

Developing the Mental Health Occupational Therapy Service to Forth Valley Prisons

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Background

NHS Forth Valley has 3 prisons. There was no process in place for prisoners to access Mental Health Occupational Therapy (OT). Referrals were received ad-hoc and there was no defined referral criteria or process for accessing the service. There was recognition that the prison population was not receiving equitable access to Mental Health OT as indicated in NHS Scotland's Mental Health Strategy – Action 15. There was a need to establish more effective ways to provide Mental Health OT services to this population.

What did we do?

- S-Bar completed and submitted to OT management highlighting inequalities and challenges prisoners faced accessing Mental Health Occupational Therapy.
- Identified 2 Mental Health OTs from current workforce to take this work forward.
- Links developed with prison healthcare staff to establish target prisoner population. Female population was identified as priority target group.
- Links were made with OT's working in other prisons.
- Attended mandatory Scottish Prison Service (SPS) training and spent time with nursing team to gain a better understanding of prisoner routine and environment.
- Provided half day per week clinical session into HMP Cornton Vale (Ross House) and completed a 6 month scope .
- Developed a referral pathway
- Submitted report and funding application for Mental Health strategy money.

Outcome

- Data demonstrated Mental Health Occupational Therapy was accessed by the target prisoner population and there was an identified need for Mental Health Occupational Therapy in prison.
- A referral pathway and process was established to provide an effective way for prisoners to access Mental Health Occupational Therapy.
- Data collected detailed number of sessions completed, types of interventions provided and whether this was delivered individually or in a group format.
- Funding was obtained for 2 new Mental Health OT posts to continue the project .

Mental Health OT Interventions provided



Feedback

Semi structured questionnaires were issued to NHS and SPS staff. 2 semi structured focus groups were available to SPS staff, 12 officers attended
 Prisoner feedback was obtained verbally by OT staff.

More OT is needed to have an impact. Waste of time only half day a week

Thanks for letting me try out different things

Prisoners have reported to enjoy OT input, positive impact on their mental health as a result

The voices are calmer when I'm calmer

I understand what you are trying to do, but don't agree with it...its prison not hospital

The ladies in Ross house enjoyed the sessions and being engaged in the activities

Too much of gap - you need to be full time

Giving a prisoner a different focus

Total OT contacts (17 sessions)	58
Individual Contacts	39
Group Contacts	19

Impact

- Women in custody in Forth Valley prisons now have access to specialist Mental Health OT. Current service has targeted the women with the highest risk and needs. This is in keeping with the planned development of women's services in custody.
- Occupational Therapists are now functioning as part of a multidisciplinary team within prison healthcare in Cornton Vale. This is recognised as an essential component of developing this service in other Forth Valley prisons.
- Occupational Therapy input has complimented existing services.
- Women have been followed up when transferred from HMP Cornton Vale to HMP Polmont by Mental Health Occupational Therapists, providing consistency of intervention across services.

Conclusion and recommendations

This model has worked well in HMP Cornton Vale. It has been identified that there is a need to consolidate and establish a sustainable service to women in custody before moving on to the next part of the journey, which is to identify and develop the Mental Health Occupational Therapy service to the other prisons within Forth Valley. (HMP &YOI Polmont and HMP Glenochil).

References

Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 The Scottish Government's approach to Mental Health- a 10 year vision. Published March 2017