Who we are.

- The Centre for Mental Health is an independent national mental health charity.
- 30 years old.
- Bridges research, policy and service provision.
- Areas of work: children, criminal justice, economics, employment, mental and physical health, recovery.
About the project.

- In partnership with Howard League for Penal Reform.
- Funded by Monument Trust.
- Following on from the Harris Review.
- Two year project (currently in year one).
- Involved focus groups and interviews with a range of stakeholders (people with experience of being in prison, clinic reviewers, prison officers).
Context: The Harris Review

- Harris et al (2015)
- What lessons have been learned from the suicides in custody of 18-24 year olds that occurred after ACCT was fully rolled out in April 2007?
- What actions should be taken to prevent further deaths?

**Methodology:**
- Literature review.
- Analysis of 40 year data set.
- Analysis of clinical reviews.
- Stakeholder and staff interviews.
- Surveys with prisoners.
- Prison visits.
- MQPL data sets.
- Case material of 87 suicides.
Recommendations: 108 covering all aspects of the prison system and Criminal Justice process.

**Fundamental Recommendation:** there should be cross-organisational cultural change in the approach towards rehabilitation and management of people in custody.
Prison Today: Prison Population

- January 2016: **85,242** people in prison in the UK (Howard League 2016).
- The prison population is **ageing** (Prison Reform Trust 2015).
- One in four prisoners are from a **minority group**, compared with one in ten in the general population (Prison Reform Trust 2015).
- Facing **complex and multiple vulnerabilities**.
Prison Today: The Prison Environment

Overcrowding and resource cuts
- Greater proportion of prisons are overcrowded.
- Prisoner to staff ratio has increased.
- Purposeful activity lowest ever recorded.

Sentencing lengths and licence recall
- Sentence lengths are increasing.
- Mandatory supervision in the community.

Assaults and self-harm
- Assaults highest ever recorded.
- Rates of self-harm have increased.

(Prison Reform Trust 2015, Ministry of Justice 2015)
Prison Today: Suicide

Number of suicides in prison

Year


Number of suicides

0 20 40 60 80 100 120
Prison Today: Suicide

Common themes in the cases of suicide in custody (PPO 2014):

- Age.
- Offence type: sexual and violent, against a family member.
- Sentence length.
- Recalled on licence.
- Remand.
- Timing: first days in prison and prior to release.
Service User Views

What contributes to vulnerability?
- Historic and contextual risk factors, exacerbated by prison.
- Isolation.
- Not being able to show vulnerability.
- Experiences of mental and physical distress being ignored / not recognised.
- Experiences of prison and healthcare staff.
- Resource cuts.
- Mental health intervention (e.g., safer cells, therapeutic communities).
Professional Views

- Communication between teams:
  - Between community and prison staff.
  - Between prison officers and healthcare.
- ACCT
- The initial assessment:
  - Template driven V clinical judgement.
  - Emphasis on current presentation rather than risk factors and context.
- Staffing, quality and training
Recommendations from the research so far...

- Peer mentoring (people with shared experiences in mentoring roles in the prison).
- The initial and follow-up assessment: clinical skills required by the assessor.
- Work force training.
- Communication between teams.
- Involvement of healthcare on the ACCT.
- Appropriateness of prison as an intervention?
- Prisons as enabling environments.
Discussion points

Where do we go next with this?

- Achieving change with a challenging population?
- Achieving change when so much is out of the control of the prison (i.e. sentencing)?
- Achieving change in the current climate?
- Are their lessons from elsewhere that could be adapted for prison settings?
References


Thank you