

HMYOI Cookham Wood pilot to address experiences of victimisation

Background

There is growing awareness of the victim/offender overlap. A recent study by Middlesex University found that 50% of young offenders under supervision by the Youth Offending Service have been victims of crime¹. Young offenders' experiences of victimisation may contribute to their offending behaviour. Addressing victimisation is therefore important to reduce reoffending and ensure young people get the right support.

In April 2019, the Justice Secretary chaired a discussion on the effectiveness of the criminal justice system as part of the Prime Minister's Serious Youth Violence summit. The discussion was aimed at improving join-up across the criminal justice system to deliver innovative approaches that reduce reoffending, recognising that many young people in custody have also been victims of crime. The Government took an action to pilot specialist training for staff at YOIs to support young people in custody who have previously been victims of serious violence and help direct them to support services.

Public Health England published the Collaborative approaches to preventing offending and re-offending in children (CAPRICORN) in 2019. This identifies that young people entering YOIs often have poor literacy and numeracy skills, those with learning difficulties or neuro-disabilities are over-represented, and that a high number of young people have experienced complex trauma.

The MoJ is working in collaboration with MOPAC and Kent PCC to pilot a service in HMYOI Cookham Wood which addresses young offenders' past experiences of victimisation.

In May 2021, MOPAC, MoJ and Kent PCC visited Cookham Wood to discuss the pilot with the Head of Safeguarding, Michael Lamb. He was keen for a pilot which continued to support young people through-the-gate to enhance resettlement and reduce reoffending.

HMYOI Cookham Wood

HMYOI Cookham Wood is located in Kent and holds up to 188 boys between the ages of 15-18. The YOI receives young people from southern England and East Anglia but a large proportion of its boys are from London. Between October 2019 and September 2020 there was an average of 138 boys in Cookham Wood. 70% were on remand, or serving a detention training order (DTO), 49% were from London and Kent. The most common offences for Londoners were violence/assaults, robbery, offensive weapons and murder².

The average number of this cohort transitioning to the community each month is 16.

Impact of Covid-19

Cookham Wood YOI is already operating in exceptional delivery modules, and this pilot will form part of this. We will monitor the situation and ensure there is flexibility built into the pilot project, in terms of how through the gate support is offered. We will work closely with Cookham Wood to mitigate any risks to provision.

Pilot proposal

Providing a through-the-gate service to prepare and support young people to access victim interventions in custody and upon release

The pilot would provide a through-the-gate service to prepare young people to engage with support in custody and continue to support them to engage with services post-release. The pilot would run for at least a year, with a decision taken in spring 2022 on whether to extend for a further 6-12 months. The objective of the pilot is to address young offenders' victimisation in order to reduce reoffending.

Through-the-gate service

Young people often need support to get them ready to engage with interventions. This can be done by building a trusting relationship with the young person and understanding their past experiences of trauma. The YJB trialled an approach to prepare prolific young offenders in Welsh YOTs to engage with support, called Enhanced Case Management, which takes a psychology-led approach to understanding a young person's trauma and uses a 'Trauma Recovery Model' to prepare the young person to access interventions.

The pilot would provide a trauma-informed through-the-gate service, in the form of a coach or mentor, to prepare young people identified as victims to engage with psychologist support in custody and continue to support them to engage with services upon release. The through-the-gate service would refer the young people to existing victim support services in London and Kent. The through-the-gate coach/mentors would be predominantly based in the YOI but would also work with young people post-release in London/Kent.

Pilot cohort

The pilot will work with young people who have suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm, as a result of a criminal offence, or who are relatives of someone whose death was directly caused by a criminal offence. This definition is taken from the Government's Victims Code of Practice.

In terms of sentence type, the pilot will work with young people serving Detention and Training Orders (DTOs); young people on remand *and young people serving longer sentences which will see them serve no more than 1 year in the adult estate*. (Those serving long sentences will be transferred to the adult estate where support to address victimisation may not be continued so the pilot would not work with those on long-term sentences who are likely to be transferred to the adult estate). Targeting those on DTOs will enable us to work with the young people upon return to the community to support their

resettlement. The pilot would also work with young males remanded into custody, as this cohort are often overlooked. Support for this cohort is usually limited given the uncertainty over whether they will remain in custody. Many of these young males will return to the community and continuity of support will facilitate greater resettlement opportunities.

63 males in Cookham Wood are serving DTOs (39%), with the remaining 61% remanded into custody or serving long-term sentences.

Budget

£90,000 for 3x through the gate mentors (2 for London and 1 for Kent) for one year
Aim to start in September 2021

Further information

We aim to send out a tender for this work in early July, with the contract being awarded to the successful organisation in August.

Any further questions, please email Hannah.johns@mopac.london.gov.uk