

## **Catch22 Submission to Chris Harris Review into Deaths of Young People in Prison**

### **Summary**

The submission sets out our experience of providing high-quality services for young adults in prison. We outline Catch22's approach to engaging with offenders and the methodology that drives our work with all our service users in the criminal justice system. Catch22's approach emphasises strong and consistent relationships and provides tailored assessment and casework. We highlight specific interventions and programmes we deliver in Doncaster, that support vulnerable young people in prison, and that include a focus on identifying risks and preventing self harm and suicide. We emphasise the importance of integrated approaches to delivery, including the sharing of information to identify and manage risk.

### **Catch22's experience with young offenders and the Transition to Adulthood Alliance**

Catch22 is a member of the T2A Alliance and our experience of working with young adults affirms some of the key points highlighted in the T2A response to the review. We understand that the transition to adulthood is a process, not an event, and does not begin and end on a person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. 19 is the peak age of offending behaviour (for males), but is also the age at which youth-focussed services end and access to supportive services such as mental health, supported living, education and drug treatment change in nature or cease. But with the right intervention, one that takes account of young adults' distinct needs, this is the most likely age group to desist from crime.

We consider that maturity should be taken into account at all stages of decision-making, considering the particular vulnerabilities that affect a young person's maturity, including drugs, alcohol and mental health problems. We know that outcomes from interventions for young adults are best when services are based on providing a consistent, trusting relationship and an approach that is strength-based and solution focussed.

### **Overview of Catch22's approach to working with young adults in HMP Doncaster**

The work at HMP/YOI Doncaster is innovative in many ways: it brings together private and a not-for-profit organisation who jointly designed a solution, both in prison and working through the gate, that is strongly influenced by a commitment to the importance of building effective and professional relationships between offenders and practitioners, and in ensuring the environment in which the services are provided is conducive to bringing about lasting changes in behaviour. Catch22, as a social business, took on a lead role for offender management, designing the service and the over-arching approach to re-offending delivered within the YOI/prison.

In working with both private partners within the prison (Serco) and public sector and other partners in the community (police, probation, job centre plus, VCSE etc), we built trust in our organisation and have an offer that engages offenders that adds value. Working in the prison and community, in a complex delivery landscape, it has been important to have clarity about the role of each organisation at the same time as working in an integrated, coordinated way.

**One caseworker, one assessment, one relationship:  
Catch22's work in practice at HMP Doncaster**

Catch22 engages offenders from the start of sentence, at the reception point into custody. All sentenced offenders are met by our case workers who complete an assessment of needs and risks and address immediate resettlement issues. A package of support and relevant interventions is agreed according to the individual circumstances of the offender. Whilst the caseworkers provide generic care coordination and support, specialist roles within the team provide additional assistance. We understand that young adults have differing levels of maturity and at the time they move from youth to adult prison system particular care needs to be taken in assessing their needs and identifying an appropriate intervention.

Our tailored and evidenced approach sees our caseworkers undertaking comprehensive assessments, producing plans tailored to the risks and needs of each prisoner. To meet the different needs of each person they work with, our staff deliver appropriate interventions and rehabilitative activities, as well accessing the resources of local organisations.

We know that the dynamic of the relationship between the practitioner and the service user can be critical in effecting positive change. This is true of our approach to working with all offenders regardless of their age but can be especially valuable when working with vulnerable young adults. Catch22's model is based on building a high quality relationship built on trust and consistency. Our experience has shown that in order to motivate the service user to engage in rehabilitative activities, they must trust that our staff will support them through the challenges they face in prison and on release.

This model enables caseworkers to make informed decisions regarding the level of personal interaction required, taking account of the risk and individual needs, and to begin the process of involving other internal services and disciplines. Importantly, these strong relationships also mean that prisoners feel able to tell us if they are having a difficult period or if they are struggling, which means we can identify likely self-harm as well as potential harm to others.

The caseworker's role is vital in winning the confidence of the offender and in ensuring improved coordination across the regime and effectively sequencing relevant interventions. This coordinating role ensures priority health and substance misuse issues are immediately addressed. Sentence planning and wider social support needs are addressed concurrently as part of the case management process. The experience of young adults coming into prison presents a number of issues. The setting can be alienating and overwhelming and our personalised approach takes account of how these feelings can manifest, alongside the additional risks such as bullying and intimidation. Our personalised approach to assessment and casework means our staff know and understand each individual that they work with, putting them in the best position to identify the interventions that are needed. In many cases, that means linking up with specialist colleagues such as health, mental health and drugs workers. The notion of one relationship does not preclude additional input and help when required; it is designed to ensure that the offender is engaged in the process and benefits from the involvement of a consistent point of contact.

Catch22 also builds the important work of peer advisors into the approach within the prison. They provide an additional supportive relationship that can be seen as less formal than the relationship with the caseworker and assist with identifying and supporting prisoners who are vulnerable and/or at risk of suicide or harming themselves. Volunteer mentors, including ex-offenders also engage before and following release.

In addition, Doncaster has developed imaginative and sensitive approaches to helping men re-establish links, maintain relationships and drawing in the support of their families. Catch22 agrees with the findings of the recent Joint Inspectorate Report<sup>1</sup> regarding the importance of family engagement as a key element of rehabilitation. Catch22's delivery models, including our approach in Doncaster include a focus on family engagement, and working with Safeguarding and Troubled Families teams as appropriate.

### **Specific interventions and programmes in Doncaster that support young adults in custody**

The work we do with young adult males in Doncaster enhances engagement and continuity of care for the young offender client group:

**Youth to Adulthood Pilot:** Catch22 supported a recent national pilot to improve the sharing of information between young offender and adult services when a young adult is 'coming of age'. A web-based portal was developed for offender managers to request ASSET (young offender casework system) information to be sent to Doncaster prison from South Yorkshire YOT Teams. This information has been used to inform OASys (adult casework system) when assessing risk and needs, providing a useful comparator against information disclosed and importantly including what has been recorded by the youth services (YOI and YOS teams). We are still using this process despite the pilot ending. It has proved to be valuable in identifying key risk issues (including risk of harm and vulnerabilities), as well as highlighting other important contextual and personal information such as family links, that help staff to support the young offender. A key part of Catch22's approach is to ensure efficient and effective communication between the various agencies and practitioners that affect a young person's life inside prison and outside. The web portal exemplifies how such processes can streamline information-sharing so that staff can make informed assessments and identify risks to the young people they support as they transition between services.

**Care Leavers:** At HMP Doncaster, Catch22 uses a monthly report captured from PNOMiS (operational database used for offender management) to identify all care leavers in the establishment. We are proactive in engaging this group, taking an individualised approach to their needs, as we do with all prisoners. We contact Children and Young People's Social Workers involved with this cohort and ensure coordination and an integrated approach to joint resettlement and rehabilitation planning. Some social services teams provide lists to help us cross reference young offenders in certain local areas against caseloads. This information is useful in identifying historic and ongoing issues, which in turn helps our case workers/managers to assess needs more quickly and effectively. We recommended that all

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<sup>1</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted, 'Resettlement provision for adult offenders: Accommodation and education, training and employment', Sept 2014

social services teams should provide this information as it would aid practitioners in taking a consistent approach in all cases.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of the relationship with each young adult and the imperative of a coordinated, integrated approach between agencies, which includes the provision of information are key to preventing deaths in custody. Instilling hope cannot be underestimated and needs to be integral to a practical and emotional offer of help, including from caseworkers and volunteers. We know that sadly suicides cannot always be prevented. Our experience tells us that a custodial regime needs to be sensitised to the different risks and needs of young adults and all prisoners. It requires a coordinated and integrated approach to engaging and delivering interventions so that more deaths can be prevented.

**ENDS**