



Report to the Police and Crime Panel

Report title: RESTART Thames Valley

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Purpose of the report: At the request of the PCP

Recommendations: For noting only

1. Executive Summary

This report is an update on the work of RESTART Thames Valley, a year-long pilot programme that started in May 2022 and which focuses on supporting people leaving prison, including women and those on short-term sentences. This update is very much a working brief that encompasses an overview of the current key issues and challenges of this programme.

2. Background

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner secured £613,800 from the second round of the Ministry of Justice Local Leadership and Integration Fund (Prison Leavers Project) to work with partners across the region to develop solutions to key challenges faced by people released from prison. Such challenges include the provision of and access to support, access to accommodation and work opportunities and engagement with numerous service providers.

The 12-month pilot programme will support specific groups, including women and people on short-term sentences, and incorporates a number of elements such as:

- Pathway Navigation and Advocacy workers providing dedicated support to improve access to accommodation and work opportunities. This could include a meet-at-gate service encompassing transport, accompaniment, advocacy, referral and smoother access to services.
- Training for frontline staff across partner organisations on trauma-informed care and gender-informed support needs.
- Extending the capability of an existing in-prison Virtual Campus IT solution, provided by Meganexus, out into the community. This will enable services to engage with prison leavers digitally, before release and support a “tell us once” approach. Interventions such as mentoring, training, job readiness and employment opportunities can begin before release and carry through into the community post-release.
- Providing better access to place-based community interest groups (e.g. DIY, sports, gardening, craft, parenting), where services co-locate to support integration with family and the community.

Service User Forums will take place throughout the programme so that lived experience continues to inform delivery and decision-making.



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The pilot will run from May 2022 to April 2023 with multiple partners involved including the Probation Service, those in the Local Criminal Justice Board and a host of experienced voluntary and community organisations covering the force area. Leading the delivery are Aspire Oxford, Browns Community Service CIC, Connection Support, Parents and Children Together (PACT) and Thames Valley Partnership.

3. Partnership briefing update – February 2023

Problem Statements

- 1) The system around a person leaving prison is like a lottery, not person-centred. Services lose time navigating barriers; very few successfully escalated, understood and removed. No information exists across the Thames Valley that brings together the whole system journey from the perspective of the person leaving custody; organisations generally see and monitor their part of the whole system.
- 2) People leaving prison are not afforded choice and control over their journey. Parts of the system have been designed for the convenience of the system and not the person, who has to navigate through the system and accessibility is a consistent issue e.g.:
 - a. Prison Leavers released on Friday afternoons often miss opening times for provision (e.g. local council, drug services, clinics etc.);
 - b. Prison Leavers cannot access technology-based solutions and are digitally disadvantaged;
 - c. Services are contracted only to serve Prison Leavers with a ‘local connection’;
- 3) There is often insufficient notice and information sharing between partners to prepare the best services for people leaving prison. Individuals say they need to re-tell their story to multiple providers, which can create (repeated) trauma and mistrust.

The Challenge

Provider Evidence:

- The charity allows clients to call 24/7/365 but other services are closed out-of-hours so it leaves a vacuum
- It is hard for many individuals to achieve a safe direct journey from prison into the community because they run a gauntlet of “entrepreneurs” and unhelpful distractions between the prison gate and their Probation appointment
- We are unable to offer support for prison leavers without a local connection
- Individuals do not want to engage with lots of people to receive the support they need. If the support is not “fluid”, and no relationship has been built beforehand, the cycle of reoffending can often occur
- Geographical and organisational boundaries create walls where information and learning do not naturally pass through.

Individual Feedback:



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- Almost all those asked said that didn't receive enough information or support prior to release and they felt "done to" and disempowered
- Most expressed a desire to engage with "normal" community activity so they could stop identifying as an 'ex-offender'
- Having to repeatedly retell their story ruined trust or belief that various organisations were talking to each other (women specifically cited re-traumatisation)
- Women expressed isolation and needed a single named worker to connect with/trust

Partnerships across Thames Valley

Thames Valley benefits from a long-standing Reducing Re-offending (RR) Group, with sub-groups covering health, accommodation and women's provision, chaired by the Head of Operations for Probation (South Central). The group, which will provide the pilot oversight, reports to the Local Criminal Justice Board, which will provide governance and scrutiny, and is chaired by the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC). The RR Group will also be the basis for a Thames Valley Alliance which, alongside monthly system-learning events, will be the home of cross-system collaboration for the lifetime of the project, and beyond.

An Executive Board for the project consists of:

- The Police & Crime Commissioner, Thames Valley
- The Regional Director for Probation, South Central
- The Head of Operations for Probation, South Central
- The Prison Group Director for the South Central region
- The Governor of Bullingdon Prison
- The Director of Bronzefield Prison
- The Senior Commissioning Manager for NHSE South East (for NHS Reconnect)

This Board will meet every other month and will be responsible for receiving information from the Restart Team, individuals and groups with lived experience, partners and services who interact with the Restart team and more. This information will relate to barriers and escalations for the Exec Board to problem solve and identify resolutions / options.

Delivery Roles

- The Probation Service, being in charge of the core commissioned service, will lead on entry/referral routes into the pilot through the existing resettlement process.
- The Office of the PCC will lead on Project Management, ensuring due diligence/transparency of process. They will also act as the decision maker for the allocation of demand from referring partners into the Restart Team.
- Our core delivery partners (Aspire, Browns, Connection Support, PACT, Thames Valley Partnership) will host the ten Restart Team members, offering meet at gate, transport, accompaniment, advocacy, referral, smoother access to services and other issues raised through service user input.



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- The Restart Team will monitor progress through shared Outcome Stars and be responsible for ensuring the workers attend the monthly whole-system learning events, acting as one unified team.
- Adding to the existing MoJ contracted in-prison “Virtual Campus”, Meganexus will extend the capability out into the community through the functionality of “Assess, Plan, Track” (APT). This will act as a shared information case-monitoring tool where partners can share information and with the person leaving prison.
- The wider partnership consisting of existing voluntary sector service providers, councils, housing providers, drug treatment services, DWP, health providers etc. will be offered funded training and take their place in the TV Partnership Alliance to enhance the whole system approach.

Delivery (from Oct 2022)

A. Training & Whole System Learning

- Commission training for up to 500 front-line staff across both LLIF-funded and non-funded partners on Trauma Informed Care/Psychologically Informed Environments, and gender-informed support needs, establishing a minimum standard of knowledge and capability, focusing on safety, trust, choice & empowerment
- Provide Outcome Star training and accreditation to the Restart Team and their host organisations to reduce unnecessary re-assessment from each organisation (the same outcome star to be shared across partners and “owned” by the service user rather than the service providers).
- The Restart Team will come together monthly with representatives from the wider partnership to share learning, raise and problem-solve identified systemic barriers. This establishes a “team-around-a-system” approach, information transparency and a collaborative culture.

B. Transition from Custody to Community (New Innovation)

- Possibly a national first, extending the capability of the in-prison Virtual Campus into the community through the functionality of “Assess, Plan, Track” (APT) as an extension of the existing MoJ contract with Meganexus. Individuals leaving custody will be afforded a consent-based approach to sharing their information with services and providers. Providers will “advertise” their support offers (mentoring, training, floating support, job readiness and employment opportunities) on APT and service users can choose when and with whom to engage, increasing their likely desire to engage and their feelings of self-worth and respect.
- Dedicated “key worker” relationships are developed through referral to the Restart Team through an existing in-reach approach, supported by the prisons, so that the cohort can develop trusted and tested relationships as early pre-release as possible (target 6 weeks but can be as early as 12 weeks).
- To respond to the charity-sector-identified barrier of costs of escorting service users to appointments (made worse during covid), or enabling them to afford journeys on top of the one-way journey from custody, a “safe journey” fund will ensure that delays in finance do not risk services user safety, and will add value to



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the existing core commissioned service provision. Restart Team members will offer to meet at gate, transport, accompaniment, advocacy, referral etc.

- Service User forums to take place throughout the delivery phase ensuring continuous learning and feedback that genuinely influences delivery and decision-making. They will be invited to form a core part of the content for the Exec Board meetings.

C. Smoother access to services

- Restart Team will, on a rota, provide capacity on Saturdays so that individuals are not left unsupported in their most vulnerable first 24 hours
- Workers are not aligned to the confines of any one location; to address known gaps and remove “exclusion by postcode ineligibility”. It also allows for responsive capacity according to changing demands.
- MoJ-funded delivery alongside existing delivery will come together in four (funded) weekly community drop-in locations where 87% of all people are released to - North Bucks (27%), Oxford (24%), Reading (20%), Slough (16%).

Summary of pilot actions and impact

Inputs & Activities	Outcomes (Short/Med)	Impacts
Restart Team trained in Trauma- & gender-informed support Service user voice encouraged throughout Restart Team rota to provide 1/3 rd capacity to minimise the impact of Friday releases	Better access to accommodation, work opportunities. Support that is wanted and valued.	Stable outcomes that are more resilient Directly reduce the negative impact of Friday releases
APT account on a consent basis, allowing them to express needs/hopes/goals. Providers to push information and service offerings pre-release	Individuals supported to build their social capital through increased sight and ownership of their journey Individuals have choice and control over their journey.	Working towards shared single version of the truth. Breaking down silo working. Individuals supported to believe in their ability to influence their own future and achievements
Restart Team will offer meet at gate, transport, accompaniment, advocacy, referral, smoother access to services	Increased successful engagement in statutory provision/appointments	Reduced re-offending
Place-based community interest groups (e.g. DIY, sports, gardening, craft, parenting), where	Positive social networks in community-based locations rather than	Service users better able/ motivated to



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services co-locate to support integration with family, community	enforcement-linked locations.	maintain pro-social identity
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4. Next Steps

The pilot runs from May 2022 to end of April 2023 and the Executive Board agreed in January 2023 to extend the pilot for a further 12 months (to end of April 2024), jointly funded by the PCC and the Director of Probation, South Central.

The headcount assigned to frontline delivery for 2023-24 will adjust to align with the revised levels of joint funding available. A procurement exercise to allocate delivery partners to the extended pilot period concluded in February 2023 the outcome of which will be published in early March 2023.

5. Conclusion

The RESTART Thames Valley pilot encountered a significant initial delay in the launch of frontline delivery owing to circumstances outside of the OPCC's control. The additional pilot extension period agreed by the PCC and Director of Probation, South Central will allow the original successful bid proposal to be robustly tested, providing a comprehensive evidence base for a future commissioning model.

The Ministry of Justice Local Leadership and Integration Fund have assigned a national evaluator for their Prison Leavers Project (TONIC, University of Kent) who will continue to evaluate RESTART delivery until this phase of funded delivery concludes in April 2023. Concurrently a University of Oxford DPhil Sociology candidate is conducting research at a regional Thames Valley level and will be publishing a dissertation on RESTART delivery.