documentation.

**Table Two: Performance Indicator Two**

<b>Performance Indicator Two:</b> Increased stability in PPOs housing circumstances.			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
Greater stability in housing circumstances for all 70 PPOs referred, determined at the point of their exit interview.	(a) PORCH files re: exit point.	By definition all offenders will have chaotic accommodation histories at the start of the project.	OASys and Hub document as start point, to be set against Exit questionnaire to measure changes in circumstances.
	(b) Analysed against the length of tenancy sustainment pre-PORCH taken from INCASE/OASYS data.		There are eight beneficiaries who have, at least temporarily, been 'closed'.

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

However, some contextual information was gathered through the stakeholder interview process. It is evident that '*increased stability*' is considered to cover a number of factors including beneficiaries not re-offending, reducing or stopping drug or alcohol abuse and staying in their accommodation over a set period of time without going into rent arrears. Anecdotal evidence gathered suggests that the project is having a positive impact on all of those areas with the degrees of success being dependent upon the individual offender and the complexity of their personal circumstances.

#### 4.2.3 Performance Indicator Three

Performance indicator three includes several targets relating to the combination and delivery of interventions (Table Three). Overall, some progress has been made in relation to each of these targets although missing data has, in places, rendered it difficult to track distance travelled.

**Table Three: Performance Indicator Three**

<b>Performance Indicator Three:</b> Effective combination of interventions delivered in a timely sequence to PPOs, including smooth processing of referrals (process/outcome).			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
(a) An offender to be seen by PORCH 14 days after a referral is received if in a local prison, three weeks if further afield.	PORCH records.	Mechanisms in place for referrals at start of project.	Dates of receipt of referral and first contact being recorded. This information will be incorporated onto a database and / or spreadsheet.  Spreadsheet now operating, database still a few weeks away.
(b) Inclusion of PORCH objectives in sentence plan.	Analysis of objectives in sentence plans.  Interviews with PORCH staff.	Alignment between PORCH and probation staff re: sentence plan being established.	All appropriate referrals backed up by accommodation objective in the sentence plans (In Reviews for those cases before October and in the Initial SP subsequently).
(c) All offenders asked to complete a pre-referral questionnaire, a questionnaire at key 'milestones' and an exit questionnaire. 70% of beneficiaries reporting satisfaction with PORCH experience at exit stage.	Completed feedback forms.	Pro-forma in preparation.	Pro-forma in use as from January.
(d) Reduction in offenders' drug & alcohol dependency.	ENDAS data.	N/A.	ENDAS data inconsistently presented and CPN narrative unavailable.

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

The evaluation team understand that since the commencement of the project a system has been put in place whereby dates of receipt of referral and first contact can be recorded. The team were supplied with data from this system on a spreadsheet illustrating the date of each referral and the subsequent date of the first meeting with that offender. Complete data was available for six of the offenders listed and this data indicated that, for three of them the date of the first meeting was *less* than 14 days after the date of referral and for the remaining three the date of the first meeting was *more* than 14 days after referral. However, information was not supplied as to whether, at the time of referral, these

offenders were in a local prison or one further afield meaning that progress in relation to target (a) cannot be fully reported. In order to track distance travelled it will be important in the future for the project to maintain accurate records of referral and first meeting dates, together with the location of the offender's prison and to ensure that records are kept for a higher proportion of beneficiaries.

In relation to target (b), an interview with a PPOU member of staff indicated that staff have been alerted to the importance of PORCH objectives into sentence plans and the evaluation team has noted a steady development in the inclusion of PORCH objectives (i.e. those relating specifically to housing) within the sentence plans reviewed. Importantly, this includes sentence plans for those already in accommodation, meaning that meetings between offenders and PORCH are now understood to be enforceable. However, interviews with PORCH staff revealed that the approach is not entirely consistent and is still partly dependent on which Probation Officer works on the plan. Further, there was some suggestion that objectives are not always detailed or sufficiently in-depth and still do not adequately reflect the extent and importance of PORCH involvement. Hence this appears to be an area for future development.

With regard to target (c), since the commencement of the project, pro-forma questionnaires have been developed for use at the pre-referral stage, at key milestones and at the exit stage in order to monitor progression and levels of satisfaction with the PORCH Project. However, these instruments have only recently been established and it appears that their usage has been somewhat patchy to date, again rendering it difficult to report on distance travelled that this point in time. However, these tools should yield some rich data for future data collection phases.

Finally, at the time of writing, there have also been some difficulties with the ENDAS data supplied to the evaluation team. Information has only been supplied for some PPOs and it combines ENDAS with COZART (oral testing) results without clear narrative explanation. Hence it is not possible to draw conclusions about progress made against target (d) at this stage. This will be revisited at the next data collection phase.

#### 4.2.4 Performance Indicator Four

Information supplied to the evaluation team indicates that good progress has been made in relation to performance indicator four with all 17 beneficiaries that were accommodated as at January 2007 being in suitable accommodation within PORCH terms of reference (Table Four).

**Table Four: Performance Indicator Four**

<b>Performance Indicator Four:</b> Close match between housing need and accommodation provided (outcome).			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
Close match between housing need and accommodation provided for 50% of all PPOs referred.	Pre-engagement questionnaire, HUB document & PORCH files (nb.OASys).	-	All 17 in accommodation regarded as suitable within PORCH terms of reference.  OASys S3, pre-referral questionnaire and Hub document to be used as from January.

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

During the interviews PORCH staff were asked to specify what they regarded as '*suitable accommodation*' within their terms of reference. This revealed that certain standards such as maintenance and cleanliness were applicable to all beneficiaries but that other measures of suitability vary according to need. Indeed, interviews revealed that the project takes a very offender-centred approach to accommodation placement. Thus, for example, a beneficiary with Deep Vein Thrombosis might be placed on the ground floor of a building to avoid excessive walking while an examination of a person's history, capability and stage of recovery from alcohol or drug dependency would also inform the nature of their accommodation. Ensuring that the accommodation provided matches the expressed needs of the offender is viewed by staff as being a fundamental, although time consuming, aspect of PORCH, both from the beneficiary's perspective, to ensure they are living somewhere that is safe and suitable for them, but also from the landlord's perspective in order that a longstanding relationship with PORCH might be sustained. Interviews with staff indicated that both the geographical location of the accommodation and the type of accommodation offered were important considerations when locating the most appropriate accommodation for beneficiaries.

#### 4.2.5 Performance Indicator Five

Performance indicator Five is concerned with measuring PPOs' re-offending rates. This is very important for PORCH as it reflects one of the key aims of the project. However, it is important to note the difficulties that are inherent in any attempts to measure re-offending as well as some of the local issues that have been encountered. Whilst reconviction rates are a standard measure of re-offending, the shortcomings of this measure are well known (see for example, Le Vay's briefing paper 1/04). These include the time delay in being able to access data and the fact that they undercount *actual* offending; together with the fact that they are affected by changes in police and prosecution practice and are subject to technical difficulties such as offences being committed prior to an intervention but which do not reach sentence until after or during the intervention.

Notwithstanding these issues, it was initially intended that global recidivism data for the geographical area covered by the project would be used as a crude measure of success, comparing rates for the 15 months prior to the establishment of PORCH with the rates during its 15 months of operation (Table Five). This was to be supplemented by data relating to the offending rates of individual PORCH beneficiaries in which it was hoped that the team could access '*expected reconviction rates*' through the Offender Group Reconviction Scale-Revised (OGRS) which is a Home Office risk prediction instrument. However, there have been difficulties with both sets of data. The evaluation team have been advised that OGRS are not used and that the recidivism data will only be collected by the police in a consistent manner from the beginning of the new financial year with the first set of information being available from mid-May 2007. Hence this indicator will need to be re-examined when the data becomes available.

**Table Five: Performance Indicator Five**

<b>Performance Indicator Five:</b> Reduction in offending rates of PPOs (outcome).			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
(a) Crude measure = reduction of overall offending rates.	Comparison of overall figures for previous 15 months with figures from Oct '06 - Dec '07.	Data unavailable.	Data unavailable.
(b) Reduction in individual re-offending rates.	Police analyst data.	Data unavailable.	

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

#### 4.2.6 Performance Indicator Six

It is evident that progress is being made against performance indicator six, as indicated by Table Six.

**Table Six: Performance Indicator Six**

<b>Performance Indicator Six:</b> Greater willingness by accommodation providers to offer tenancies to PPOs and so increase the pool of accommodation (outcome).			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
(a) Increase in number of accommodation providers engaged over time.	PORCH internal records.	0 accommodation providers engaged at the outset.	Accommodation providers:- Exeter City Council – 2 East Devon District Council - 1 Mid Devon Council – 1 Prospects – 4 Goldmax – 5 Dave Ellis – 3 The Amber Foundation – 1 Howell Road Hostel – 2 Gabriel House - 2 Housing Associations:- 3 Signpost – 2 Magna – 1  NB other placements have been made with family & friends but are not recorded here as 'providers'.
(b) Increase in number of individual units available.		0 units provided.	See above.
(c) Number of new private sector landlords contacted against number of referrals made and accepted over time.		No landlords contacted.	5 landlords approached.  3 offered placements.

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

There has been an increase in the number of accommodation providers engaged by PORCH over time (target a), with no engagements as at September 2006 and 11 engagements as at January 2007. Three of these providers had not previously been used by Probation and can therefore be seen as truly 'new' providers. These were from the private sector and it was felt by staff that the success of securing these private sector landlords was at least in part due to the openness, accessibility and commitment of PORCH. Interestingly, the view expressed during the stakeholder interviews was that PORCH's engagement with Registered Landlords (RSLs) which are a more typical source of accommodation for ex-prisoners has had little effect on either increasing the pool that is available; or in what was termed as '*elbowing other non-PORCH offenders out of the way*'.

There has also been a concurrent increase in the number of accommodation units available (target (b)) from no units in September 2006 to 24 units as at January 2007. A third (eight) of the 24 accommodation units used by the project as at January 2007 were provided by the three new private sector providers.

In terms of the ratio, alongside the 31 referrals made to the project up to January 2007, five new private sector landlords have been approached and invited to offer tenancies of which three have accepted PPO placements (target c).

More generally, it was suggested that despite PORCH's success in making suitable placements, with the exception of the private sector landlords, there has not been an increase in the *willingness* of providers to provide accommodation. This was attributed in part to the '*internal politics*' amongst other agencies and in part to the fact that information is not shared between accommodation providers which could be used to showcase success stories and thereby induce an increased willingness amongst them to provide.

#### 4.2.7 Performance Indicator Seven

Again good progress is being made in relation to performance indicator seven as can be seen from Table Seven and the project's approach to work with accommodation providers may be seen as one of the areas in which it really '*adds value*' to existing local provision.

**Table Seven: Performance Indicator Seven**

<b>Performance Indicator Seven:</b> Early resolution of problems for accommodation providers – providers to receive prompt and constructive response to issues raised (process).			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
(a) Acknowledgement of calls within one working day.	PORCH Log.	PORCH log set up to record calls and response.	Log in place.  One query received.
(b) Out of hours response set up.	Internal records and PORCH log.	Exploration of Lawson House as an out of hours services.	Lawson House now set up and in operation.

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

Information provided shows that a log was set up to record calls from accommodation providers and the response to these calls (target a) and that just one call had been received as at January 2007. However, the nature and speed of the response to this call has not been detailed and it is also of note that not all members of staff appeared to be aware that the log had been established. It will be necessary for the project to keep information relating to this log updated in order that the percentage of calls that have been acknowledged within one working day can be monitored.

As at January 2007, the project was awaiting confirmation that an '*out of hours*' response could be established through Lawson House (target b) but the evaluation team has been subsequently made aware that the service has been successfully set up. The agreement with Lawson House allows PORCH landlords, as with CARD mentors, to make contact with the Lawson House Duty Manager '*out of hours*' should this be needed. On receipt of a call, the Duty Manager would then act in an advisory capacity or refer queries on to a member of PORCH staff or, in the case of an emergency, to the Police.

More generally, information gathered during interviews with staff revealed that the project has adopted a proactive approach to the support of accommodation providers. Regular telephone contact is kept with providers and, where appropriate, meetings are held with individual providers to monitor the success of the placements and any emergent issues. In addition, PORCH staff make themselves accessible throughout accommodation placements and offer continuous support that can be accessed when needed. This balance of passive and active support is thought to be particularly successful as accommodation providers are made aware of the support on offer to them by PORCH staff rather than being in receipt of proactive support that, according to staff, could be overbearing.

#### **4.2.8 Performance Indicator Eight**

The development of a common housing risk assessment tool and referral document was borne out of an identified need to consolidate the information exchange process between accommodation providers and practitioners to reduce the duplication of information. Information supplied to the evaluation team at January 2007 indicates that PORCH

contributes to the formation of various strategic documents in relation to housing via the Housing Operations Executive (HOE) forum meetings (Table Eight). However, the stakeholder interviews indicated that there may be other, more appropriate fora, in which to proceed with the common risk assessment and referral work, some of which may be taken forward through ECI's Development Manager

The project's relationship with Devon Supporting People (SP) is, however, less clear. PORCH does not, at present, have a fixed arrangement within the overall SP structure. It appears that different organizations have different responsibilities and the project is currently attempting to establish its place within the network.

**Table Eight: Performance Indicator Eight**

<b>Performance Indicator Eight:</b> Development of a common housing risk assessment tool and referral document for wide use by accommodation providers (outcome).			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
PORCH contribution to this process through Devon Supporting People team.	PORCH internal records. Minutes of relevant forum meetings.	Lack of common housing risk assessment tool and referral document.	Membership of " <i>The Hoe</i> " accommodation forum-as vehicle to progress the issue of common referral/assessment/risk tool.

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

#### 4.2.9 Performance Indicator Nine

Information supplied to the evaluation team indicates that progress in relation to performance indicator nine has been substantial as can be seen from Table Nine.

**Table Nine: Performance Indicator Nine**

<b>Performance Indicator Nine:</b> Consolidation of the role of PORCH into PPO Unit with Staff and PPOU working co-operatively towards solutions (outcome/process).			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
(a) Links developed and maintained between PORCH and PPOU through weekly meetings and monthly strategic level meetings.	Stakeholder interviews.	N/A.	Regular pattern of attendance at these meetings since September.
(b) All PPO staff aware of how accommodation issues are processed.			All PPOU staff, including prison liaison officer are aware of PORCH and how it operates.

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

Weekly and monthly strategic level meetings are regularly attended by both PORCH and PPOU staff (target (a)) with PPOU staff being understood to have a sound awareness of PORCH and how accommodation issues are processed (target (b)). Interviews with stakeholders (both PORCH and PPOU staff) revealed that links between the two organisations and levels of co-operative working have developed steadily over time. Initially the difference in the approaches adopted by PORCH and the PPOU in providing accommodation support is understood to have caused a certain level of operational misunderstanding. However, over time clarification in relation to these issues has been reached largely through discussions at weekly and monthly meetings and through regular telephone contact between staff from the two organisations. This clarification has led to an increase in co-operative working and the level to which PORCH and the PPOU are understood to be taking a *'joined up approach'* to meeting offender needs.

The evaluation team understand that, currently, co-operative working takes place in relation to the inclusion of PORCH objectives in sentence plans (although see comment on performance indicator three above) and through the direct and indirect delivery of services. In relation to service provision, arrangements have been made for PORCH to be responsible for the direct delivery of services relating to accommodation but also to act as a signposting organisation to other services which might include

debt counselling and accredited tenancy schemes. Regular communication is also understood to take place between the PPOU and PORCH in order to update INCASE records.

The interview process also revealed a good basic understanding of the PORCH Project at the relevant levels within HMP Exeter and the prison is in receipt of regular updates from PORCH regarding its progress and latest news.

#### 4.2.10 Performance Indicator Ten

Considerable progress has also been made in relation to performance indicator ten (Table Ten) as illustrated by the variety of promotional activities that have been undertaken in order to help increase the awareness of PORCH within the housing and criminal justice community.

**Table Ten: Performance Indicator Ten**

<b>Performance Indicator Ten:</b> Greater awareness of PORCH within the housing and criminal justice community.			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
Promotional activities.	Internal records. Personal development portfolios.	Formal support made at the launch by senior managers from:- probation, police, City Council, prison and mental health.	Presentation to HMP Exeter partnership event to launch the Offender Management Unit. Presentation to ECI Annual Review Meeting (public meeting.) Participation in South Devon Residential Landlords Forum. Contribution to HMP Exeter OMU team meeting.  Presentation to Government Office of the South West (GOSW) Criminal Justice Network Meeting.

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

Since the launch of PORCH, at which formal support was offered by a number of stakeholders, presentations have been made to the HMP Exeter Partnership, the ECI and Government Office for the South West. In addition, the project is represented on the South Devon Residential

Landlords Forum and has contributed at the Exeter Offender Management Unit (OMU) team meeting. Interviews with PORCH staff further indicate that staff from the project spent several weeks visiting appropriate agencies in the locality in order to explain the remit of PORCH and to increase awareness. In addition, an interview with one stakeholder highlighted the usefulness of the newsletters and updates that PORCH sends to its partner organisations. It is understood that as the reputation of PORCH has been established a concurrent increase has been noted in the extent to which the housing and criminal justice community are aware of PORCH and anecdotal evidence from staff interviews suggests that positive feedback has been received at multi-agency events.

#### 4.2.11 Performance Indicator Eleven

Information supplied to the evaluation team indicates that considerable progress has also been made in relation to performance indicator eleven (Table Eleven).

**Table Eleven: Performance Indicator Eleven**

<b>Performance Indicator Eleven:</b> PPOs benefit from introduction of CARD mentoring if considered helpful (process/outcome).			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
Effective mechanism to make suitable referrals to CARD Project established.	Internal records.	Collaborative working but no formal referral system in place.	Total number of shared /referred offenders - 5.  Monthly combined team meetings between CARD and PORCH.  Combined Projects' Management Committee.  Referral form raised.  Joint Newsletter.

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

Since September 2006, five PORCH beneficiaries have been referred to the CARD Project. To date informal mechanisms are in place to ensure that CARD referrals are suitable; this takes the form of a management committee that oversees both PORCH and CARD and monthly combined team meetings with staff from both projects. Information sourced from PORCH staff interviews indicates that a certain amount of contact also occurs between staff from the two projects outside of meetings. This contact allows information to be exchanged in relation to character references and behavioural patterns that can inform the work of both organisations in relation to the nature of an offender's accommodation placement through PORCH and also the level of mentoring they might receive at CARD. The evaluation team understands that PORCH intends to develop a formal referral document to further assist this process and that this has been raised at the appropriate meetings.

#### 4.2.12 Performance Indicator Twelve

Less extensive but nevertheless still significant at this stage is the project's progress in relation to performance indicator twelve as shown in Table Twelve.

**Table Twelve: Performance Indicator Twelve**

<b>Performance Indicator Twelve:</b>			
Project sustainability. Value of PORCH demonstrated through the evaluation process and plans in place for its longer-term sustainability by the close of the funding period (outcome).			
<b>Target</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Baseline position September 2006</b>	<b>Position at January 2007</b>
(a) PORCH to engage in active promotion of the project to a variety of funders in the coming year.	PORCH internal records.	(a) Launch event at the start.	Bids pending to Community Safety Partnership and Hilden Trust. (See also Table Ten).
(b) Continuation funding secured.	-	Financial support during the pilot period from:- Innovations Forum Exeter City Council Weavers Company Tudor Lankelly Chase ENDAS	

Source: PORCH Evaluation 2007

The evaluation team is aware of several promotional activities in which PORCH staff have been engaged (target a), although the extent to which these activities have been conducted with prospective funders is not known. With regard to continuation funding (target (b)), financial support is currently still being sought during the pilot phase of PORCH from a range of organisations and the project has also sourced extra funding from Exeter Positive Steps. Bids to the Community Safety Partnership and Hilden Trust are pending and staff interviews revealed that there are potential funding opportunities for housing resources and rent purposes but these are, as yet, unsecured. In the future, the project plans to bid for funding as a *'preferred provider'* through the DCPA. The success of this bid is reliant on the ability of PORCH to prove that it could provide *'added value'* when compared to the services that might potentially be offered by any alternative providers. It is anticipated that the evaluation findings will aid this process.

### 4.3 Discussion

Overall, the data relating to the performance indicators – which have been selected as measures of the project's success - indicate that PORCH is beginning to impact on a number of factors within its remit. A comprehensive referral and assessment process has been established for PPOs and is currently considered to be appropriate and effective by all staff although there are some indications that it does not always operate in the most timely manner. Importantly, however, all 17 beneficiaries that were accommodated as at January 2007 were considered by staff to be in suitable accommodation within PORCH terms of reference and there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that this is leading to increased stability for them. It will be very important to examine any impact more fully when data become available, including the impact on re-offending.

The pool of accommodation itself is, to some extent, increasing through the project and PORCH staff have adopted a proactive approach to the support of the providers that have been engaged and keep in touch with them regularly via the telephone and, where necessary, through face-to-face meetings. In addition, the out of hours service has been established providing round-the-clock support to providers and on-hand advice should any urgent problems arise. This may be seen as one of the ways

in which the project really adds value to existing activity and the approach taken should lead to increased co-operation with providers in the future.

Softer impacts also include the progress that has been made in co-operative working between the relevant criminal justice agencies and the levels of awareness of PORCH amongst the criminal justice and housing communities. Steady development has been noted in the inclusion of PORCH objectives within sentence plans although it seems that there is room for further development here to ensure that sufficiently detailed objectives are always included.

All of these outcomes represent markers of success. It should be noted, however, that a full examination of distance travelled has not been possible for all indicators due to gaps in data. Whilst some of this, such as the recidivism data, is beyond the control of the PORCH team, there are some areas in which internal improvements could be made. For example, pro-forma questionnaires have now been developed for use with beneficiaries at the commencement of their involvement with PORCH, at key milestones during this involvement and also once their case has been '*closed*' but need to be systematically administered in order to be able to demonstrate impact. Likewise, consistent and accurate record keeping will aid future understanding of project progress. These issues will be revisited in the concluding section of the report.

## 5. Case Studies

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the case studies is to furnish an in depth understanding of the impact of the project from the point of view of its beneficiaries, focusing specifically (although not exclusively) on the indicators shown in Table Thirteen below.

**Table Thirteen: Case Study Indicators**

Detailed Indicator	Evidence Base
Greater stability in housing circumstances.  (N.B According to PORCH staff, greater stability in housing circumstances is perceived to indicate that a particular offender is progressively maintaining accommodation and managing the practicalities surrounding tenancy: for example, avoiding rent arrears and managing a household budget).	(a) Hard data  (b) Face-to-face interviews with beneficiaries and relevant PORCH staff  (c) Assessment of the amount of time between <i>commencement and any further re-offending</i> matched against the amount of intervention by PORCH
Accommodation status maintained during periods of crisis or vulnerability.  There are a number of factors which can contribute to periods of crisis and vulnerability including drug and alcohol dependence, mental health issues, unemployment and so forth.	(a) Focus on <i>'themes'</i> of vulnerability (grounded within relevant literature)  (b) HUB document  (c) Face-to-face interviews with beneficiaries and relevant PORCH staff
PPOs greater confidence in managing their accommodation and awareness of the repertoire of behaviour needed to sustain it	(a) Successful completion of EATS course where appropriate  (b) Interviews with accommodation providers and beneficiaries.

Source: PORCH evaluation 2007

To date, three case study beneficiaries have been interviewed, together with their relevant project worker; their personal files have also been accessed which typically includes a pre-sentence report, HUB documents, OASys forms, PORCH referral forms, case notes, correspondence notes; and, information relating to housing/benefit applications. It is of particular note, however, that each file holds an inconsistent selection of the aforementioned documents, which has presented the evaluation team with difficulties in terms of compiling consistently thorough case studies. In light of this, this section of the report discusses the findings to date.

## **5.2 Beneficiary One**

### **5.2.1 History**

Beneficiary One is a 33 year old male who has been convicted for 44 offences since 1991 and has served two custodial sentences since September 2001. The nature of these offences ranged from shoplifting, burglary and theft from a vehicle to criminal damage, possession of illegal substances and Actual Bodily Harm (ABH).

Accompanying the series of criminal offences, Beneficiary One also has a long-term history of substance misuse spanning over two decades; this has involved the misuse of solvents, cannabis, amphetamine ecstasy, Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD), and from the age of 22, the regular intravenous use of heroin occasionally combined with crack cocaine and benzodiazepines. Evidence garnered from the PORCH beneficiary files indicates that although Beneficiary One claims not to have a dependence on alcohol, the misuse of illegal substances has regularly been accompanied by the consumption of alcohol. Beneficiary One's most recent criminal conviction was committed under the influence of heroin, crack cocaine and alcohol, which also suggests a link between substance use and criminal activity.

In addition to these long-term issues surrounding criminal convictions and substance misuse, Beneficiary One has experienced an unsettled accommodation history. Excluding time spent serving two custodial sentences Beneficiary One had resided in five different abodes since September 2001, and had spent a number of months during 2006 with no fixed abode before serving the most recent custodial sentence.

Beneficiary One was released from prison on November 14<sup>th</sup> 2006 and prior to this was referred to the PORCH Project through the PPOU. Beneficiary One's initial consultation meeting with PORCH staff took place on November 8<sup>th</sup> and following release from prison, Beneficiary One has maintained regular contact with the PORCH team.

### **5.2.2 The Impact of the PORCH Project on Beneficiary One's Housing Circumstances**

Immediately after release from prison Beneficiary One resided with a parent on a short-term basis. Beneficiary One claimed that this accommodation was not available on a long-term basis due to personal differences with his parent's partner, and by late November was made

homeless after being 'thrown-out'. By December 1<sup>st</sup> 2006, Beneficiary One's housing circumstances had significantly improved as the PORCH team had secured accommodation in a hostel in Cullompton (Devon). This accommodation was maintained until March 2007 by which time Beneficiary One had reported that they were being intimidated and bullied by the accommodation manager due to their criminal history. Beneficiary One felt strongly about this situation, and stated during discussions with the research team:

*'They had got me a place in Cullompton but my name was known in that area as a bad one. The manager of the accommodation was hassling me because of my reputation... I hadn't damaged anything, never fought, never arrested, but I was still hassled'.*

Positively, with the support of the PORCH team Beneficiary One managed to remain at the accommodation in Cullompton whilst formal complaints were issued against the property manager and alternative housing was sought. One particular member of the PORCH team claimed:

*'Beneficiary One wanted to leave but we talked to Beneficiary One and said we have to do this in a positive way... I think Beneficiary One felt supported and otherwise Beneficiary One would have lost the accommodation... we wrote a letter of complaint and Beneficiary One managed to stay in the accommodation for a week longer and left feeling good'.*

As highlighted above, the PORCH team played an important role in minimising the effect of this situation upon Beneficiary One's housing circumstances; Beneficiary One has now left the hostel in Cullompton due to these events and through the PORCH Project has secured alternative housing in Exeter.

Beneficiary One has also experienced a number of other problems since being released from prison in November 2006. During late March 2007 Beneficiary One had committed theft under the influence of amphetamines and alcohol despite claiming that their perspective towards crime had positively changed. Nevertheless, this reflects a four month period between being allocated accommodation through the PORCH Project and committing a recorded criminal offence.

More generally it seems that Beneficiary One has relapsed on a number of occasions in terms of drug misuse: ENDAS urine test results reveal that there have been six positive traces for amphetamine and benzodiazepines between December 2006 and February 2007. Beneficiary One has also accumulated a debt of £72.50 in rent arrears, although the PORCH team have made efforts to support and educate the beneficiary on household budgeting. Despite these set-backs, however, Beneficiary One has maintained the accommodation provided through the PORCH Project as a result of the efforts of the PORCH team. The PORCH team have provided Beneficiary One with weekly and, at times, daily support, which has ranged from talking to the beneficiary about the relapses in re-offending behaviour or drug use to providing drop-in advice/coffee sessions.

Whilst it is therefore clear that there have been certain problems surrounding Beneficiary One's personal circumstances at this interim stage involving substance misuse and re-offending, there has also been a general increased state of stability in Beneficiary One's housing situation as a result of the PORCH Project. With assistance from the PORCH team, Beneficiary One has progressed from having no fixed abode after being released from a custodial sentence to residing regularly in two places of accommodation, one of which lasted for approximately 4 months and the other of which is currently ongoing. From the viewpoint of PORCH staff, Beneficiary One would not have achieved this state of accommodation without engaging with the PORCH Project.

### **5.2.3 Perceptions of the PORCH Project**

This particular beneficiary has developed a good relationship with the PORCH team and fully appreciates the services that are offered by the project, as Beneficiary One claimed:

*'I have never come across something like PORCH... I couldn't thank them enough... if I'm in trouble they help me. I've dealt with other agencies that don't help... they do things quickly and productively... it's made a difference on my life'.*

Following on from this, Beneficiary One specifically claimed that the PORCH Project offers a distinctive type of service which can often be more effective than similar services offered by agencies such as Probation:

*'[PORCH staff] speak to you differently... I spent 12 months with probation and was looking for accommodation – I didn't get it and ended up back I prison'.*

There is also evidence to suggest that the PORCH Project is making an impact upon this particular beneficiary's self-perception, as Beneficiary One claimed: *'I have respect for other people... [and] PORCH gave me increased self-confidence'.*

Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that these combined factors act as a testament to the unique way in which the PORCH team interacts with its beneficiaries and the effective processes that project beneficiaries experience.

### **5.3 Beneficiary Two**

#### **5.3.1 Beneficiary History**

Beneficiary Two is a 34 year old male whose criminal history began in 1986. Since then, Beneficiary Two has been convicted for numerous criminal offences including burglary (dwelling and non-dwelling), common assault, breach of a CRO (community rehabilitation order), possession of a Class B drug (amphetamine), and theft of a motor vehicle.

It has been noted in Beneficiary Two's Probation Case Summary Sheet (2005) that a past heroin addiction has acted as a trigger for offending behaviour. In addition, Beneficiary Two has used cocaine on a recreational basis and has been known to use cannabis. Although Beneficiary Two does not consider the use of heroin as a problem, which has been stated in the beneficiary's HUB document, relapses into substance misuse have occurred which has led to the prescription of Methadone or Subutex.

Accompanying the series of criminal offences and substance misuse, Beneficiary Two also has a recent unstable accommodation history. Between 2002 and 2005, Beneficiary Two resided in eight different abodes excluding time spent in custodial sentences. Prior to 2002, it is

evident that Beneficiary Two's accommodation history had greater stability: from the age of 18 years old Beneficiary Two resided with a partner for a period of ten years and during 2000-01 had lived in a flat with another partner for a period of six or seven months. Subsequent to the latter relationship ending Beneficiary Two was made homeless.

Beneficiary Two first met with the PORCH team in October 2006 whilst serving the most recent long-term custodial sentence. During this inception meeting it was revealed that this particular beneficiary was apprehensive about being released from prison. These concerns arose from previous experiences where, on release, Beneficiary Two had re-engaged with associate drug users and street homeless people which led to a relapse in substance misuse and re-offending behaviour. Beneficiary Two was released from the most recent custodial sentence in February 2007 and currently possesses a licence that will expire in May 2009.

### **5.3.2 The Impact of the PORCH Project on Beneficiary Two's Housing Circumstances**

On release, the PORCH team located accommodation for Beneficiary Two in a hostel in Cullompton as a temporary measure until suitable housing could be secured in Exeter. This was perceived as a major achievement in relation to this particular beneficiary, as one member of PORCH staff claimed:

*'Beneficiary Two is prone, if in the wrong company, to go off the rails a bit and if we hadn't found the accommodation Beneficiary Two would have been squatting in Exeter with known drug users and would have started using again. [As a consequence] Beneficiary Two would have found it more difficult to stick to his license'.*

Since mid February 2007 Beneficiary Two, who keeps regular contact with the PORCH team on a weekly basis, is maintaining accommodation in Cullompton and according to PORCH files has not committed any further recorded criminal offences. Beneficiary Two claimed that this has been a result of interacting with the PORCH Project:

*'...before getting out of jail I had nowhere to live and went back to re-offending, but PORCH gives me stability'.*

Furthermore, evidence suggests that Beneficiary Two is managing to maintain rent payments and PORCH staff are confident that this will lead to long-term stable accommodation on an independent basis, as one member of PORCH staff stated: *'I don't think it will be long before [Beneficiary Two] is in [independent] accommodation'*.

Interviews with PORCH staff also revealed that Beneficiary Two has shown a greater confidence in managing accommodation compared to many other PORCH beneficiaries despite relapses in drug use, as claimed by one member of the PORCH team:

*'We have, a couple of times, been out to the accommodation because [Beneficiary Two] was stoned, we have had to say this is not acceptable, and [Beneficiary Two] has taken that on board'*.

Evidence from interviews with PORCH staff also reveal, however, that the beneficiaries personal motivation may play a significant role here. For example, one member of the team claimed:

*'Beneficiary Two had a long prison sentence and managed to address many of the drug issues, so Beneficiary Two was coming out clean, and started on an even keel and manages to maintain that... Beneficiary Two is much more capable than other PORCH beneficiaries and does not need as much emotional support, with Beneficiary Two its more practical support with benefits and work'*.

In terms of the awareness of the repertoire of behaviour needed to maintain accommodation, Beneficiary Two has completed the Exeter Accredited Tenant Scheme (EATS) whilst serving a custodial sentence, which provided training in the skills needed for independent living. Furthermore, as stated in the PORCH files, Beneficiary Two is eager to secure employment. Whilst these factors stand independent of the PORCH Project, at this interim stage, Beneficiary Two has gained greater stability in terms of accommodation status, which has to some degree resulted from the PORCH Project's intervention.<sup>3</sup> Beneficiary Two has effectively engaged with the PORCH Project which facilitated Beneficiary Two's seamless transition into stable accommodation on release from

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that it is difficult to measure the impact of the PORCH project upon this particular person at this interim stage due to the fact that Beneficiary Two had only been released five weeks prior to the research team conducting the case study interviews.

prison. Likewise, Beneficiary Two has maintained the current accommodation during a particular period of vulnerability and although there is evidence to suggest that this may have resulted from the beneficiary's stable circumstances after being released from prison, from the view point of PORCH staff the progress Beneficiary Two has made since release from prison would not have occurred without support from the PORCH team. The viewpoint of PORCH staff was also reflected by Beneficiary Two, who claimed: *'without them I would probably be back in jail'*.

### **5.3.3 Perceptions of the PORCH Project**

Beneficiary Two claimed not to have any expectations of the PORCH Project prior to the initial inception meeting with PORCH staff. Nevertheless, on reflection Beneficiary Two is fully satisfied with the project and testifies to the efforts made by the PORCH team to support beneficiaries in gaining/maintaining accommodation. Indeed, Beneficiary Two claimed: *'...whatever needs doing, they sort it out for you... they are a wicked service'*.

## **5.4 Beneficiary Three**

### **5.4.1 Beneficiary History**

Beneficiary Three is a 39 year old male who was released from prison in August 2006, with a nine month supervision order, after serving a custodial sentence for joint robbery. Beneficiary Three first presented in court at the age of 17 years old and has numerous convictions to date ranging from dishonesty, theft and burglary to vehicle related offences, criminal damage, affray and assaults (one of which was within a domestic context towards a partner).

PORCH files reveal that Beneficiary Three has had a long-term issue with alcohol abuse spanning over two decades. Furthermore, it has been suggested within Beneficiary Three's 2005 Pre-sentence Report that 85-90% of the offences committed by this individual were *'fuelled'* by alcohol and that this appears to encourage the beneficiary to commit more serious offences. Beneficiary Three's last conviction acts as an example of the link between offending behaviour and alcohol abuse. The circumstances behind this last offence included the collection of cannabis from a drug dealer's property whilst Beneficiary Three was under the

influence of alcohol, which then resulted in a fracas and robbery. Although there have been periods where the consumption of alcohol has been under control and Beneficiary Three claims not to have a dependence on alcohol, relapses in substance misuse have been a common occurrence. Accompanying these issues surrounding the consumption of alcohol, Beneficiary Three also has a history of cannabis and amphetamine use.

Beneficiary Three's recent accommodation history also reflects housing instability. Prior to 2002, Beneficiary Three had maintained accommodation in a number of locations including the parental home and shared accommodation with a previous partner. In 2002, the relationship broke down and Beneficiary Three '*sofa surfed*' up until October 2006, not including the time spent in custody for the last offence.

Evidence taken from the beneficiary's Referral Form and HUB document (2006) suggests that Beneficiary Three's accommodation issues between release from prison and PORCH intervention were causing some difficulties. Specifically, on release from prison in August 2006 Beneficiary Three was residing with friends and this accommodation status was beginning to exacerbate the Beneficiary's substance misuse.

As previously mentioned in Section 4.2.1 of this report, the PORCH referral process ideally involves PORCH staff obtaining a referral from the PPOU, and subsequently engaging with the offender prior to their release. However, with Beneficiary Three the referral process did not operate in this manner and a referral was not made until late September, by which time Beneficiary Three's accommodation situation was impacting negatively on other areas of life, thus potentially increasing the likelihood of re-offending. More positively, Beneficiary Three has consistently engaged with the PORCH team since his referral.

#### **5.4.2 The Impact of the PORCH Project on Beneficiary's Housing Circumstances**

Beneficiary Three was allocated accommodation within a hostel in Cullompton dating from October 2006 and this accommodation is currently being maintained, although Beneficiary Three has expressed an interest in gaining alternative housing in Pinhoe (Exeter).

To date, the PORCH team has provided Beneficiary Three with regular support. This support has occurred on a weekly and daily basis and has included assistance with securing housing benefits, completing Housing Register Application forms, and co-ordinating and attending accommodation site visits. Indeed, this particular beneficiary received an especially high level of intervention from the PORCH team.

Beneficiary Three has not re-offended since being accommodated in Cullompton and PORCH staff have noted that the provision of accommodation has been a particularly 'stabilising' factor for this beneficiary. According to Beneficiary Three:

*'...if you haven't got somewhere to live you will re-offend. I can say of three of four people who would be back in jail if they didn't have a roof over the head. Accommodation is somewhere where you can have five minutes of thinking time; if they don't have somewhere to stay they go and commit a crime'.*

Beneficiary Three has also explicitly acknowledged the impact that the PORCH Project has had on life post-prison in this regard, as illustrated in the following statement:

*'It was so much of a relief getting that accommodation and I haven't committed an offence since I left prison. It's changed my behaviour patterns. If I had left prison and didn't have PORCH I think I would have lost my way'.*

Beneficiary Three's stay in Cullompton, however, has not been without difficulties. In particular, Beneficiary Three has demonstrated an inability to effectively manage household budgeting: PORCH files indicate that Beneficiary Three has also accumulated rent arrears. However, as illustrated by one particular member of PORCH staff, it has been possible for Beneficiary Three to maintain their accommodation despite these difficulties as a result of the support provided through the project:

*'There are a couple of occasions where support has helped Beneficiary Three maintain the accommodation. Beneficiary Three has real issues with benefits and can't manage them so I don't think Beneficiary Three would have been able to fill in the*

*necessary forms. Beneficiary Three also has a problem with budgeting and has had a few relapses with amphetamines and gone into debt and we helped Beneficiary Three through that, so we agreed with the manager of the property that the beneficiary would catch up [on rent] on a regular basis and that helped'.*

To date, discussions with Beneficiary Three have revealed an awareness of the 'rules' associated with maintaining accommodation, specifically regarding the need to sustain a level of cleanliness in the property. Regarding Beneficiary Three's awareness of the repertoire of behaviour needed to sustain accommodation, interviews with relevant accommodation providers revealed that since placing Beneficiary Three in Cullompton, there have not been any problems logged.

At this interim stage, Beneficiary Three has therefore made some progress towards gaining greater stability in terms of accommodation status, having moved from a situation where there was no fixed abode following release from prison to residing in one place of accommodation which is currently being maintained, including during periods of crisis or vulnerability, and having not been convicted of any further offences since being released from prison.

It is of note, however, that Beneficiary Three appears to be heavily dependent on PORCH staff in terms of their ability to 'cope'. Whilst both PORCH and Probation staff have positively highlighted how Beneficiary Three has demonstrated an increased willingness to ask for support in order to ensure that the accommodation is maintained, there is often a danger of 'over-dependence' with these sorts of initiatives which presents its own set of challenges.

#### **5.4.3 Perceptions of the PORCH Project**

Beneficiary Three's initial expectations of the PORCH Project related primarily to gaining secure accommodation. Since engaging with the PORCH Project in September 2006, Beneficiary Three has acknowledged that the PORCH team provides a more holistic service in relation to housing issues and general support than the beneficiary first anticipated.

Specifically, Beneficiary Three has made reference to the positive working relationship that exists between the PORCH Project and PPOU, and the PORCH team and accommodation providers. In terms of the

relationship between PORCH and PPOU, Beneficiary Three perceived there to be a *'close working relationship'* specifically in terms of communication about the beneficiary's appointments. Likewise, the work that PORCH undertakes with accommodation providers was highlighted by Beneficiary Three as being of great benefit in that *'it stops communication breakdowns'* between the PPO's, other tenants, and the accommodation providers.

## 5.5 Discussion

The case studies clearly illustrate that the PORCH team are able to offer continual, intensive, support which is bespoke to the individual beneficiaries that are referred to them, leading to the effective allocation and maintenance of suitable accommodation. Further it is evident that the PORCH Project has positively impacted upon all three case study beneficiaries in different ways. Although all three individuals have experienced certain relapses in terms of either substance misuse, further criminal offences and/or accumulated rent arrears, they have all maintained stable housing circumstances throughout these periods of *'vulnerability'*.

This acts as a testament to the efforts made by the PORCH team to overcome emergent problems and can also be seen as an indicator of the effective rapport that has developed between staff and the PPO beneficiaries. Indeed all three individuals have commented positively on the difference that PORCH has made to their lives. However, whilst in no way wishing to detract from the excellent work that is being undertaken, as mentioned within case study three, the evaluation team would wish to highlight the potential danger of beneficiaries' over reliance on initiatives such as this, raising questions around the long term sustainability of a small team of PORCH staff providing such an intensive level of support. This has been recognised by the PORCH team themselves who are fully aware of the need to safeguard against nurturing dependence.

## **6. Interim Conclusions and Next Steps**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This report has provided a comprehensive update on the progress of the PORCH Project during its first few months of operation. This update has been developed by monitoring the distance travelled, where possible, against a series of performance indicators that were established by the evaluation team at the outset of the project in conjunction with PORCH staff; and also through an examination of three detailed '*case studies*'. This concluding section of the report brings the findings together and offers some tentative conclusions at this interim stage, together with some suggested actions for the PORCH team's consideration. The section also outlines the next steps to be taken by the evaluation team in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of the project.

### **6.2 Progress to Date and Suggested Action Points**

It is evident that the PORCH Project has made a great deal of progress in relation to its aims and objectives. It has been very successful in terms of finding suitable accommodation for its beneficiaries and in working with those individuals to maintain their accommodation status, including through periods of vulnerability. And the early indications are that this is having a stabilising effect on the individuals involved. This has particularly been demonstrated through the three case studies which show that the project has had a positive effect on their attitudes and behaviour, although due to the timescales involved and issues with data, the longer-term impact on reducing offending is yet to be established.

The pool of available accommodation has also been increased through the efforts of the PORCH team to some extent, notably through private sector providers. Further, the support offered to those providers can be seen as one of the ways in which the project adds value to existing provision.

The project is run through a number of highly committed individuals who have worked hard to develop co-operative relationships with other agencies, particularly the PPOU with whom they have developed appropriate processes and procedures for the assessment and referral of beneficiaries. These co-operative relationships are of particular importance to the successful running of the project and enable staff to maintain an offender-focused approach to their service. However, this

may also represent an area for further development to ensure, for example, the timely delivery of referrals to the PORCH team and the consistent inclusion of PORCH objectives within sentence plans.

Another key area for future consideration relates to the consistent record keeping and monitoring of activities. The evaluation team found, for example, that information relating to the referral process is not being as comprehensively recorded as might be desirable; that beneficiary files did not contain a consistent set of information for each offender engaged; and, that relevant data collection tools such as questionnaires are not being systematically used. Whilst it should be borne in mind that the project is still in its infancy with protocols still in the process of being established, it will be important for project staff to ensure that PORCH's monitoring systems are regularly and comprehensively updated in the future in order that the evaluation team are able to accurately monitor the impact of the project both on individual offenders and also at a strategic level using the performance indicators developed. It is particularly suggested that all staff agree upon the way in which data is to be collected and recorded and that they develop mechanisms to ensure that this occurs.

With regard to the project's longer-term sustainability, the evaluation team understands that various activities have been undertaken in order to raise awareness levels of PORCH amongst the criminal justice and housing communities and to attract future funding. Whilst the outcome of various funding bids is as yet unknown, it is hoped that the findings from the evaluation process will be of value for future developments.

### **6.3 Next Steps**

It will be important in the first instance for the PORCH staff to supply the evaluation team with any data that is currently outstanding so that future progress can be accurately monitored. In particular, at the time of writing, the team is unable to access data from the client questionnaires together with INCASE data; comparable ENDAS/COZART data; and, recidivism data, all of which will be important in terms of reporting on distance travelled, particularly in relation to performance indicators two, three and five. These items will also be especially important for the purposes of the summative evaluation which is due to be completed in January 2008.

Following this, the evaluation team will, over the coming months continue with the desk-based analysis of PORCH and offender-specific documents in order to update the performance indicators at regular intervals; and the team will also undertake additional stakeholder interviews to supplement this data. At the time of writing, three further case studies have already been completed (but are not included within the present report due to the timescale involved) and a further one has been scheduled. It is anticipated that meetings with the same individuals will be arranged, to the extent that it is possible, towards the end of the project's lifespan in order to establish any further impact.

In accordance with the project brief the evaluation team will produce bi-monthly reports on progress, covering the items above, leading to the production of a final report in January 2008; together with a dissemination event.

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