



Sex Offenders in South Yorkshire

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1. Context

The overall aim of the National Offender Management Service Co-financing Organisation (NOMS CFO) programme is to improve offender education, training & employment opportunities and increase access to existing resettlement provision. Rather than deliver education and training programmes directly, the NOMS CFO Programme is designed to motivate participants and remove barriers that prevent them from progressing into mainstream provision delivered by other agencies such as Jobcentre Plus employment services, Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) funded provision or further education/training. Not all these services are directed specifically at offenders and NOMS CFO links into services in prison/community for offenders and those available to everyone. Effective engagement with offenders in custody or in the community will also more adequately prepare them for employment, training, education and other mainstream activities. The NOMS CFO provision enhances existing activity within prisons and the community by identifying the gaps in delivery for the harder to help groups, which includes prisoners serving short term sentences. NOMS CFO aims to complement existing delivery activity by bridging the service gaps experienced by offenders.

The Prime Provider for the South Yorkshire NOMS CFO region is South Yorkshire Probation Trust. South Yorkshire is a much smaller CFO region financially compared to that of the other regions; as a consequence, the contract targets and numbers are smaller. Despite this, South Yorkshire Probation Trust offer a high quality service for rehabilitating offenders; winning an award in 2009 for their standard provision. South Yorkshire Probation Trust aimed to use the current CFO programme to develop their services so that it can extend the help it offers to more offender groups. South Yorkshire Probation Trust rehabilitates offenders by offering a person-centred approach for getting offenders back into employment and investing in new social enterprises in the local area that can continually provide placements for offenders exclusively. South Yorkshire are using the current programme, running from January 2011 to December 2014, to extend their provision to hard-to-help groups; including sex offenders. Delivery of the current programme formally started in June 2011; the period up until then was used to source referrals.

Sex offenders were chosen as the targeted hard-to-help sub group for the region of South Yorkshire due to the lack of statutory provision for this group. This sub group presents a particular challenge due to their complex array of barriers; the nature of their offence, the wider public perception and the possible consequences of people finding out about the offence are just some of the specific barriers to sex offenders. The current South Yorkshire programme helps sex offenders by offering placements with the various local social enterprises and promoting the employability of participants by offering a bespoke service that presents the participant as a learner; as opposed to just being an offender. It should be noted that South Yorkshire does not offer a specific sub-project for sex offenders; instead sex offenders are incorporated into the caseload of the 4 Case Managers. South Yorkshire



Probation Trust is targeting 10% of target participant group to be sex offenders; this equates to 48 sex offender participants.

The main findings of the report will focus on the following key research aims:-

1. To explore the implementation and delivery of the sub project within the NOMS Co-Financing programme – to show good practice, areas of development and lessons learned.
2. To explore differences in resettlement needs and how they have been addressed by the provider – looking at activities carried out and outcomes achieved.

2. Approach

The methodology of this report is designed to provide a balanced commentary on the overall implementation, delivery and sustainability of the project; analysing how impactful the support offered is, what is working effectively as well as where are the areas for development, and finally what are the long term prospects of the project. The evaluation consists of a series of qualitative interviews with selected people involved in the design, delivery and reception of the project supported by quantitative analysis of the sub group participant cohort taken from the Case Assessment and Tracking System (CATS) database.

Quantitative Data

The source of the quantitative data used in the report was the CATS database. It enabled a comparative analysis of the needs and outcomes of that of the target sub group cohort to that of the main offender cohort on the project in the CFO region of South Yorkshire. In the CATS data, one female offender from the sex offender sub group was removed so that a comparison could be made between two male-only cohorts. Further analysis was conducted to determine whether there was any statistical significance of the highlighted needs of the target sub group differed to that of the main cohort. These significance tests were carried out using Pearson's Chi-Squared test with Yate's Correction for Continuity.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was collected in the form of several semi-structured interviews, supplemented by questionnaires, with relevant parties. The interview with the Commissioning Manager from the Prime provider gave an overview into the development and implementation of the project. Interviews with the two Case Managers offered insight into the delivery and the support given. Finally, interviews with participants provided feedback on the project and the quality of the help provided. The nature of the interviews was dependant on the interviewee; influenced by their role and input to the project. Interviewees were made aware that they could stop the interview at any time and that the interview would last approximately 40 minutes. With regard to project participants, it was stressed that at no point would they need to discuss their offence.

In total, 5 interviews were conducted; with implementation management staff, delivery staff and sex offender participants all providing a viewpoint. The interview with the Commissioning Manager from South Yorkshire Probation Trust offered a perspective on the development



and implementation on the project; discussing the initial plans and direction, proposed targets and outcomes, the continuing development of the project and finally the future direction and sustainability. The interviews with the two Case Managers provided an insight in to engagement with and work that is provided to sex offender participants. The areas discussed during the interviews relating to the specific approach that the case workers had with regard to working with sex offenders, how the specific needs are identified and what support and services were made available. Finally, the interviews conducted with the two participants offered comment on the support given and their personal experience of the project. Interview questions revolved around the bespoke support that the participant had received, what their experiences were compared to their initial expectations of the project and what impact the support had on their lives.

In order to answer the set research questions, the interviews were analysed for recurring themes. The themes that were discovered will be reported on and discussed in full.

3. Results

This thematic report serves as an effective feedback mechanism to the provider, NOMS CFO and The European Social Fund (ESF) that explores the delivery of the provision and the impact on participants. The central issue of this report is to determine whether the project is contributing to the change that it was designed to make, and to examine those aspects of the project that are contributing to or hampering its success; do these lie in the design or the implementation process.

This section provides the results of the evaluation to date by answering the following two research aims:-

- To explore the implementation and delivery of the sub project within the NOMS Co-Financing programme – to show good practice, areas of development and lessons learned.
- To explore differences in resettlement needs and how they have been addressed by the provider – looking at activities carried out and outcomes achieved.

The themes that are discussed firstly are in relation to answering set research question one: To explore the implementation and delivery of the sub project within the NOMS Co-Financing programme – to show good practice, areas of development and lessons learned.

‘Lack of a specific sub group programme’ and ‘Inclusivity’

South Yorkshire Probation Trust deliberated extensively on whether to implement a specific sex offender sub-group programme alongside their main provision. However, it was eventually decided that having a specific sub-group project would not be beneficial to sex offenders. The Commissioning Manager discussed how South Yorkshire Probation Trust decided against a specific sub-group programme because it was thought that it would unnecessarily segregate sex offenders from perfectly suitable provision and would only serve to create additional stigma and barriers. The Commissioning Manager also described how the Prime Provider considered that the creation of a specific sub-project could possibly negatively impact on the confidence of a sex offender participant if they were to volunteer to join the project only to be diverted away to a selected part of the programme. Instead South



Yorkshire Probation Trust decided to incorporate sex offenders into the main provision and place the Case Managers in the local Impact Teams so that they would be able to effectively help sex offenders because specialist guidance from Offender Managers would be to hand. South Yorkshire decided instead to promote the idea of 'inclusivity' with regards to their sub-group to avoid causing any additional barriers to employment.

South Yorkshire Probation Trust have tried extensively, where possible and appropriate, to include sex offenders in mainstream provision. The Commissioning Manager explained how funds have been used to source mainstream provision for participants including, where appropriate and safe to do so, sex offender participants. South Yorkshire Probation Trust has learnt through the course of this project that specialist provision sometimes does not adequately prepare someone for entering employment so instead have diverted resources to locating statutory provision. Although this is difficult in many instances, Case Managers have managed to oblige this, finding suitable mainstream education, training and employment opportunities for sex offender participants. For example, one Case Manager successfully placed a participant on a mainstream mechanics course. Another managed to get a participant into a mainstream college even though the college was extremely reluctant to enrol him. As a result of their efforts, South Yorkshire Probation Trust has managed to establish high quality links with outside organisations that can be utilised continuously to provide safe and suitable prospects for their sub-group participants; it is hoped that these links can be maintained after the duration of the project.

'Risk, Restriction and Effective Risk Management'

One aspect that is particularly pertinent to sex offenders is the concept of risk. With the associated risk comes restriction which is again another challenge to finding suitable opportunities for sex offender participants. Participants may be restricted from specific locations as well as coming in to contact with certain groups. Foremost in South Yorkshire Probation Trust's consideration when placing a participant is what are the potential risks to the public and what are the potential risks to the participant themselves.

In order to ascertain the suitability of a placement with regards to a sex offender participant, South Yorkshire Probation Trust has an effective risk management strategy. Case Managers try to establish a balance between what the participants wants and what is realistically possible. At initial assessment, they will ask a participant what they are interested in and then look for suitable opportunities. When looking at job opportunities, a Case Worker will sort through explaining to them what is appropriate and what is not with regards to their risk and restrictions. From there, foundations are made and the participant can move from there. Both Case Managers stated that the first thing they do with regards to a case is thoroughly examine the client's risk assessment. Case Managers have access to several databases that outline the risk that client's pose and which are continuously updated. Then with input from the participant, they can offer an individual approach which considers the client's aims whilst effectively balancing the risk. By doing it in this format, a compromise can be made that satisfies all aspects. Case Managers also state that they must maintain a good working knowledge of what employment sectors are best to source opportunities from. They must sustain knowledge of what sectors are willing to accept offenders in general and which present the lowest risk so that sex offenders can be placed more easily. It is this information



combined with effective risk awareness that allows Case Managers to offer a bespoke approach that satisfies both the needs of the client and the risk associated.

‘Perception and the subsequent exclusion from opportunities’

One of the major issues with placing sex offender participants is the massive stigma attached to a sex offence and the subsequent perception that employers and the wider public have of sex offenders. The Commissioning Managers and both Case Workers discussed how one of the biggest challenges has been persuading employers to take a sex offender participant. One Case Worker explained that they had an instance where a participant was called for interview, had disclosed a sex offence and the employer had terminated the interview instantly telling the participant to leave. Both Case Managers also discussed how self-perception is also a problem for sex offender participants impacting on self-esteem and confidence. Although they desire employment they feel that they will be disregarded because of their offence. The two participants that were interviewed expressed similar fears. One stated that due to his age and offence, he felt invisible to employers. The other stated that he thought that employers would only see his offence and not him as an individual. The perception of sex offenders by employers and the perception that sex offenders have of themselves have been major barriers to placing sex offender participants. However South Yorkshire Probation Trust has made excellent progress in dealing with this issue.

Despite not having a specific sex offender sub-group programme, South Yorkshire Probation Trust have managed to offer some form of bespoke, individual service to sex offender participants. This derives from the lesson learnt that participants should be viewed as learners rather than offenders. One of the interviewed participants commented as much. He stated that he felt that the staff on the project saw him for who he was. This participant had gained a voluntary placement with one of South Yorkshire Probation Trust’s various social enterprises. The Commissioning Manager stated that these social enterprises were invaluable as they offer a place where sex offenders can be placed without the fear of rejection. This subsequently boosts self-esteem and confidence allowing the participant to function normally and gain some stability. With regards to statutory provision, sex offender participants have been placed successfully despite initial reluctance. In the case where the sex offender participant was placed with a mainstream college, the Police were asked to consult with the college to explain that he could be managed effectively; subsequently the college were satisfied and the participant was enrolled at the college. It is instances like this that give sex offenders the chance to prove that they are not what people initially perceive them to be and therefore the perception of them can change. One Case Manager stated that she hoped that one of the lasting legacies of this project was that outside organisations had the confidence and the processes to consider taking on sex offenders. By continuing to push for opportunities like this, South Yorkshire Probation Trust can challenge existing perception of sex offenders among outside organisations.

‘Managing Expectations’

One of the most difficult aspects with regards to working with sex offenders has been management of the participant’s expectation of the project. The Commissioning Manager discussed how it has been found through the course of the project, that some sex offenders have come from affluent backgrounds, often being very well-educated, and that South



Yorkshire Probation Trust has struggled to manage the expectations of these participants because it is more difficult to source meaningful opportunities. Case Managers have to negotiate and compromise with these offenders; explaining why it is unlikely that they will be able to achieve a similar role to what they had previously. Getting the offenders to understand and accept this and then still finding suitable placements has been difficult. The Commissioning Manager noted though that the social enterprises that South Yorkshire Probation Trust has links with have been extremely helpful in this matter. They have managed to offer opportunities that retain a sense of responsibility and purpose for participants. It is due to these social enterprises that they have been effectively able to offer well-educated offenders meaningful opportunities instead of: "...an emotionally distressing route of pushing against the tide..."

There are still instances of problems with expectation management. One participant that was spoken to explained that his experience of the project had not met his expectations at all. This participant has been on the project for a substantial period of time and felt he had not gained anything towards what he wanted to achieve. He had a particularly poor opinion of the project but was grateful for what help had been offered. The participant has tried for several jobs but been unsuccessful at being selected; he states this is due to his age. However, he does have a voluntary placement that has potential. But the combination of his expectations and the length of time spent without achieving his aims means that he has not had a good experience of the project. The problem appeared to stem from his understanding what the project offered. He described how, when he first joined, he expected that the Case Manager would have in place a list of organisations that he could contact in order to get full-time employment and that all he would need to do would be to pick which ones he was interested in and send his C.V to them. On a related note, when both participants were asked what their understanding of the project was they both replied that they did not know much at all about what was available to them. Inferences cannot be made from such a small sample however possible questions can be raised over participant knowledge about what the project offers and the quality of communication supplied to participants.

'Implementation and Delivery'

There are some issues with operational delivery though South Yorkshire Probation Trust has made steps to address these. The Commissioning Manager described how it was discovered during the course of the project that cases in custody could not be managed effectively with what they had allocated to it. In order to resolve this, a Case Manager was assigned solely to custody cases so that provision for these cases would be much more appropriate. The Commissioning Manager also discussed the provision in general and how if the project was re-done, funds would have been used more to source established outside provision rather than specialist opportunities. This fits more in line with South Yorkshire Probation Trust viewing a participant as a learner so therefore should have access to established mainstream opportunities.

The Case Managers have also experienced difficulties during the course of the project. One has been finding it difficult to source mainstream provision in their assigned area; often having to send participants to other towns and cities for opportunities. However, Trust funds will be increasingly used to source local placements. Another Case Managers has been assigned to a large area and is struggling to cover it all; saying that often that they do not get



to meet with potential participants due to work load. The Case Worker also mentioned about developing links with outside job agencies and advising them in order to be able to better help offenders including sex offenders; saying that in many instances sex offenders are dismissed as too difficult by outside job agencies. So if links were established in order to provide the agencies with better risk awareness and suitable training then it would be more beneficial for sex offenders as potential job opportunities could be supplied to them. This is in line with what one participant was expecting with regards to the project.

The next set of themes are pertinent to answering set research question two: To explore differences in resettlement needs and how they have been addressed – looking at activities carried out and outcomes achieved.

The below table shows the identified resettlement needs specific to the sex offender subgroup cohort compared to the main cohort for the South Yorkshire programme. The below statistics and all following statistics are accurate as of October 2013.

Table 1: A table to show resettlement needs of Sex Offenders compared to the Main Cohort. (n = 32; main cohort = 316.)

Resettlement Need	Sex Offender Participants			Main Cohort		
	Has Need	No Need	Percentage with Need	Has Need	No Need	Percentage with Need
Alcohol	8	24	25%	113	203	36%
Attitude & Life Skills	22	10	69%	239	77	76%
Drugs	3	29	9%	165	151	52%
Education	30	2	94%	308	8	97%
Employment & Training	32	0	100%	316	0	100%
Financial Status	9	23	28%	148	168	47%
Health	13	19	41%	99	217	31%
Housing	11	21	34%	124	192	39%
Relationships	8	24	25%	119	197	38%

*Most prevalent resettlement needs are highlighted

As the table shows, the major resettlement needs for sex offenders are: Attitude and Life Skills, Education and Employment and Training. It should also be noted that the CATS data showed a higher average age for sex offender participants compared to the main cohort. The mean age of sex offender participants starting on the project was 38; for the main cohort the mean age was 30. This increased age may explain why there are increased Health needs for the sex offender participants compared to the rest of the main cohort. Using Pearson's Chi-Square significance test with Yate's Correction for Continuity it was found that there was no significant difference between the resettlement needs of sex offenders compared to the main cohort; there was one significant finding for drugs in that sex offenders were approximately 10 times less likely to have a drugs resettlement need. The following themes discuss how South Yorkshire Probation Trust is working to remove major barriers that sex offenders have.



'Employability'

South Yorkshire Probation Trust has continually tried to promote the employability of all participants on the project. Case Managers expressed that they accentuated the potential in participants; focusing on previous employment experience, any training they have undertaken and the transferable skills they have. In order to maximise the employability aspect of participants, South Yorkshire Probation Trust offer help with C.V. writing and completing job applications, assistance with job searches and tips for participants who have secured interviews. This is part of the bespoke service that the Case Managers offer where they will compromise with a participant on what is realistic for them, find suitable employment vacancies and then provide assistance with applying for selected opportunities. This help is especially useful when considering the idea that sex offender participants are of an older age. One Case Manager noted that being of an older age was a barrier in itself to acquiring a job but combine this with a conviction for a sexual offence and it becomes extremely difficult. This is where such a tailored approach to looking for work is useful as the Case Manager can provide guidance in all aspects of applying for vacancies. This is reflective in the soft outcomes claimed as according to the CATS database. 41% of sex offender participants received help with applying for a job; being aided during the process of completing a job application or assistance with the creation and/or development of a C.V. 59% of sex offender participants received an introduction in to job search; learning how to locate and source suitable job vacancies. Finally, 56% of sex offender participants managed to secure an interview in some capacity. One participant that was interviewed had received help with enhancing his C.V; stating that it had changed his C.V for the better and that he was grateful for the help.

'Disclosure'

One of the most difficult things for an offender who is looking for work is to disclose their offence at interview; particularly when it is a sex offence. All interviewees discussed the topic of disclosure, Case Managers and participants in particular; discussing the impact it has on participants and the support that is offered to help ease a distressing prospect. Case Managers described how disclosure is most likely one of the biggest fears that participants have; and in particular sex offenders because of the potential consequence of wider people finding out about the offence. The participants gave their opinion on disclosing their offence. One participant said that he tries to avoid disclosure because he felt that his offence would put employers off. Case Managers are very intensive regarding preparing a client for disclosing an offence. Case Managers will decide the right time for disclosure work to be conducted and then slowly introduce the client to different aspects of it. To begin with Case Managers will outline what is involved in disclosure and why it is necessary. They will then explain the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and what it means for the participant. Case Managers will discuss the use of disclosure letters, when they should be given and will help the participant compile a disclosure letter of their own. According to the CATS database, 72% of sex offender participants on the project received help regarding disclosure. The two participants who were interviewed both received help with disclosing their offences. They



both stated that, after receiving help, they felt better about disclosure but in general were still anxious about the prospect.

‘Motivation’

One of the aspects that Case Managers have had to monitor closely is the participants’ level of motivation. As the Commissioning Manager discussed, it was vital to source meaningful opportunities to ensure that sex offender participants’ motivation and engagement remained stable. According to CATS data, upon starting the project, sex offender participants have red (31%) or amber (69%) levels of motivation, often being highly motivated to get back to work but pessimistic about their prospects. The Case Managers also testified to this effect, saying that sex offenders are usually very eager to return to full-time employment but are either too fearful of disclosing their offence or feel that they would never be considered. Case Managers make sure that motivation remains positive by having consistent contact with the participant, actively searching for opportunities and identifying where the participant is struggling and how best to help them. Case Managers are also able to recognise what additional needs the participant has and can prioritise what needs to be addressed first. 38% of sex offender participants had outcomes for signposting to other agencies, 53% had outcomes for transport advice given and 16% had outcomes for benefit and financial advice provided. One of the interviewed participants explained how the project had initially helped him find new accommodation before it was passed on to another agency and that he had also received help with regards to his marriage breakdown. Case Managers have been very accomplished in keeping sex offender participants engaged in the project. By identifying and prioritising their needs and then offering a service that is tailored to the participant, they can monitor how motivated the participant is and respond accordingly if motivation drops.

‘Confidence and well-being’

Speaking with the two Case Managers, one of the biggest issues is the participant’s confidence and the subsequent effect it can have on their well-being. Another reason for the constant and continuous contact between Case Manager and participant is to assess confidence levels. From there, Case Managers can find ways to build on the participant’s confidence; either in a one-to-one discussion setting, by finding them suitable opportunities or by successfully placing them. Both participants that were interviewed discussed their volunteering placements and the subsequent impact it had on their confidence and well-being. The first participant described how his voluntary placement had proved to be vital to his mental health; saying that without the voluntary work he would have fallen into depression. The other participant stated that he was extremely happy with his placement with one of the social enterprises. It had proven to be a positive distraction from his other issues and that he was happy to be learning new skills in an environment he had never experienced and was offering his own skills in return; he is also optimistic that his placement may turn to full-time employment. This participant explained how he was glad that people were seeing him for as an individual rather than a sex offender. This is in line with South Yorkshire Probation Trust’s viewpoint that project participants should be seen as individual learners rather than as offenders.



4. Conclusion

Despite not having a specific sub-group programme, South Yorkshire Probation Trust has managed to provide a bespoke service to sex offender participants. Not having a sub-group project negates some of the barriers such as the stigma surrounding sex offenders by ensuring that they have inclusivity by not segmenting them away from the main project. By placing sex offenders with social enterprises, they can regain a sense of responsibility and purpose; so that the participant gains some stability. By placing sex offender participants in mainstream services, it gives them a chance to prove that they are not what people perceive them to be and therefore that these perceptions can be changed. However finding suitable statutory provision has been difficult but South Yorkshire have, through the course of this project, looked to directing funds more to this. There is more scope for improvement with regards to this, as one Case Manager suggested, building links with outside job agencies so that suitable job opportunities could be provided to sex offender participants; subject to training in risk awareness and sourcing suitable vacancies. South Yorkshire Probation Trust also found that provision for cases in custody was not adequate with the resource allocated but have made progress to improving this. A new Case Worker has been appointed and tasked specifically with managing custody cases; also to give increased provision to sex offenders a Case Manager has been assigned to the Approved Premises in South Yorkshire and they will work with a considerable number of sex offenders. Finally, the participants that were spoken to as part of this project had little understanding of what the project was offering them. For one participant, misconceptions regarding what the project was offering him were made and as a result had a poor experience of the project because it was not remotely what he was expecting. However, overall South Yorkshire Probation Trust, by viewing participants as learners rather than offenders, has provided a service that has managed to extend statutory provision to sex offenders and has effectively mitigated some the specific barriers that they face by offering inclusive support.

5. Recommendations

Sex offenders pose a challenging sub-group contingent as they present a variety of complex needs as well as prominent restrictions. If a project of this nature was to be conducted again, the following recommendations are made with regard to implementation and delivery:

- It is imperative that risk assessment and management is of a high standard, as exhibited in the current project, so that both the public and the participant are not put in a vulnerable situation. Failure to manage information sensitively or an inappropriate placement could be potentially disastrous.
- Participants spoken to on the current project voiced that they desired to be viewed as individuals. Those involved on any subsequent project should respect this view and act accordingly; as South Yorkshire Probation Trust did on the current project by viewing participants as learners.
- Provision, where appropriate and safe to do so, should be delivered through mainstream services rather than a specialist group so as to avoid further segregation. However, this should also extend to outside job agencies so that suitable employment



opportunities can be sourced for sex offender participants; this would be subject to training in risk awareness.

- Clarity of what the project offers and what the participant expects should be made to participants to ensure that incorrect inferences are not made and to avoid subsequent negative experiences.
- Contact between participant and case workers should be frequent to monitor health and well-being as well as be used to develop trust. Case Workers need to be reasonable and realistic with participants so that their expectations can be managed effectively.
- Disclosure advice is a fundamental aspect of provision for sex offenders especially due to the heightened risk that they pose. Help with disclosure is extremely beneficial for the participants as it gives them the knowledge regarding what is required of them as well as giving them the confidence needed to carry it out. Disclosure advice should be a core aspect of any provision for sex offenders with all participants receiving it (if not already provided previously at some point).