

Peer support for adult social care in prisons in England and Wales

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WHY IS THIS STUDY NEEDED?

- More adults in prison need social care support.
- This is provided by professionals, and/or peers

WHAT ARE PEER SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE?



SERVICES WHERE PRISONERS ('BUDDIES') PROVIDE **NON-PERSONAL SOCIAL CARE SUPPORT TO OTHER PRISONERS**

- Peer support services are not mandated but have been proposed as a solution to support social care provision in prisons, given a constrained prison environment and stretched resources.
- There has been little research evaluating the effectiveness, implementation, and experience of peer supported social care, and how best to evaluate these services..

WHAT DID WE AIM TO DO?

To evaluate peer support schemes for adult social care in prisons in England and Wales



Implementation



Experience of staff, buddies, recipients



Benefits and risks



How best to measure impact and cost

HOW DID WE DO IT?

A rapid mixed-methods multi-site study of implementation and experience.

Workshop
(13 stakeholders)

71 interviews

- 7 National leads
- 20 Prison leads (18 prisons)
- 7 Staff (5 prisons)
- 18 Buddies (4 prisons)
- 19 Recipients (5 prisons)

Cost survey
(10 prisons)

WHAT DID WE FIND?

IMPLEMENTATION

- Buddies in place in many prisons – filling gap in social care.
- Differences in peer support models (*e.g. formal/informal, leadership, governance*), due to differing prisoner, staff, prison and service factors.
- Some good practice identified.
- Areas for improvement e.g. formal training needs for staff and buddies.

STAFF, BUDDY AND RECIPIENT EXPERIENCE

- Buddy scheme important and valued by staff, peers and recipients.
- Some barriers e.g. low pay for buddies, lack of training (buddies/staff), prison regime restrictions (e.g. allowed out of cell between certain hours).
- In prisons without buddy schemes, prisoners provide informal support.

BENEFITS AND RISKS

- Potential for wide reaching benefits (recipient independence, buddy skills development, prison staff time, supporting safeguarding).
- Several potential risks, e.g. safeguarding risks to recipients & buddies, risks of exploitation of buddies in terms of hours, workload and role parameters.

EFFECTIVENESS AND COST

- It may be feasible to use some existing data to infer the impact of these schemes.
- However, there are major gaps in the data, particularly for measuring the direct impact on prisoners themselves.
- Cost data is limited and infrequently collected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Produce & pilot national guidance for peer supported social care

2. We have developed an evaluation guide that outlines operational, cost and outcome data that needs to be collected to enable regular monitoring and/or evaluation in future.

3. Responsibility for monitoring peer supported social care could belong to HMIP in their role of inspectors.

4. For service implementation and mitigation of risks, we recommend:



Dedicated roles



Appropriate funding



Collaboration between organisations



Formalisation (employment processes, training and supervision)

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- Peer support services for social care are widely used in prisons in England and Wales.
- Standardisation of services is needed to ensure they are sufficiently resources and appropriately monitored to mitigate against risks.
- Future research could pilot standards and routine monitoring plans in a proportion of prisons, to explore and determine feasibility of data collection and implementation of recommendations.

