

UNCLASSIFIED

# National Probation Service Briefing



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## ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT SERVICE FOR BAIL AND HDC

### INTRODUCTION

The Bail Accommodation and Support Service (BASS) was introduced by NOMS in June 2007 to allow Courts to make greater use of bail and prisons and to make greater use of Home Detention Curfew by providing rented, shared homes in small flats and houses in the community. The contract was awarded through a competitive tender process to ClearSprings Management Ltd, an ISO 9001 company providing housing and support to vulnerable people.

This scheme offers an additional support and accommodation resource in England and Wales for eligible people to whom the Courts have granted bail and to those prisoners, whom prison governors have agreed, taking account of probation assessments, to release on Home Detention Curfew who do not have a home of their own to return to.

### WHAT THE BASS PROVISION PROVIDES

BASS provides accommodation for the duration of a person's bail or HDC licence in dispersed community settings. The housing meets the standards of the Landlord Accreditation Scheme of the relevant Local Authority. The scheme endeavours to return people to their home town or area unless this would be inappropriate. The mix in each property is carefully managed by ClearSprings and is single gender with typically three or four sharing but never more than five.

A single parent with dependent children can be accommodated in a property reserved for that family only - and a number of families have already benefited.

ClearSprings allocate a designated Support Officer to each individual. They will meet them on arrival at the agreed property and induct them into BASS, explain the local geography, establish any immediate needs and ask them to sign an Accommodation Agreement. Those on bail will receive three one-hour contact sessions a week in the first three weeks, and one hour per week thereafter, to help them comply with bail conditions, maintain appointments, access benefits, training and work and help with move-on accommodation. They will also receive help in accessing medical support in collaboration with existing specialist public and voluntary services. For those on HDC there is one contact session per week unless the offender has an offender manager allocated. If the offender has an allocated Offender Manager then there is an expectation that the sentence plan will include objectives relevant to the criminogenic needs of individual offenders and that Offender Managers will provide appropriate levels of support to the offender in achieving those objectives. However, ClearSprings will additionally provide induction and move-on assistance. The level of support provided by ClearSprings is intended to help to promote independent living.

The flats and houses are fully furnished and maintained by ClearSprings. Residents have their own bedroom and front door key and are expected to cook and clean for themselves and to respect the other occupants and neighbours. Bed linen is provided new to each resident, as is a returnable mobile phone with £5 credit. Residents have to pay rent, from their own funds or through entitlement to housing benefit, and make a contribution towards utilities.

**The 'support-only' element of this service is available to those who have accommodation of their own to go to but who would not be released without such support.**

## ELIGIBILITY AND BREACH

This provision is aimed at lower risk groups than those usually accommodated in Approved Premises. To help mitigate risk to the public there are exclusions to the scheme:

- All those convicted of or charged with sex offences
- Those convicted of arson of buildings in the last ten years or charged with arson of buildings
- Those who pose a significant risk to the public or to ClearSprings staff or to others in a shared house
- Those under 18 years of age.

For HDC the existing policy on eligibility applies, subject to the above exclusions. The eligibility criteria for BASS is available on EPIC.

ClearSprings staff have strict breach procedures to follow in the event of absconding, failure to attend contact sessions or unacceptable behaviour, notifying the police on a Section 9 Witness Statement and, where relevant the EM supplier, prison, the Post Release Section and offender manager where there is one.

## SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

Up to the end of April, 1043 people had been released into the ClearSprings service, 600 on bail and 443 on HDC (867 men and 176 women). 392 have completed their bail or HDC period.

In its start-up phase the Service has had a number of successful outcomes, two of which are related here.

**B** had served a custodial sentence and was eligible for Home Detention Curfew but had nowhere to live. Prison staff referred her to a ClearSprings supported property. B had led a very chaotic life prior to serving her prison sentence. Her 14 year old son had been living with a family friend and had not attended school for months. His father had taken his own life a short time prior to this. An opportunity arose for B to be re-united with her son when a ClearSprings property suitable as a family unit became available and the two were able to be re-united. The ClearSprings Support Officer assigned to B immediately liaised with social services in order that they were fully aware of B and her son's circumstances. The support officer contacted a local school to attempt to get him back into education and then put her in touch with the school's Family Liaison Officer, The Parenting Partnership, the Local Community Development Officer and the Educational Welfare Officer to help speed up this process. B's son was eventually offered a place at the local school the following term and in the meantime the Support Officer introduced him to the local Connexions Office where he went and used the various recreational/sports meetings taking place. A key part of ClearSprings' role is assisting service users to sort out their welfare benefits, which in B's case included housing benefits, income support, child benefit and child tax credit. They also liaise with probation to maintain regular contact. B was a good tenant and there were no re-offending issues (confirmed by the local police). She did have a difficult time settling in with her son after some time apart but now he has made many friends and appears to be very settled, as does B.

Mother and son have now moved on into permanent accommodation via Wulvern Housing, helped by her Support Officer. ClearSprings Support Officer has helped B to overcome a lot of initial anxiety and enabled her to have a home in the community with her son and a greater degree of independence.

**K** was arrested for burglary and bailed to a ClearSprings address. He was given bail conditions not to enter his home town. **K** engaged with the local support services and was supported in keeping his appointments, changing his thinking and learning everyday life skills. His Support Officer attended the initial meeting between **K** and his Offender Manager and followed that by weekly telephone discussions on progress, incorporating input from the local community drugs team. After an extended bail period, during which he fought with his various addictions, including a sideways move to alcohol, **K** was given a DRR by the judge in his case in recognition of the efforts he had made towards becoming drug free throughout the period. ClearSprings was able to find him move on housing with Stonham and he is currently waiting to enter a 12 month detox and rehabilitation process. He has been re-united with his family.

## HOW THE BASS PROVISION OPERATES

Full details of how BASS operates can be found in PC33/2007. Referral forms to book the provision are available on EPIC, on the Court Service intranet site and on ClearSprings secure website.

Bail – through Court based or peripatetic bail information officers, defendants can be referred on the day of their first Court appearance to ClearSprings with obvious benefits to the defendant and cost benefits to NOMS and the public. Where this is not possible the defendant will be remanded in custody, perhaps with pre-release conditions set by the Court, and consideration and referral to ClearSprings will be the responsibility of the prison Bail Information Officer. Defence solicitors are not authorised to make a referral to ClearSprings but can request the service on behalf of a client through the Court, the Probation Service or direct to the Bail Information Officer.

HDC – HDC staff in prisons have been issued with PSI 29/2007 setting out the process to follow. Probation should carry out the normal suitability checks in respect of issues relating to the individual and complete form HDC(3b) but will not have to do an address check as this will have been done when the property was acquired and approved for the Service (consultation between ClearSprings, probation, police and local authorities). If a prison governor has assessed an offender as suitable for HDC ClearSprings will normally accept them into their service.

## HOW BASS IS MANAGED

BASS is managed on a regional basis by the Regional Offender Manager/Director of Offender Management, who identifies the location and volume of properties required based on data on prisoner origins and volumes through the Courts. In acquiring properties ClearSprings is required to liaise with the Police, Local Authority Housing Team and Probation Area to confer on the suitability of addresses. Liaison with Probation should initially be with the designated single point of contact, usually a Chief Officer.

Contacts in the regions are:

### ROM/DOM office

EAST OF ENGLAND

[june.jackson32@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:june.jackson32@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

EAST MIDLANDS

[Trevor.williams1@justice.gov.uk](mailto:Trevor.williams1@justice.gov.uk)

LONDON

[Tanya.barrow@justice.gov.uk](mailto:Tanya.barrow@justice.gov.uk)

NORTH EAST

[Richard.taylor@justice.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.taylor@justice.gov.uk)

NORTH WEST

[paul.pandolfo@justice.gov.uk](mailto:paul.pandolfo@justice.gov.uk)

SOUTH EAST

[janette.powell@justice.gov.uk](mailto:janette.powell@justice.gov.uk)

SOUTH WEST	<a href="mailto:gerry.graham@justice.gov.uk">gerry.graham@justice.gov.uk</a>
WALES	<a href="mailto:martin.dennett@justice.gov.uk">martin.dennett@justice.gov.uk</a>
WEST MIDLANDS	<a href="mailto:stuart.turner31@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk">stuart.turner31@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk</a>
YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE	<a href="mailto:val.mcnerney@justice.gov.uk">val.mcnerney@justice.gov.uk</a>

## Press Enquiries

Inevitably this Service will attract press attention and misreporting in the media. All press enquiries should be referred to MoJ Press Office on tel. 020 7210 8822 or 07659 173270 for out of office hours.

## WHERE THIS SERVICE IS CURRENTLY LOCATED

ROMs/DOMs review the distribution of accommodation needed regularly and can provide you with information on what is available in your area. The 'Support-only' option can be provided anywhere in England and Wales.

## LOCATION OF SERVICE USERS

The first principle of placing any service user on the scheme is to ensure closeness to home in order to maintain continuity of offender management, supervision planning, family and community ties etc. The large majority of service users are able to be housed within their home probation area. There will be a proportion of service users, however, for whom it is necessary and appropriate for them to be located away from the home area due most commonly to offending related risks. There will also be service users who are located away from the home area due to unavailability of accommodation.

For those cases with an offender manager, proposed placement on the scheme should involve consultation by the prison (HDC) or by the bail information officer (bail) in all cases and close liaison with the Support Officer once on the scheme.

The configuration of ClearSprings accommodation has improved as the contractor approaches full provision of the initial bedspaces commissioned by the Regional Offender Manager/Director of Offender Management. As regions develop further growth the fit between bedspace location and offender origins will continue to improve.

Women have benefited proportionately more than men from the scheme to date with a higher proportion of referrals and a higher success rate in gaining places than for men. Attention is being paid to the location of accommodation for women but there is a smaller number of properties than for men and the difficulties in meeting the closeness to home agenda are therefore amplified.

For service users who are accommodated away from the home area transfer of supervision is in accordance with PC 07/2007.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Information about this provision is available from the following sources:

<b>Probation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Probation Circular 33/2007</li> <li>○ EPIC / Service Delivery / Bail Accommodation</li> </ul>
<b>ClearSprings Management Ltd</b>	<p>Tel. 0845 273 2225</p> <p>Email. <a href="mailto:bass@clearsprings.co.uk">bass@clearsprings.co.uk</a></p>

**HMCS**

- HMCS intranet site:
  - Courtwork
    - General Courts work
    - Guidance and Manuals / Scheme for good bail candidates with accommodation
  - Bench Handbook

**Prisons**

- PSI 29/2007
- HMPS intranet site

**NOMS HQ**

Email. [Sue.nickson3@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.nickson3@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

**MOJ Press Office**

020 7210 8668

**Out of office hours**

07659 191662

**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

Further Briefings like this one will be produced as necessary and posted on the Epic Intranet <http://npsintranet.probation.gsi.gov.uk/index.htm> (navigate from Home>News & Comms>Newsletters>Briefings) and the National Probation Service website at: [www.probation.justice.gov.uk](http://www.probation.justice.gov.uk) (navigate from Home>News and Updates>Briefings)

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