

Community Navigator Service Evaluation

Initial insights into the Community Navigator pilot project in HMP Kilmarnock

The overarching goal of Community Navigator is to provide appropriate interventions, support, and guidance to men being liberated from prison in order to enhance capacity for change, reduce harm caused by substance use or violence, improve overall wellbeing, and stop the revolving door of imprisonment. During the pilot phase, the service was implemented in HMP Kilmarnock and was intended to benefit men of all ages who were: (a) on remand or serving long term sentences with no statutory throughcare in place (b) primarily affected by problematic substance use and/or violence, (c) being liberated to Ayrshire addresses.

Approach to evaluation

The evaluation of the service began in July 2020 and continued until March 2022. A mixed methods approach to data collection was taken.

The evaluation is based on:

- Data provided by We Are With You quarterly monitoring reports (i.e., information on (a) the number and the profile of men engaging with the service and (b) service users progress towards a range of outcome)
- Records of implementation, steering group, and Navigator team meetings
- Interviews with Navigators

Goals of evaluation

We were interested in evaluating how the service was implemented and whether it influenced service user outcomes. The lessons learned from this evaluation will be used to inform the future use of this approach.

As a result, the Community Navigator evaluation project had four key aims:

1. Evaluate how the service works in practice
2. Establish “what works” and identify any barriers and enablers in delivering different features of the service
3. Examine the impact of the service on users short and medium,
4. Establish any barriers and enablers to the men achieving these outcomes

In conclusion

The service has successfully been able to engage the pre-specified sub-population of men in HMP Kilmarnock and it has been possible to undertake the majority of service activities as planned. The evidence gathered suggests that service users have made progress towards a range of outcomes across knowledge, motivation, attitude, and behaviour. Both barriers and facilitators to service delivery and impact have been identified and can be used to inform the implementation of the project moving forward.

Main Findings

The service has successfully been able to engage the intended sub-population of men in HMP Kilmarnock. There have been 134 referrals to the service since August 2020.

Of those who have returned to the community, 87% of individuals have continued to engage with Navigators the following release.

Service-user eligibility criteria has been slightly adapted in response to Navigator feedback and the specific demands placed on the service.

It has been possible to undertake the majority of service activities as planned. However, Navigators have had to be flexible and responsive to the challenges presented by COVID-19 restrictions

Barriers to engaging service users and implementing planned service activities include:

- Difficulties associated with COVID-19
- Challenges when working with services
- The impact of the stigma surrounding seeking help within the prison
- Unplanned exits from the service following liberation

Facilitators to engaging service users and implementing planned service activities:

- Face to face contact and presence on the prison wing is key:
- Making the service visible and accessible to all potential service users
- Establishing good working relationships with prison staff
- The person-centred nature of the service
- Qualities and skills of the navigators

There is evidence that service users have made progress towards a range of outcomes including: improved mental health and wellbeing, reduction in alcohol and substance-related harm, improved relationships, improved housing, and progress towards a crime free life.