

Prison Visits – HMP&YOI Chelmsford

Summary of Harris Review Visit

This summary reflects the experience and observation of the members of the Harris Review that visited the establishment on 8th of September 2014. They do not reflect changes that have happened since that date.

Background

Type of prison	HMP&YOI Chelmsford is a young offender institution holding sentenced, un-sentenced and remanded young male adults aged 18–21.
Occupational Capacity	745
Attendees	Richard Shepherd, Meng Aw Yong, Deborah Coles, Robyn Malan de Merindol
Details of relevant self-inflicted deaths	8 – in scope
	25th December 2007
	8th January 2008
	12th February 2008
	20th September 2008
	4th July 2011
	16th June 2012
	15th September 2012
	15th November 2013
Relevant health care provision	North Essex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Care UK
Date of Visit	8 th September 2014

Meet the following staff:

Governor, Head of Safer Custody and Administrator

- Prison benchmarked one year ago and vacancies are affecting the regime, the 18:30 – 19:30 unlock was no longer happening except for those prisoners going to the gym.
- There are barriers to recruitment and issues around retention of staff. There used to be 193 uniformed staff there are now 144 and they have 30 vacancies and they have some detached duty staff.
- Governor said there were positive staff/prisoner relationships and the staff were good, friendly, welcoming and resilient.
- The prison hold weekly complex needs meetings with a custodial manager for complex need ACCTs.
- The prison used to have 50 ACCTs open at any one time, they felt that high number was due to an over caution approach and numbers have been reduced and are now generally around 30 – 40.
- The demographic of young adults at Chelmsford has recently transformed as a result of changes to where the East London courts send their prisoners. This has resulted in the position where the number of BAME prisoners reduced. At the same time the number of prisoners who appear to pose a risk to themselves in terms of self-harm have increased.
- YAs and adults live on the same wing but do not share a cell. The prison believe that this has led to improved behaviour, with older prisoners acting as role models and it dilutes the pressure on YAs to behave 'hard'.
- It was mentioned that the Review may like to look at the document about the changes that took place at HMP Norwich before and after they mixed YAs and adults on the wings.
- When a prisoner moves to Chelmsford from the Juvenile estate the details of their social worker and parents will be logged. The prison may try and involve the parents if it is appropriate but that sometimes this is a fine balance.
- The prison has a safer custody helpline for people to phone in and leave a message, it is checked morning and afternoon Monday to Friday, the call is logged and followed up. At the weekends this is done by the duty manager.
- The prison has an information sharing protocol and sometimes Chaplaincy is used for difficult news.
- Following a self-inflicted death a liaison person will be appointed for all dealings with the Coroner's Court and there is a Regional initiative to support staff.
- Following a self-inflicted death the prison has an action plan, this is looked at in safer custody meetings (which are multi-disciplinary) and followed up.
- Prisoners spend a maximum of 10 hours out of cell each day.

- If someone is identified as 'shouting out' their IEP status will be reviewed and there will be a sanction. Dispursing YAs across the prison helps reduce this.
- A football pitch was seen and the panel were told it is used every day.
- The Governor was asked what she thought about safer cells. She said that no cell is completely safe. If someone attempts to take his life this goes on the daily briefing, an ACCT will be opened and reviewed.

Healthcare staff

- Primary healthcare in the prison is provided by Care UK. In-patient and mental health care provided by South East Partnership Trust.
- Good practice around complex needs is shared at Regional safer custody meetings.
- Prisoners have been known to self-harm or threaten to self harm because they don't want to move to Glen Parva because of the distance from home and perceived gang issues.
- Chelmsford is only be able to hold on to prisoners who are sentenced to less than 12 months, otherwise they will have to serve their sentence elsewhere and if it is their area for resettlement come back for the last 3 months.
- There is a multi-disciplinary meeting for all mental health referrals every day if needed.
- There are three psychiatric clinics per week and staff follow up if someone doesn't go to their appointment.
- Prisoners are encouraged to go to work and education for their well-being.
- The prison try to learn from all self-inflicted deaths and the officers are encouraged to refer prisoners they have concerns about to the mental health in-reach team.
- The prison feel there is a good partnership between health and security.
- The commissioning of different health care services and their respective remits is confusing and means it can be difficult to confirm who is responsible for what.
- The nurses just want to look after their patients and feel a holistic approach is what is needed and commissioning (of health care services) issues can distract from this. An example of this is who pays for 'constant supervision' when the most important thing is looking after the patient.
- Health care staff say that they will work beyond their hours in the interests of patient safety.

Listeners and Samaritans

- There was concern by staff that when the prison becomes a Resettlement prison there will be an issue with Listeners not being able to stay long enough to be trained in the first place and if they are already a Listener when they arrive, the time they are there will make it difficult to build the

relationships with the Samaritans and other Listeners on the team and get to know staff and prisoners.

- Chelmsford currently has 12 Listeners and they reported that they have a good relationship with the Safer Custody team.
- Listeners reported being well supported by staff from the Governor down, and said this was due to her leadership.
- All Listeners are engaged for a minimum of six months in the role, upon completion of their training to ensure consistency.
- They reported being released from their cell to see prisoners can often help to prevent a death in custody, although they acknowledged that sometimes it was problematic to get them out of cell.
- There is a Listener suite on every wing but they don't have a lavatory.
- Samaritans and Listeners agreed that they had an open and honest relationship and that this extended to staff. The Samaritans attended Safer Custody meetings.
- Samaritans visit the prison twice per month to support Listeners.
- Samaritans felt that ideally there should be an officer appointed to co-ordinate with them.
- The Listeners thought it would be a good thing for Listeners who were now ex-offenders to come back into the Prison system and help with Listener training.
- Listeners said that the role gave them great insight.

Quotes from Listeners:

"You can spot vulnerable people and follow up on the over the next few days."

"We tell each other to keep an eye out."

"There is no bell in the Listeners' suite."

"If a prisoner is high risk we go to the Listeners' suite."

"(*Despite asking*) someone may not be given a phone or see a Listener."

"If someone is on constant watch you may be able to see them."

"The prison phone the Samaritans if there has been a death in custody and all ACCTs are reviewed."¹

Offenders including YAs joined the above meeting

- Prisoners said that they had newspapers delivered to them at the prison and these may be paid for by family/friends.
- At the time of the visit there were no Listeners living on B or D wing.
- Older prisoners said that one of the things they didn't like about young adults was 'shouting out' and they thought that they had a good influence on stopping this by modelling appropriate behaviour.

¹ Subsequent to the visit the Prison clarified the position in that when there is a death in custody all ACCTs are reviewed as a matter of course.

- Suggested there should be a Domestic Violence Group, perhaps with a forensic psychologist, so that they could talk to each other about this issue.
- Older prisoners help you to learn to control your temper and listen.
- When you're in despair you need the guidance that Listeners can offer.

Quotes from prisoners:

"You can't trust anyone; everyone knows what's going on."

"They're slow to answer your cell bell."

"It takes a long time to get a healthcare appointment."

"Simple things wind you up."

"Not enough food, one hot meal per day during the week and two hot meals per day at the weekend."

"Being hungry puts you in a bad temper."

"Need better pay."

"Need a starter pack."

"In the first week you build up debt to other prisoners."

"When you're sharing, it's disturbing if cell mate is on an ACCT as they do observations during the night."

"You can self-harm to get things."

Quotes from prisoners about Listeners and Insiders

(Vulnerable prisoners are kept on F wing)

"They welcome you. Around for the first 2 – 3 days."

"Get you on your feet."

"Can spot a problem and give you guidance."

"Good to mix YOI with adults."

"You've got to keep 18 – 24 year olds busy."

Suggestions: Physically active, In-cell packs for hobbies/activities, Evening Gym, Keep your brain occupied.

"Young people have no respect, they find trouble [under peer pressure]."

"Insiders/staff trust each other they have a good dialogue."

Bullying? 'prison use SAFE anti-bullying policy, Insiders are careful to reporting bullying.'

"Staff are run ragged." "Fewer staff." "Stretched, can't respond as quickly as possible."

"I like being on an ACCT, I feel safer. Never heard of any bullying [because on ACCT]. Listeners pick up if you're on an ACCT they see people to support them."

Observations

Reception

- Reception staff are aware that holding prisoners on the transport whilst they wait to process them into Reception is an issue but they cannot allow them to enter into the prison until the warrant to hold them is checked.
- Reception is open until 8pm, there are some issues with the delays in Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) picking up and dropping off prisoners as the window is 06:30 – 20:00.
- The panel were told that prisoners regularly ‘kicked off’ to try and avoid going on the transport to Glen Parva and observed one such prisoner being escorted onto the transport, he was cuffed (as would be expected) and compliant although saying he didn’t want to go.
- Staff said that there should be more use of Video Link for court appearances, prisoners much preferred it as the process of being booked in and out of the prison and the risk of facing lock-out and going anywhere was stressful and a worry to them.
- Prisoners will spend around an hour and a half going through the Reception process.
- There is a television in the suite and lavatory next to the holding cell in Reception.
- Panel told that Samaritans, Listeners and Insiders are all available to prisoners

IEP

- Staff thought that the 14 day rule in the new scheme which means that prisoners automatically move to Entry Level IEP on being sentenced was ridiculous and caused unnecessary suffering and increased risk of self-harm for the prisoner and increased tension between staff and prisoners. It also creates a lot of work for staff.

Healthcare facilities

- Panel told that sharing of healthcare information with local practices is good but not so good for prisoners coming from London.
- Healthcare look out for prisoners convicted of domestic violence for risk of self-harm or self-inflicted death, and to the Prisoner Escort Record (PER) for any mention of mental health issues.
- The reception healthcare interview is 1:1 and private. There is a safer custody questionnaire and if the nurse has any concerns about safety will open an ACCT.

Induction Wing / First Night Unit

- Holds 102 prisoners who will stay 2 – 3 days, before moving to another wing.
- Three Listeners and three Insiders are available every day until 22:00hrs.
- Staff help prisoners fill in forms.

- There is a medical team on the wing with access to System 1.
- There are kettles and TVs in cells.
- Prisoners get a £2 PIN phone credit on their first night.
- There is a socially isolated prisoner protocol for what to do if prisoners don't have any contact with friends or family.

General

- Prisoners have the option to dine communally; we understood that they generally did so.
- Some prisoners said they didn't get enough food.
- The "Personal Officer" scheme is still running at Chelmsford and they said that there was good interaction between prisoners and staff
- LEAP, Confronting Conflict, was used and considered a very good scheme and that the contract should be extended.² No longer in place now.

Post Visit

- At the Community Stakeholder Seminar we heard from Atrium who provide mental health and support services at Chelmsford, (including, bereavement counselling and talking therapies for a range of issues amongst them, self-harm and suicidal feelings, trauma, depression) prisoners are able to self-refer or officers may suggest it. They told the seminar that their case load had recently increased from 30 referrals to 90.
- At the Public Hearing we heard from LEAP who talked about their effectiveness and value in establishments around conflict management.

² Subsequent to the visit the Prison clarified that this scheme is no longer in place within the establishment