

Proposal for Obtaining Views of Young Adults in Custody

Background

In February this year Lord Toby Harris was invited by the Minister for Prisons to lead an Independent Review into Self-Inflicted Deaths of 18-24 year olds in NOMS Custody. The Review began in April, and since then has considered evidence from a number of sources, including senior stakeholders that will contribute to the final conclusions and recommendations of the Review panel.

The Terms of Reference for the Review state that the stakeholder's views that should be taken into account include young adults in custody. It has been very difficult for the Review to come up with the means to constructively engage young adults in custody, particularly because of the need to balance meeting the terms of reference with limited resources to commission research. We are also committed to ensuring we do not overburden NOMS staff unnecessarily.

This proposal has been put together as an efficient and practicable means of reaching young adults in custody, drawing on the expertise and resources of a number of stakeholders to support the process.

Proposal

We are developing a short, simple and targeted questionnaire on a small number of key issues (draft questionnaire attached at Annex A) that we are proposing to circulate to a small number of institutions. We are arranging for the questionnaire to be both distributed and collected by the relevant IMBs and sent back to the secretariat. We are suggesting that completed questionnaires are to be posted in the 'application' drop box on the wings. In order to facilitate this, we plan to work with MoJ Communications design team to ensure that the questionnaire stands out sufficiently from other items that might be posted in the drop box.

Awareness of the questionnaire among the target age group will be raised through:

- a. An article in *Inside Time* that is currently being developed.
- b. An interview that is recorded for *Prison Radio* and repeated at key times during the period of the questionnaire. We are negotiating with Prison Radio that this will be aired on 'HYPE', (Hindley Young People's Entertainment), which targets 18-20 year olds.

In addition, we are looking into using the Prison Radio Freephone number to enable young adults in custody to record their thoughts or responses either to the questions, or in general about the interview and topic.

Prisons Involved

The Institutions we are proposing to target for this engagement are:

HM YOI Aylesbury
HMP/ YOI Stoke Heath
HMP/YOI Norwich
HMP/YOI Rochester
HMP/YOI Isis

We would expect to work closely with the relevant prisons ensuring that Safer Custody Teams are aware of the engagement plan and, through the Samaritans that Listeners are also made aware that the questionnaire is being circulated.

Timing

The best time to run this, based on the availability and capacity of the various stakeholders involved, would be in October 2014.

The Harris Review into Self-Inflicted Deaths of Young Adults in Custody

The Harris Review is a group of experts who have been brought together to look at why some young adults (who are around 18-24 years of age) try to take their own lives while they are in prisons or young offender institutions. The panel want to make recommendations that will help protect young adults better in the future.

We are looking at lots of different topics to help us really understand what goes on in prisons and YOIs. For example, the relationships between staff and younger people, what sort of training staff get, how families are involved with young adults while they are in custody, and how information is shared between people and organisations.

More than anything else, we would like to hear the views of young adults who are in YOIs and prisons, and about the things that help you when you feel a bit depressed, or even the things that you find most difficult to cope with.

We would be very grateful if you could send us your views. You can either answer the questions below and then post this questionnaire into the 'application drop box' on your wing, or you can phone the Prison Radio number on [xxxxx] and leave a message there. We are also very happy to receive your views sent directly to us at: **Harris Review, 8.25, 102 Petty France, London SW1 9AJ**. You can do this anonymously, or you can write your name – it is up to you.

The Review will treat your information as confidential and will only use your name if you say that you are happy for us to do that.

1. What are the sorts of things about being in prison that you think make someone feel most vulnerable, unsafe, sad or lonely?

2. What, if anything, could help someone to feel better? What, if different, could make someone feel better faster?

3. Which of the following things do you think would help someone to feel safer while in custody:

- Visits from family
- Being busy with education and/or work opportunities
- Association time
- Access to the internet
- Talking to staff
- Talking to a Listener
- Speaking to peer support
- Something else (please say): _____

4. What sort of things do staff members do to help young people who are in custody feel safe and cared for? What might they do differently?

5. Has there ever been a time when you or someone who you know in prison has made you feel so frustrated, sad, or unsafe that you felt suicidal? If so, can you tell us what caused these feelings and what helped you, or the person you know, to get through it?