

# LONDON ASSEMBLY

## Health Committee

### **London Assembly Health Committee review into mental health for offenders and ex-offenders in London**

The London Assembly Health Committee is conducting an investigation into the mental health needs of offenders and ex-offenders, as part of a wider investigation examining what the Mayor can do to support better mental health for all Londoners.

#### **Why are we looking at this issue?**

In recent years there has been a growing awareness that people in contact with the criminal justice system face significant health inequalities. Having poor mental health does not in itself make you more likely to offend. People with mental health problems are much more likely to be a victim of crime than a perpetrator. However, poorly treated mental health is an overwhelming factor in the offender population. According to Public Health England, almost two thirds of male prisoners have a diagnosed personality disorder, while the rates of depression and anxiety for both prisoners and those on probation are several times higher than the general population.

The health, economic and social inequalities faced by the population in contact with the criminal justice system are stark and striking. According to the Revolving Doors Agency, “while evidence is of variable quality, the picture that emerges is one of a population characterised by high levels of health needs, housing problems, not being in employment, training or education, and psychological trauma.”

We are interested in what can be done to support people with mental health issues who have been in contact with the criminal justice system, either in prison, on probation, and especially upon release into the community. In particular, we seek views on how the Mayor can improve access to mental health support for this group, and how he can support mental wellbeing for ex-offenders through his wider policy brief.

#### **How you can help us**

We are inviting organisations and individuals to submit views and information to the committee, giving you the opportunity to influence our work. In turn, we will draw conclusions and make recommendations to the Mayor with a view to influencing his policy development in this area.

We would welcome your views on the following key questions to help inform our work. And do feel free to add any further information that you think the committee should consider in relation to this topic. We also encourage you to pass this request on to anyone who might be interested in sharing their experiences.

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1. What are the main mental health challenges faced by prisoners and ex-offenders in London?
2. What measures are in place to prevent people with mental health needs entering the criminal justice system and how are they supported through prison, probation and release? Are these measures sufficient?
3. Which groups within the offender population are specifically at-risk of developing mental health problems?
4. What steps could mental health service providers take to make their services more accessible for ex-offenders?
5. How effective are programmes that aim to support continuity of mental health support when people have returned to their communities following prison?
6. How do issues such as housing and unemployment affect the mental wellbeing of offenders and ex-offenders?
7. What examples of good practice are there in London and further afield?
8. What can the Mayor and the London Assembly do to support better mental health for this group?

We will publish written submissions online unless they are marked as confidential or there is a legal reason for non-publication. We may be required to release a copy of your submission under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, even if it has been marked as confidential. In any event we will ensure that information or data that could identify particular individuals and service users will be removed before publication.

We would be grateful if you could reply by email to Lucy Brant, the officer supporting this investigation, either by email (preferable) to [healthcommittee@london.gov.uk](mailto:healthcommittee@london.gov.uk) or by post to Greater London Authority, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London, SE1 2AA. We would be pleased to receive your submission by **31 May 2017**.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Onkar Sahota AM** Chair of the Health Committee