



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Strategy for care experienced people



Preventing victims by changing lives





Foreword

At the heart of our work in the community and in custody is a passionate belief in rehabilitation. We believe in the ability of each individual to change their lives for the better with the necessary help and support. For those who have experienced family breakdown and been taken into care as children there are often additional hurdles to overcome. Many have had adverse childhood experiences that have led to trauma. The purpose of this strategy is to set out how Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service can provide the support needed to help these individuals lead happy, fulfilling and crime-free lives.

In 2013, the government published the cross-government strategy for care leavers and HMPPS appointed a Care Leavers Champion. Since that time we have made significant progress in identifying those with care experience, linking up with local authorities and working with the voluntary sector to provide support and access to legal entitlements. Every prison group and probation division now has a senior manager responsible for leading the work on people with care experience and every prison now has a single point of contact. Identification of care experienced people has

improved and there are many examples of excellent joint-working practices between HMPPS, local authorities and third-sector organisations. We appreciate the positive contribution of family and the support of significant people in the lives of those in our care and continue to work alongside the Families and Significant Others Strategy Team to implement the recommendations of Lord Farmer's Review.¹

Central to this work is the voice of the person who was in care and we will strive to ensure that this remains central to all we do. We have consulted with people who have experience of care on our vision and will continue to engage with those whose experiences inform this work, whether they are staff, those in our custody or under supervision. This strategy sets out how we will take an inclusive, holistic and evidence-based approach to ensuring that those who have been in care receive the support they need to change their lives for the better.

Jo Farrar
Chief Executive Officer
Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service



Context

For the purpose of this strategy the definition of someone who is care experienced is a person who has been in the care of the local authority as a child regardless of their current age, the time they spent in care or whether they meet the legal definition of a 'care leaver'.

Our vision

“We will seek to create a culture where those who have experienced being in care as children feel confident to tell us in the knowledge that we will provide support and empathy. Working in partnership with local authorities, the voluntary sector and other government departments we will help them access their legal entitlements and support them on their journey away from offending. Recognising that some people who have experienced care have suffered adverse childhood experiences and trauma, we will seek to value, support and enable them to look forward with hope to achieve their full potential.”



Introduction

“ Do you really want to tell a random stranger that you have been through the care system because your family can't look after you? You just want to keep it to yourself. But don't be scared, it's better to open up and not to keep it all in. ”

Young Adult, Swinfen Hall

Children in care and those leaving care account for less than 1% of the general population (DfE 2013) but approximately 25% of the adult prison population.ⁱⁱ Historically this over-representation has not been appreciated and therefore not reflected in a national suite of bespoke support measures tailored to this vulnerable group. However, the publication of the cross-government Care Leaver Strategy in 2013 and the subsequent creation of an HMPPS-led National Care Leavers Forum generated greater awareness of this group and recognition of their unique and complex needs for the first time.

According to DfE figures (2018) the majority of children (63%) entering the care system have experienced abuse or neglect, meaning they often have significant disadvantages and vulnerabilities.

Awareness of the issues facing care experienced people and the support and entitlements available to them has been improved among frontline staff and managers thanks to a suite of training opportunities and an annual HMPPS conference. Efforts are being made to further our understanding of those in our care who have care experience by commissioning our own research and inviting partner agencies and service users to contribute to development and delivery in this area. There are already a number of projects looking at improving our systems, strengthening collaborative work and supporting care experienced people.

These achievements have made significant inroads but we acknowledge that immediate gains can only achieve further traction and be consolidated

through the development of a national strategy underpinned by a robust infrastructure and effective governance. The purpose of this strategy is to build on these achievements to imbed a coherent and standardised approach to improving outcomes for care-experienced people at prison, regional and national levels across HMPPS.



Profile of the needs of care experienced people in custody or serving community sentences

Context

There have been no published large scale analyses of need of people with care experience either in prison or in the community, published in the UK or internationally.

A priority as we progress this work is to continue to develop the **identification process** within prison and the community so that's we are able to complete a robust and meaningful analysis of need. This will ensure that our approach to supporting people with experience of care is evidence based.

In the absence of large scale robust studies, our learning has come from smaller scale studies so caution must be exercised around the implications and generalisability of the evidence, based on methodological and sample size constraints. We have a strong commitment to **develop our strategy in line with new evidence** as it emerges.



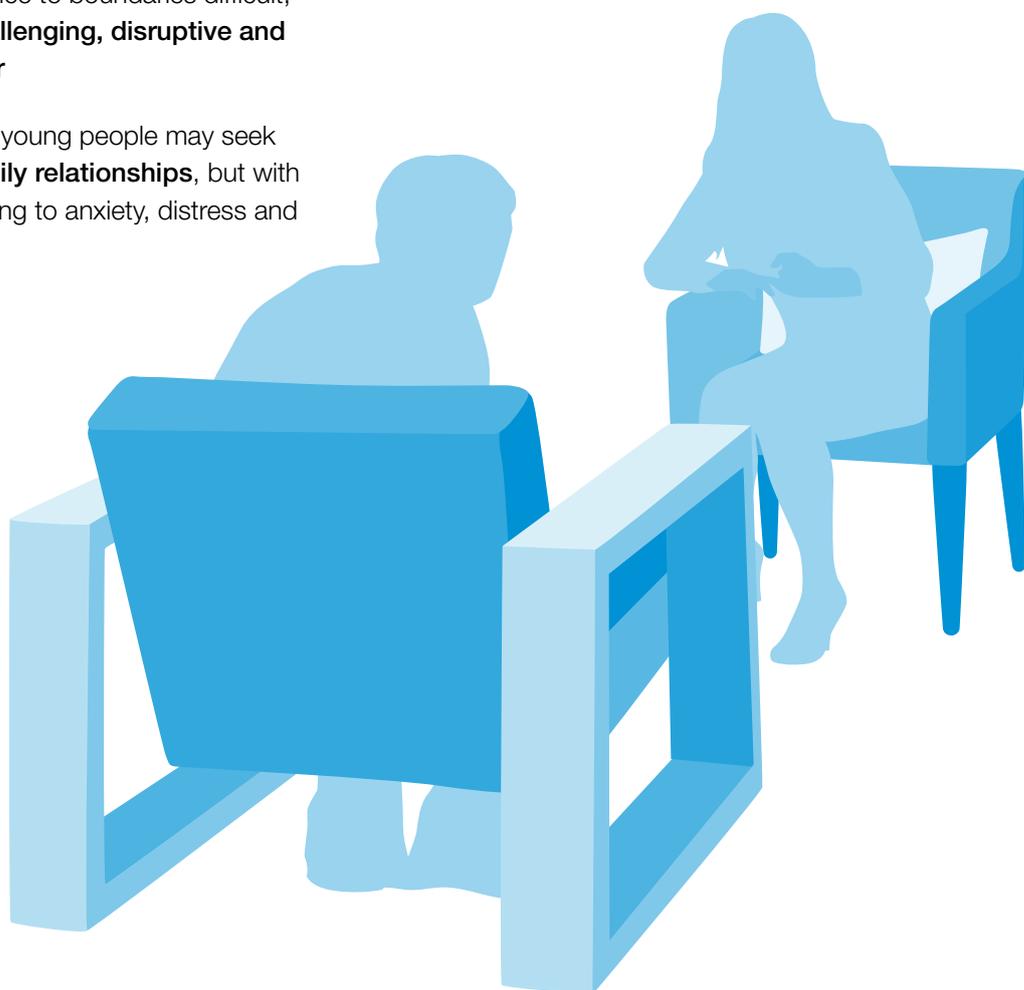
Our current understanding of the needs of people with care experience

- Within the general population there is evidence to suggest that young people leaving the care system consistently demonstrate higher risks of a range of **negative outcomes**^{iii, iv} in early adulthood compared to the general population, specifically in **educational, financial, mental health and emotional issues**.^v
- Children in the care system have higher rates of **psychiatric disorders**.^{vi} There is some evidence to suggest that these **mental health needs** continue as children develop into adolescents and adults in the criminal justice setting.
- One-third of young males in prison custody have previously been in care, and 9 out of 16 girls, highlighting the over-representation of people with care experience in custody.^{vii} Studies have shown that children who have spent more time in care are **more vulnerable**.^{viii}
- Women with **early-teen foster care experience** have higher rates of re-imprisonment than women without foster care experience, regardless of whether they were reunited with their parents.^{ix} This association is particularly strong when women also have **educational and substance misuse needs**. The researchers suggest that women with a history of care may need additional attention and support during their time in custody and upon their release.
- There is good evidence that **accommodation** is a significant need for people with care experience, suggesting that support is needed in the transition stages between leaving custody and returning to the community.^{x, xi}
- There is some evidence that, in comparison with young males without care experience, young males with care experience have greater needs across all of the OASys dimensions, in particular **accommodation, relationships, emotional wellbeing and attitudes to offending**.^{xii}
- The Care Leavers' Association (CLA, 2013) highlight numerous factors commonly affecting those with care experience, such as **poor emotional wellbeing and mental health; underdeveloped social skills; isolation, loneliness and/or a sense of abandonment; difficulties in establishing trust or forming relationships of meaningful attachment; and low aspirations for the future due**





- to low self-efficacy.** The CLA state that these factors, combined with **accommodation** and **emotional needs**, a **lack of social capital**, and the **stigmatisation of having care experience**, can increase the risk of reoffending.
- Research^{xiii} on prison violence within a young offender institution in England accommodating young men aged 18 to 21 found that:
 - young men with experience of care may be more likely to be **vulnerable both to exploitation and victimisation** within the prison environment but also demonstrate **extreme behaviour**, leading to use of force, adjudications and time spent in segregation
 - while some people with care experience can find institutional life easier to acclimatise to, others find adherence to boundaries difficult, demonstrating **challenging, disruptive and harmful behaviour**
 - upon leaving care, young people may seek to re-establish **family relationships**, but with little success, leading to anxiety, distress and harmful behaviour
 - There is some evidence to suggest that people with experience of care – particularly women – may need support in developing both **informal and formal relationships** and may need access to additional emotional support.^{xiv}
 - It is important that people with experience of care have the **faith and confidence that the prison/probation staff** they approach with their concerns or details of their care experience will have the knowledge and skills to be able to meet their needs and provide support. In the absence of well-informed and skilled staff, people with care experience are less likely to seek or respond to support.



Our response to the identified needs of care-experienced people

1. Identifying people with care experience

“ They ask you at the beginning when you come in prison have you been in care or a care leaver. I always said no because I was embarrassed. I was worried what people would think but now have learned not to be. It don't matter what people say about you For me it was hard but I conquered that, I conquered the fear and that doubt in your head that people are gonna look at you like you are a piece of dirt on the rug. My advice would be to come forward and state your name and be proud of that. You are part of the care leavers. It doesn't matter – come forward and state your name. ”

Resident, Brixton

In order to provide a safe environment which encourages the identification of people with care experience we will:

- Use formal (BCST) and informal systems (e.g. links with other agencies and peers) to identify people with care experience. We will develop a culture where disclosure of the experience of care is seen as a positive development and a natural part of the relationship with staff.
- Recognise that transition from Youth Custody Services (YCS) requires planning and communication. We will work with YCS to ensure that information regarding a child's time in care or as a looked after child is transferred as part of the transition process.
- Continue to raise staff awareness through use of the intranet, regional and divisional leads and single point of contacts (SPOCs) in each prison, and local probation office champions.
- Ensure staff identify and record care experienced people appropriately on case record systems.





2. Collaborative working with local authorities and other organisations

“ I was supported in prison. I was kept occupied. They arranged for me to do a tenancy course so I knew what to expect when I went to a property. My (SOVA) worker, the person who helped me inside the prison, also helps me outside the prison so on the first day I got out he was there ready to support me. He helped me get to accommodation and go to probation which was a biggy. I still get that help now. I am in supported accommodation. I feel like there is a light at the end of the tunnel where I can be successful. I can live a normal life without going to prison because the support is there – just because I let them know I was a care leaver. ”

Former Brinsford resident

In order to develop effective working relationship with responsible local authorities, ensuring they are engaged in the planning processes for those coming into custody, serving prison sentences, on release and in the community, we will:

- continue to engage with local authorities at a local group and national level to build relationships of mutual support and understanding
- encourage the responsible local authority to engage with both the prison and the care experienced person during custody and after release and to work alongside Offender Managers in developing the Pathway Plan and Sentence Plan
- support a project to explore how the Sentence Plan / Pathway Plan can be blended to create one document to support the care experienced person during and following release
- ensure that the Transitions Protocol is followed for those transferring from YCS to adult custody and work alongside those reviewing this protocol to ensure the needs of those who were in care are considered
- identify prison and probation leads, including contracted probation providers (CRCs) to improve the journey for care experienced people across the whole system and encourage sharing of best practice
- allow flexibility for Personal Advisors to visit as a domestic visitor (in their role of corporate parent) as well as on a professional basis
- work with local authorities to encourage them to include those in custody within their local offer for care leavers
- where a care experienced person is 25 or under and subject to ACCT (Assessment, Care Custody Teamwork) or CSIP (Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan), prisons will be expected to involve the Personal Advisor from the local authority in their management (with the person's consent)
- require group and divisional leads to organise meetings with their local authorities to build good working relationships with relevant departments and individuals



3. Effective wrap-around services

“ We may need to work harder to help our care leavers form relationships and to form those relationships with them ourselves. ”

Wolverhampton Corporate Parenting Guidance

In order to effectively co-ordinate wrap-around services that enable development of reliable and trusting relationships, we will:

- Develop an increased understanding of the needs of this group across all staff in HMPPS and our partners, particularly in health, education and resettlement services. We will work closely with academics to enable research about the experiences of those who have been in care to ensure our work is evidence-based.
- Continue to understand the links between care experience and self-harm/self-inflicted death and violence to improve our understanding on how this can be reduced.
- Seek to use Keyworkers in prison to develop positive, supportive relationships in custody. Training for Keyworkers already includes information about care experiences and the needs of this group and we will build on this.
- Ensure that services required by each person with care experience are co-ordinated by the Offender Manager and appropriate information is shared.
- Explore the delivery of adverse childhood experiences and trauma informed training/ briefings for staff so that we can work better with care experienced people to support resilience.
- Further develop our relationship with the DWP to ensure care experienced people can access all appropriate entitlements to provide them with the support required to live a crime-free life on release.
- Publish a HMPPS Care experienced Policy Framework providing advice and guidance to staff.
- Participate in cross-agency workshops to identify and develop opportunities to improve and better co-ordinate processes and practices in responding to the needs of care experienced people.
- Communicate the impact of the changes on the Offender Management Model and care experienced cohort to staff and those in our care.
- Communicate the impact of the changes to the Proposed Future Model for Probation: A Draft Operating Blueprint^{sv} and Care Experienced Cohort.
- Encourage group leads (for care experienced people) for prisons to work with group safety leads to enhance their understanding and awareness of care experienced people. Safety leads will be asked to ensure that prisons consider whether care experienced people are overrepresented in relation to self-harm, suicide and violence and to take account of the experiences of those who have been in care when managing prisoners subject to ACCT or CSIP (case management systems for those at risk of suicide or violence).



4. Improve protective factors

“ How do you pay for water? I have no clue. ”

Young adult, Deerbolt

“ At 18 I left foster care and had my own flat. I didn't know too much how to run it – how to cook, how to clean. ”

Care experienced resident, Brixton

We will assist individuals to address some of the potential disadvantages of care experience in the following areas:

- Education – We will liaise with education providers to explore how we can better identify and address the educational disadvantage experienced by this group. We will work closely with the Shannon Trust to support care experienced people who have low levels of literacy. In the community, we will purchase education interventions from CRCs or other providers.
- Employment – We are working closely with Spectra First to deliver the Care Leavers Covenant to those in custody. This should provide access to a wider range of employment options through commitments made by employers. We will also engage our Regional Employment Brokers (New Futures Network) to ensure that care experienced people are considered a priority for employment opportunities on release from custody. In the community, we will purchase employment interventions from CRCs or other providers.
- Accommodation – Offender Managers will work with CRC services to ensure that this high-priority group have accommodation. We will ensure we meet our obligations under the Homeless Reduction Act to highlight the risk





of homelessness where this is apparent. Local authority Personal Advisors will be invited to engage with resettlement planning to ensure that there is co-ordination of effort.

- Mental health – We will engage at national and local level with Health Service Commissioners and providers to explore how the specific needs of care experienced people can be met.
- Emotional issues – We acknowledge the need to provide support to this group specifically and are exploring how trauma informed practice can assist staff to do so. We will continue to include specific reference to care experienced people in our Families and Significant Others strategies at local and national levels. We recognise that younger prisoners may not have developed the necessary maturity to make good choices and we have developed a Maturity Resource Pack to assist them in developing the skills necessary for life. We will use Keyworkers to deliver this resource to young prisoners (aged 25 and under). The MOD for Young Adults also provides guidance on supporting those under 25 years of age.
- Financial issues – We will ensure that those with care experience can access all of the benefits they are entitled to. Our working relationship with the DWP means we have a good understanding of those entitlements and have included them in the Framework document provided for HMPPS staff. We will ensure that local authority Personal Advisors can access care experienced people in custody and provide access to all the practical and financial support available.
- Social skills and relationships – the introduction of the Keyworker scheme in prisons will help staff support care experienced people who need additional help to improve social skills.

The Maturity Resource Pack will be helpful in providing tailored support to those under 25 years old by raising awareness of the needs of care-experienced people with all our staff and partners. We will develop a greater understanding of the obstacles and issues faced by them.

- Substance misuse – We will work with commissioners to focus services on this group of people where appropriate to do so.
- Independent living – We will explore with education providers and other partners how they can prepare people with experience of care for independent living in the community.
- Support – Work with the lead for CSIP to improve understanding of the impact of care and trauma prior to care when considering how to use CSIP to support people.
- Develop a support offer for those people who have never or no longer receive statutory support from local authorities.
- Develop and provide training to peer mentors that will enable them to support others in custody and upon release, providing friendship, practical help and signposting, as well as developing a skill set that will strengthen the social capital of themselves and others in the community.





5. Rehabilitation

“ What does Family look like? It might be your mate’s mum. It’s other credible voices, someone who can give you a seal of approval. ”

Lord Farmer

In order to provide opportunities for reflection, encourage hope, optimism and the development of positive social connections, we will:

- Continue to develop rehabilitative cultures in all our prisons, seeking to provide an atmosphere of hope and optimism for all. This will be continued upon release on licence and for all care experienced people on community supervision.
- Ensure our vision for care experienced people reflects our intention to encourage hope and enable people to achieve their full potential.
- Include consideration of the needs of care-experienced people in every Families and Significant Others strategy so that each prison is clear about how this group of people has been considered when developing the strategy. We acknowledge that many care experienced people will have contact with family members and that others may have limited or no contact. Our strategies will recognise this and we will work with other agencies, the voluntary sector and the individual to strengthen appropriate ties where these exist.
- Provide consistent support through Keyworkers and good case management through Offender Managers, aiming to strengthen positive social connections in custody and with external agencies.
- Identify prison and probation leads, including contracted probation providers (CRCs) to improve the journey for care experienced people across the whole system and encourage sharing of best practice.
- Ensure our working relationships with Personal Advisors facilitate positive social connections between them and the individual care-experienced person.
- Link in and use the experience and expertise of third-sector providers to further develop peer support to aid rehabilitation.
- Use findings from the Visits Research, using available evidence to inform practice around isolation and loneliness.
- Improve our awareness around attachment disorder to consider how we can raise awareness in our staff and look for suitable interventions.



6. Sharing experiences

“ There are 12 people on our group. We care for each other, listen to each other, have respect for one another. We listen to what one another are saying and give each other support and help if they need it. It gives you that feeling of trust ... gives you more trust in people. Now I can walk up to someone and talk to them. I couldn't do that before. Its help my self-confidence and self-respect. I would recommend it to anybody. I have got more of a voice and can now express myself to people. ”

Young adult, Swinfen Hall

In order to enable people with care experience to have space to safely share experiences of being in care, we will:

- Work with partners and care experienced people to reduce the stigma associated with labels such as 'care leaver' so that people are willing to share their experiences in a supportive environment.
 - Enable support groups in prisons where sufficient numbers of care experienced people have been identified. Where possible we will enable external organisations such as the Care Leavers' Association to facilitate and support these groups but also recognise the ability of care experienced people to organise support groups.
 - Use the findings of research about care-experienced people in custody, including information about girls and women, to further develop our understanding, knowledge and approach to this group.
 - Work with the voluntary sector to support and train peer mentors in prisons who can provide support and advice to care experienced people in custody.
- Ensure the lived experiences of people who have experienced care and custody is valued and their views included as we develop our systems and processes and build on our strategy.
 - Recognise that our staff may also have been in care as children. We acknowledge the value of these experiences and will create a 'Staff Consultation Group' to which we will engage with as we develop the strategy and policy for this group.





Next steps

An action plan will be formulated from this strategy, which will be managed by the National Care Experienced People Forum.

The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure any new learning is incorporated.

“ When considering outcomes within criminal justice settings it is critical to think about addressing the neglected risk factor of care experiences, creating opportunities that assist individuals in the desistance process, developing a positive narrative, increasing levels of self-esteem, building confidence, self-awareness and self-knowledge. Fundamental to this is a user led model of working, which provides a unique and innovative environment for individual and collective growth.

It is only through empowering that we may positively impact the process of proactive change, increasing self-esteem and self-determined independence. ”

The Care Leavers' Association



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