

Recommendations for an Optimised Framework on the Implementation of Key Working and Training for Key Workers in UK Prisons

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The Key Worker role is part of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model. OMiC has the potential to overcome some of the core challenges facing His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). The aim of the model is to assist offenders in their re-integration back into society¹, by providing an avenue of pre-release support, and an individualised case management approach. Yet feedback from frontline staff suggests that the model currently falls short of this potential. Reasons for this include the COVID-19 pandemic, poor staff retention, and inadequate training. Considering the high rates of reoffending and that the prison population is on the rise, Key Working risks becoming yet another failed policy.

There is little academic discussion to date on the efficacy of Key Working in prisons. Initial findings, and research on Key Working in other sectors, is largely positive². However, the reality on the frontline contrasts this. This article begins by examining the current literature relating to offender rehabilitation and the Key Worker scheme. It will then outline the findings from a consultative review undertaken with frontline staff working in the male estate. The review aimed to seek frontline staff's perspectives on the quality of Key Working, the training of staff, and their understanding of the role. These findings highlight that HMPPS still has some way to go in embedding the culture and values conducive to supporting offender rehabilitation.

Further, the Key Worker model — which has proven highly effective in other sectors — is not performing as envisioned. Consequently, two core recommendations are made: (1) That there should be a structured training programme for all Key Workers; and (2) There should be a unified model for implementation of the role across establishments.

Offender Rehabilitation and a Reduction in Reoffending as the Purpose of Prison

For decades academic and Ministerial discussion has focused on the function of prison³. In 2018, the then Justice Secretary, David Gauke, stated that 'rehabilitation' must be prioritised to reduce reoffending⁴. Despite this, academics rarely delineate a clear or concise criminological definition of rehabilitation⁵. For example, Raynor and Robinson define rehabilitation as a positive process for change involving some form of restoration to a former, or ideal state, usually with third-party intervention⁶; whereas Rotman describe it as being a right of the individual, and something penal policy should be orientated towards⁷. These definitions are reflected in contemporary penal discourse. European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) caselaw equates rehabilitation to being a fundamental human right of reintegration into society for all under Art 3 and Art 8 of the ECHR⁸.

Whilst the academic literature to date focuses on the purpose of prison, the values and culture that make

1. Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Manage the Custodial Sentence Policy Framework*. HM Prison and Probation Service.
2. Renehan, E., Goeman, D., Kock, S. (2017). Development of an optimised key worker framework for people with dementia, their family and caring unit living in the community. *BMC Health Services Research*, 17(1), 1-16.
3. Bullock, K., Bunce, A. (2018). 'The prison don't talk to you about getting out of prison': On why prisons in England and Wales fail to rehabilitate prisoners. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 20(1), 111-127.
4. Gauke, D. (2018, March 6). *Prisons Reform* [speech transcript]. Ministry of Justice.
5. Raynor, P., Robinson, G. (2005). *Rehabilitation, crime and justice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
6. Raynor, P., Robinson, G. (2005) see no. 5
7. Rotman, E. (1990) *Beyond Punishment: A New View of the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders*. New York, Greenwood Press.
8. Martufi, A. (2019). The paths of offender rehabilitation and the European dimension of punishment: New challenges for an old ideal? *Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law*, 25(6), 627-688.

a good Prison Officer⁹, and the factors supporting rehabilitation, it appears this research lacks application in UK prisons.¹⁰ As although prison policy places rehabilitation at the heart of the prison system, the reality in many prisons is still an outdated and anti-rehabilitation beliefs system, coupled with a prevailing traditional Prison Officer culture¹¹ Bullock and Bunce suggest that the Prison Service 'is failing to embed the cultures, relational processes and practices that have been found to facilitate effective implementation of rehabilitative regimes'.¹² In summary, the Criminal Justice Sector faces many challenges in its mission to reduce reoffending through achieving offender rehabilitation. These include Prison Officer cultures and negative attitudes towards rehabilitation¹³, balancing the competing aims of security and rehabilitation¹⁴ lack of training for staff and low staffing levels¹⁵.

How the Key Worker Role Can Overcome Some of the Challenges Facing the Prison Service, to Fulfil Prison's Role in Facilitating Rehabilitation

There is a clear gap between 'what works' in the penal discourse, and the prison reality in the delivery of rehabilitative interventions. High re-offending rates reaffirms this — at 24.3 per cent.¹⁶ Although there are many avenues of support, services, and interventions available in UK prisons, prisoners are often unaware of these and do not utilise or engage with them effectively. Further, many Prison Officers do not appear to be aware of these services. The Key Worker

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role has the potential to bridge this gap between theory and practice and overcome some of the core challenges outlined above. By professionalising the service and embedding a culture of rehabilitation, the role could lead to a reduction in recidivism on a large scale.

Implemented in 2018, the OMiC model aims to promote rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. There are two strands to the model, the first is a Prison Offender Manager (POM). The POM's role is to act as a case manager and work with the prisoner to develop their sentence plan. They can assist with the identification of needs and can facilitate access to targeted interventions. POMs also bridge the gap between custody and community probation services¹⁷.

The second strand is a Key Worker for every prisoner in the closed prison estate. Within this model, each Prison Officer will be the Key Worker for 6 prisoners¹⁸ and they should meet with each prisoner for 45 minutes, once a week.¹⁹ The primary function of the role is to signpost prisoners to, and support them in accessing, internal and external support services.²⁰ A secondary function being to provide support and motivation to change. Ultimately, this should be a tailored and individualised service, reflecting the prisoner's individual needs. Over time, the Key Worker role could improve prisoner engagement with rehabilitative interventions; as well as enabling trusting and therapeutic relationships to develop.²¹ Both have been found to be effective in reducing recidivism.²² Considering its potential, Podmore argued that the 'Key Worker needs

9. Tait, S. (2011). A typology of prison officer approaches to care. *European Journal of Criminology*, 8(6), 440-454.
 10. Social Exclusion Unit. (2002). *Reducing reoffending by ex-prisoners*.
 11. Crawley, E., & Crawley, P. (2007). *Understanding Prison Officers: Culture, Cohesion and Conflict*. In J. Bennett, B. Crewe & A. Wahadin, *Understanding Prison Staff* (1st ed.). Routledge.
 12. Bullock, K., Bunce, A. (2018). See n.3
 13. Maycock, M., McGuckin, K., Morrison, K. (2020). 'We are "free range" prison officers', the experiences of Scottish Prison Service throughcare support officers working in custody and the community. *Probation Journal*, 67(4), 358-374;.
 14. Ismail, N., Viggiani, N. (2018). Challenges for prison governors and staff in implementing the healthy prisons agenda in English prisons. *Public Health*, 192, 91-97.
 15. Howard League for Penal Reform. (2017) *The role of the prison officer. Research Briefing*. London: Howard League.
 16. Ministry of Justice. (2023). *Proven Reoffending Statistics: January to March 2021*. National Statistics.
 17. *Custody and resettlement*. Justiceinspectorates.gov.uk. (2022).
 18. House of Commons Justice Committee. (2021). *Through the Gate and new Resettlement Model*.
 19. Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Manage the Custodial Sentence Policy Framework*. HM Prison and Probation Service.
 20. Martin, G., Wheatley, R. (2022). The experiences of the Keyworker scheme from the perspective of men in prison. *Forensic Update*, 140 p11-17].
 21. Podmore, J. (2014). *The Key Worker in Transforming Rehabilitation*.
 22. Blagden, N., Winder, B., Hames, C. (2014). "They Treat Us Like Human Beings" – Experiencing a Therapeutic Sex Offenders Prison: Impact on Prisoners and Staff and Implications for Treatment. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 60(4), 371-396.

to be bolstered and placed at the heart of how a future justice workforce should operate if it is to be effective'.²³

The vision for the role appears to draw from leading contemporary desistance theories. Prisoners can build pro-social bonds with their Key Worker, aligning with the Social Learning Theory.²⁴ The signposting function assists prisoners in accessing the services and resources proven to reduce reoffending. These include services to rebuild family ties;²⁵ access to substance misuse and mental health services; and employment and educational opportunities.²⁶ These are all identified in the seven pathways to reduce reoffending and align with Social Control Theory.²⁷ Finally, a Key Worker can provide motivation and support to prisoners to reduce their Criminogenic Needs, equipping them with the human goods necessary to live a better life. This is in accordance with the Risk Needs Responsibility Model and the Good Lives Model.²⁸

Since its implementation, Martin and Wheatley explored the benefits of the Key Worker scheme from the perspectives of 8 male prisoners.²⁹ They found prisoner experiences to be largely positive. Prisoners reported that they received practical and emotional support, that it felt personalised, and that therapeutic relationships developed. Further, it was suggested that this successfully managed the risk of violence. Their findings also highlighted that improvements needed to be made. For example, they found that not all sessions took place in private;

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some prisoners felt there were inconsistencies in support given; and others thought their Key Workers were unprofessional.

Similar roles in other jurisdictions have been praised for their effectiveness. For example, the Throughcare Support Prison Officers in Scotland was widely regarded as a success. The role combines elements of the Key Worker, POM and probation role to provide an individualised case management approach during and after custody. The role was found to build therapeutic relationships; support access to services; encourage prisoner motivation; and provide a sense of purpose for the Prison Officers involved.³⁰ Additionally, penal systems in Sweden and Norway have placed the Personal Officer role as a core function of Prison Officers. Like Key Workers, Personal Officers have a small caseload of prisoners with which they do motivational work, provide counselling, and help with social planning for their release. The role led to improved job satisfaction; improved staff-prisoner relationships; and professionalised the service.³¹

The Key Worker role has also proven to add value in many sectors, ranging from support for those suffering with dementia,³² children with disabilities,³³ homeless individuals,³⁴ and 'troubled families'.³⁵ Key findings across the sectors suggest individuals with Key Workers experience a therapeutic relationship;³⁶ have improved access to services;³⁷ an improved quality of life;³⁸ and may experience a

23. Podmore, J. (2014). See n.21

24. Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Sampson, R., Laub, J. (2003). Desistance from crime over the life course. In *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 295-309). Springer, Boston.

25. Farmer. (2017). *The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*. Ministry of Justice.

26. Coates, S. (2016). *Unlocking Potential A review of education in prison*. Ministry of Justice.

27. Sampson, R., Laub, J. (2003). Desistance from crime over the life course. In *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 295-309). Springer, Boston; Social Exclusion Unit. (2002). *Reducing reoffending by ex-prisoners*.

28. Andrews, D., & Bonta, J. (2006). *The Psychology of criminal conduct* (4th ed). LexisNexis, Newark; Ward, T., Maruna, S. (2007). *Rehabilitation: Beyond the risk paradigm*. Routledge.

29. Martin, G., Wheatley, R. (2022). See n. 20

30. Maycock, M., McGuckin, K., Morrison, K. (2020) see n. 13

31. Bruhn, A., Nylander, P., Johnsen, B. (2017). From prison guards to... what? Occupational development of prison officers in Sweden and Norway. *Journal of Scandinavian studies in criminology and crime prevention*, 18(1), 68-83.

32. Renehan, E., Goeman, D., Kock, S. (2017). See n.2

33. Greco, V., Sloper, P., Webb, R., Beecham, J. (2005). *An exploration of different models of multi-agency partnerships in key worker services for disabled children: effectiveness and costs*. Social Policy Research Unit, University of York.

34. Manning, R. (2014). *An ecological perspective on recovery in homelessness: the influence of key worker values on consumer self-determination* (Doctoral Thesis). University of Limerick.

35. Parr, S. (2016). Conceptualizing "the relationship" in intensive key worker support as a therapeutic medium. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 30(1), 25-42.

36. Parr, S. (2016) see n,35

37. Renehan, E., Goeman, D., Kock, S. (2017). See n. 32

38. Greco, V., Sloper, P., Webb, R., Beecham, J. (2005). See n. 33

reduction in substance misuse.³⁹ However, each sector also faces similar challenges with the role. These include a varying quality of management; a lack of understanding of the role; and poor training and supervision of Key Workers.⁴⁰

Overall, it is clear to see the role has the potential to be a success, having a proven track record across a wide range of sectors, and receiving positive feedback from prisoners. To be successful however, requires evaluation and learning from similar roles, as well as ensuring that Key Workers are sufficiently trained and resourced to carry out the role effectively. To date, there remains large gaps in the literature on the efficacy of Key Working. In Martin and Wheatley's study, the sample size only totaled eight prisoners from a Category C prison. Therefore, it is hard to make an accurate assessment on the overall impact of the role without further studies.

To further understand the impact of the Keyworker Scheme, the current review sought to provide prison officers' perspectives of the role and the skillsets; and training required to be effective as a Key Worker.

The Review

To explore frontline staff perspectives on the role and quality of working, a review was undertaken involving consultative discussions with 25 officers from four male Category B local prisons and staff from the OMiC Policy Team. All consultations took place during December 2021 — May 2022 and were undertaken by the researcher, who at that time, was also working as a supervising officer at a Category B local prison in the Midlands. An inductive analysis of the data was undertaken, and four core themes emerged from the data. The findings and a review of the literature identified a need for additional training for Prison Officers around their role as Key Workers which will be discussed.

Findings

Four key themes were identified and are discussed below.

1. The performance and quality of Key Working

Overall, the findings indicated that the quality of Key Working falls below expected standards. The OMiC Policy team reported that only approximately one-third to half of Key Worker entries were of good quality, despite receiving much more positive feedback prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, all Prison Officers spoke quite negatively about the quality of some of their colleague's entries. Although some very positive examples were also cited, and there was some suggestion that quality was improving. However, concerningly, some reported they had heard colleagues bragging about making up entries. And many staff viewed being detailed Key Working as a day off or an easy shift, some referred to it as 'Key-Shirking'. Some Prison Officers reported no ring-fencing of time to complete the role and not being assigned designated Key Workers. Finally, many staff were not aware of the services available at their establishment, hindering their ability to fulfil their signposting function.

2. Examples of good and bad practice

The consultations highlighted some positive examples of initiatives to support Key Workers in the new role. Positively, staff at several establishments reported they had Keyworker Supervising Officers who provided quality assurance (QA), feedback, and support.

Generally, Prison Officers found emails commending them for high quality entries motivating. Some staff also had Keyworker hubs on their Houseblocks kitted out with desks, phones, and computers, which provided a quiet place to complete and record sessions. However, several difficulties were also identified. Most Prison Officers reported that it was difficult to access computers or phones. As a result, most Key Workers had little to no communication with POMs, mental health workers, or other stakeholders in the delivery of care. Some establishments had Key Worker booklets, acting as a guide to complete the role and outlining the support available. But it is unclear whether staff engaged with and utilised these. Finally, concerns were raised that many staff still did not know how to use The

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39. Manning, R. (2014). See n. 34

40. Greco, V., Sloper, P., Webb, R., Beecham, J. (2005). See n. 33

Big Word translation services, and that foreign nationals and non-English speakers may be under-supported by their Key Workers.

3. Prison Officers' understanding of their role as Key Workers

During the consultations it was evident that some Prison Officers were already clear about the purpose and value of Key Working. Some reported that they have seen benefits from the role, such as a decline in violent incidents and self-harm through queries and concerns being managed in a timelier manner. However, it was evident that there is a need for further and more comprehensive training around the role, as many Prison Officers did not clearly understand their role. Several stated that the role does not work, as all the prisoners ask for is help with queries, despite this being a key part of the role. More positively, some staff referred to a QA sheet, which they found helpful in improving their understanding of the role and how to conduct a session. Many Prison Officers however, had not received any feedback, support, or guidance. Additional resources are available on the Intranet, but many staff reported that they have never accessed these and would likely not. Of the staff spoken to, none had received additional training on the role.

This is despite prisons receiving funding to deliver six hours of training for each Prison Officers on this a year.

4. Prison Officers' belief in the notion of offender rehabilitation

The findings suggest that the HMPPS aims, values and culture are not yet fully embedded into the work of Prison Officers, although the Key Worker role may be pivotal in advancing this.⁴¹ Many Prison Officers stated they did not believe in rehabilitation; or that they once did but had become cynical from the job. Several Prison Officers believed their role did not extend to supporting rehabilitation and that only prisoners could change

themselves. Concerningly, many had a limited understanding of pathways to offending and how to support rehabilitation. Although some said that they would like additional training in these areas. Several Prison Officers spoke more positively about the role, stating they gained a sense of purpose from it; and that it provided them with the time to actually support prisoners in their rehabilitation.

Overcoming the Training Deficit

Overall, this highlighted a critique of the Key Worker model, that there is a training deficit. If unresolved, this deficit will limit the effectiveness of the role. Both Udechukwu and Castlebury found a positive correlation between a lack of training, low job satisfaction, and high staff turnover.⁴² The Howard League for Penal Reform outlined some of their concerns regarding high turnover rates and low staffing levels in UK prisons. They stated that it is 'difficult to have a rewarding career as a prison officer' due to an unclear job description; low pay; short training; limited development opportunities; and dangerously low staffing levels.⁴³ Conversely, Bullock et al. argued that employing well-trained staff with good inter-personal skills; making available supervision and mentoring; and providing feedback, are emphasised in the 'what works' literature.⁴⁴ Hence, improved training for Key Workers, should lead to better outcomes for both staff and prisoners. It will also result in Prison Officers feeling more fulfilled; lead to improvements in staff retention; and prisoners would receive a higher quality, consistent level of care.

At the time of writing, all Prison Officers must undertake the Level 3 Custody and Detention Officer Apprenticeship — an 8-week training course, coupled with several weeks shadowing (Recruitment Team, 2020). This training is among the shortest in Europe, and there are no requirements for any prior academic qualifications. Comparatively, training takes two years to complete in Norway, and in Denmark three. The

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41. Martin, G., Wheatley, R. (2022). See n. 20

42. Udechukwu, I. (2009). Correctional officer turnover: Of Maslow's needs hierarchy and Herzberg's motivation theory. *Public Personnel Management*, 38(2), 69-82.

43. Howard League for Penal Reform. (2017) The role of the prison officer. *Research Briefing*. London: Howard League.

44. Bullock, K., Bunce, A., Dodds. (2017) The Mechanics of Reform: Implementing Correctional Programmes in English Prisons. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 57(1), 3-20.

average training time in Europe is reported as being between six months to a year⁴⁵. It is advanced, that a structured national training plan for Key Workers is required to overcome some of the core challenges facing the Prison Service. This training should clearly set out expectations for the role, its benefits, and the required skillsets. As well as this, there should be local management, overseeing the quality of and providing sufficient support and resource allocation to Key Working. Similar recommendations have been made in literature on Key Working in other sectors.⁴⁶ Specialised training on local support and services available should also be provided.

Additionally, specialised training programmes in personality disorder awareness; developing communication skills; and motivational interviewing, have been found to be effective in developing the Prison Officers skillset.⁴⁷ Findings also suggest that blended training through lectures, workshops, and practical's, observational experience and peer supervision, as well as on-going training, yield the best results in embedding the skillsets relevant to the Prison Officer role.⁴⁸ Reflecting these findings, the Higher Certificate in Custodial Care (HCCC), taught to Irish Prison Officers, seeks to develop critical thinking, knowledge, and skillsets. The training programme utilises blended learning, comprising of academic, practical, mentoring, and digital learning.⁴⁹ A key focus of the training is on human rights, with all participants undertaking reflective practice to consider how learning about this impacted their treatment of prisoners.⁵⁰ Morrison also highlighted the value of reflective practice undertaken by Prison Officers in Scottish prisons, as it reinforces continuous learning.⁵¹ Finally, Blevins found that those who are effective communicators, problem solve, and possess knowledge

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of the profession and working with at risk populations, are the most valuable.⁵²

Hence, there would be significant value in training around mental health, wellbeing, and human rights; as well as professional and skills-based development (if interested, please contact the author for a detailed outline of the recommended structure for the training of Key Workers). Alongside this, values-based recruitment of individuals already possessing rehabilitation supporting attitudes and skillsets, will go a long way in reducing of anti-rehabilitative sentiment and negative staff cultures.⁵³

Limitations

When considering the findings of this review, recognition must be given to its limitations. The author conducted consultative research with a small sample of staff at a limited number of Category B local prisons. Hence, the findings may not reflect the successes/failures of Key Working at all prisons. In addition, there may be many great initiatives to support its implementation not acknowledged in this article.

Further, the findings of the review are based on staff's perspectives, rather than on data, or a review of Key Working documentation. Some of those consulted may have presented an inaccurate perspective of the Key Worker scheme, and not all perspectives may be reflected. Additionally, those consulted all knew and some worked with the author, which may have impacted what they chose to disclose during consultation.

Recommendations

Considering the above findings, the recommendations outline a comprehensive framework

45. Berlioz, D. (2019). "We are more like social workers than guards". Hesa Mag, (19).

46. Parr, S. (2016). See n. 35

47. Maltman, L., Hamilton, L. (2011). Preliminary evaluation of personality disorder awareness workshops for prison staff. *The British Journal of Forensic Practice*, 13(4), 244-256.

48. Ryan, C., Brennan, F., McNeill, S., O'Keefe, R. (2021). Prison officer training and education: a scoping review of the published literature. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 33(1), 110-138.

49. Leonard, L. (2020). Justice on the inside: teaching human rights and social justice to the recruit prison officers of the Irish prison service by developing professional integrity. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 23(2), 170-183.

50. Leonard, L. (202) See n. 49

51. Morrison, K. (2019). Reflective Practice at the Scottish Prison Service. *Work Based Learning e-Journal International*, 8(1), 122-128.

52. Blevins, M. (2004). The professionalisation of the correctional officer and the role of higher education. *Corrections Compendium*, 29(5), 7-11.

53. Robinson, D., Porporino, F., Simourd, L. (1997). The influence of educational attainment on the attitudes and job performance of correctional officers. *Crime and Delinquency*, 43(1), 60-77.

for the training of, and on-going support and supervision for Key Workers.

For Policy Makers

More comprehensive and centralised guidance and resources

- ❑ Structured guidance clearly outlining the aims and purpose of Key Working should be issued to ensure the role is understood and applied uniformly.⁵⁴ Modes of communication should be considered as Prison Officers often do not engage with resources on the Intranet.
- ❑ Resources to support Key Workers during sessions, such as worksheets on substance misuse, mental health, and goal setting, should be widely disseminated.

Recruitment of Prison Officers should be attribute and values-based

- ❑ Parallel to Manning's recommendation for Key Workers working with homeless individuals, Prison Officer recruitment should be based on individual's values, attributes, and views on rehabilitation.⁵⁵ This will ensure they possess the right attitudes and skillset in their role as Key Workers.

Training for Key Workers

- ❑ Top-up training should be devised centrally, and clear guidance given to establishments on its structure and content.
- ❑ Longer initial training for Key Workers should be put in place, covering skills in communication; motivational interviewing; working with vulnerable and complex prisoners; report writing; and reflective practice.⁵⁶ The author recommends that this takes place over a 5-day period with several additional sessions for on-going learning. This should also include some establishment specific training.⁵⁷
- ❑ Initial training should take place several months after the Prison Officers are in their role, to prevent an overload of information during initial training, and so they already understand the Prison Officer role.

- ❑ The training programme should be co-created by a range of professionals and stakeholders including academics, psychologist, mental health experts, and Prison Officers, to ensure it meets training needs and is in a format Prison Officers will engage with.⁵⁸

For Establishments

Key Worker Booklets specific to the establishment

- ❑ There should be two parts to this, the first being a unified guide to Key Working for staff at all establishments, outlining the purpose of Key Working; ways Prison Officers can support prisoners; and information on prison processes and national support.
- ❑ The second part should be prison specific, outlining what provision of support and services are available internally and externally, and key points of contact to signpost prisoners to. An email and phone directory should be included. This could be produced as a template for establishments to tailor to their own needs.
- ❑ This will need to be short and concise to ensure optimal engagement. Staff should be encouraged to use this in their day-to-day work.

Key Worker Hubs

- ❑ Each Houseblock should have a Key Worker hub containing computers, phones, resource booklets, worksheets, and Key Worker booklets, so staff can facilitate private sessions and have designated resources to complete the role.⁵⁹
- ❑ This may be hindered by prison design and limited space, especially in older prisons. But efforts should be made to overcome this, such as a central Key Working Hub for all Houseblocks if not possible on each Houseblock.

Key Worker Supervising Officers/Managers

- ❑ Each establishment should have a Supervising Officer or Manager overseeing and supporting Key Working. Their role would be to carry out QA; provide feedback; and support in training and supervision.

54. Renehan, E., Goeman, D., Kock, S. (2017). See n. 32

55. Manning, R. (2014). See n. 34

56. Morrison, K. (2019). See n. 51

57. For a more comprehensive overview of the recommended training, please contact the author.

58. Weel-Baumgarten, E., Benson, J., Hoshi, G., Hurlle, C., Mendive, J., Dowrick, C., Kassai, R. (2021). Co-creation and collaboration: A promising approach towards successful implementation. Experience from an integrated communication and mental health skills training programme for Japanese General Practice. *Patient Education and Counselling*, 104(19), 2386-2392.

59. Renehan, E., Goeman, D., Kock, S. (2017). See n.32

- They would be a key point of contact to the OMiC policy team, to share good practice and implement a unified approach.

These recommendations should be trialled and evaluated to ensure their effectiveness. Some recommendations are already in place at some establishments, so these will be easier to evaluate, such as the Key Worker Supervising Officer.

Conclusion

The Key Worker role has potential to overcome some of the challenges facing the UK Prison system in achieving its core aim of rehabilitation — namely negative staff cultures and high turnover rates. The role can ensure that all prisoners have access to the array of provisions and services available to support them in their reintegration back into society. This can only work however, if the workforce is sufficiently trained and professionalised, both as Prison Officers, and Key Workers. Otherwise, the gap between the 'What Works' literature and the prison reality will remain.

These findings suggest that there is still a long way to go in embedding a culture and skillset among all

Prison Officers, that aligns with HMPPS values. Selectivity in recruitment will ensure new recruits possess the values and skillsets necessary to support offender rehabilitation. Additionally, further training and education is required to ensure professionalisation of the role. It is the author's belief that with the right combination of blended learning, support, and provision of resources, the Key Worker role may transform the culture in UK prisons. In turn, this will improve the quality of services provided, and more positive outcomes will be achieved.

It is important to be realistic however, Key Working is not going to be a magical fix to reduce all reoffending. As leading desistance theories outline, offenders themselves must have the desire and agency to change.⁶⁰ And many internal and external factors may prevent a Key Worker from having a meaningful impact. Further, it is essential to ensure a strong focus on security remains, and that this is balanced with a focus on rehabilitation, not undermined by it. What Key Working can do though, is provide those with the propensity and desire to change, the motivation and access to support they would not have otherwise had.

60. Tyler, N., Heffernan, R., Fortune, C. (2020). Reorienting Locus of Control in Individuals Who Have Offended Through Strengths-Based Interventions: Personal Agency and the Good Lives Model. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11.