Sustaining Change and Effectiveness in Prisons

A study of the perceptions, experiences and attitudes of operational prison staff towards the keyworker scheme in a young offender establishment

Galina Ignatova is a Safety Analyst within HM Prison Service and an ambassador of the Unlocked Graduates Programme.

Introduction

The keyworker scheme was introduced in 2018 as part of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model,[1] proposed by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS, now His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service),[2] in response to the increasing levels of self-harm and violence in prisons.[3] The OMiC model built on the personal officer scheme, which sought to achieve positive staff-prisoner interaction and encouraged the development of constructive staff-prisoner relationships, associated with improved safety and security and offender rehabilitation.[4]

Note. Models adapted from HMPPS OMiC Key Work Guidance (2018)

Figure 1. Overarching Aspects of the keywork model.

Figure 2. Implementation Goals of the keywork model.

1.   Her Majesty Prison & Probation Service. (2018). HMPPS OMiC Key Work Guidance. *HMPPS Intranet.*
2.   Ministry of Justice. (2016). *Prison safety and reform. Presented to Parliament by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice by Command of Her Majesty.*
3.   Ministry of Justice. (2021) *The UK's response to the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment's visit report from October 2020.*
4.   House of Commons. (2009, November 03). *National Offender Management Service.* Parliament.UK.

The OMiC guidance outlined that all those in male closed establishments, should be allocated a trained keyworker for an average of 45 minutes per week who will support them holistically.[5] Additionally, the keyworker was appointed as a singular point of contact for different departments working with the offender, taking part in sentence management, and assisting in formulating a personalised support plan (Figures 1 and 2).[6]

The keyworker model is well established in other disciplines, for example, social and residential care,[7] probation services,[8] secure accommodation,[9] personality disorder treatment units,[10] and homelessness support,[11] with research demonstrating numerous benefits for both the service users and the practitioners. However, research has also demonstrated that factors such as inconsistencies in keyworker allocation and their dual responsibility for both care and control can produce unpredictability in relationships, with the potential to undermine trust in others and the formation of future meaningful relationships.[12] Therefore, continuity, consistency and stability are central to establishing trust and ensuring positive outcomes.

In prison settings, keyworker meetings are part of rehabilitative work conducted by prison staff in supporting offenders' positive development through trusting relationships.[13] Batty recognised that an end-to-end approach to rehabilitation which is holistic, consistent, flexible and recognises individuals' strengths was necessary to achieve lasting change. In addition to promoting rehabilitative values, strengthening staff-prisoner relationships through consistent engagement can improve safety and dynamic security by providing intelligence, enhancing trust, and offering clarity and transparency of expectations related to prison policies.[14]

A review of the early implementation of the scheme examined attitudes towards keywork in prisons and found that both officers and offenders appreciated the opportunity to share time together and develop positive relationships.[15] Specifically, prisoners valued being listened to and the opportunity to get involved in their rehabilitation, while officers appreciated the prospect of making a difference and positively impacting offenders' future. In an unpublished study investigating offenders' experiences and perceptions of keywork, Martin and Wheatley found that some individuals had constructive experiences, including perceptions of genuine care and identification of keyworkers as positive role models, who provided practical and emotional support. However, others did not feel that they benefited from the scheme or developed therapeutic relationships with their keyworker. These individuals did not value support from a keyworker, either because they did not feel they needed it, because they did not get on with or feel genuinely supported by them, or because they felt that they overstepped personal boundaries. The researchers also found discrepancies between the intentions of the OMiC policy and its practical implementation, resulting in inconsistencies between keyworker approaches and reduced satisfaction of the scheme.

More recently, HM Inspectorate of Probation concluded that the OMiC model is not delivering the

> In prison settings, keyworker meetings are part of rehabilitative work conducted by prison staff in supporting offenders' positive development through trusting relationships.

5. Ministry of Justice. (2018) *Policy name: Manage the Custodial Sentence Policy Framework.* HM Prison and Probation Service.
6. Her Majesty Prison & Probation Service. (2018). HMPPS OMiC Key Work Guidance. *HMPPS Intranet.*
7. Cahill, O., Holt, S., & Kirwan, G. (2016). Keyworking in residential child care: Lessons from research. *Children and Youth Services Review,* 65, 216-223.
8. Batty, E. (2020). 'Without the Right Support Network I'd Probably Be Either Dead or in the Prison System': The Role of Support in Helping Offenders on their Journey to Desistance. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice,* 59(2), 174-193.
9. Shaw, J., & Forster, O. (2018). How do high-risk young adult prisoners with emerging personality disorders describe the process of change in therapy?. *Journal of Forensic Practice,* 20(1), 32-41.
10. McMurran, M., & Delight, S. (2017). Processes of change in an offender personality disorder pathway prison progression unit. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health,* 27(3), 254–264.
11. McGrath, L. (1999). *Keyworker and resident perceptions of keyworking relationships in hostels for young homeless people.* [PhD thesis, University of London, University College London]. ProQuest.
12. McKellar, A., & Kendrick, A. (2013). Key working and the quality of relationships in secure accommodation. *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care,* 12(1), 46-57.
13. Ministry of Justice. (2018) *Policy name: Manage the Custodial Sentence Policy Framework.* HM Prison and Probation Service.
14. Liebling, A. (2011). Distinctions and distinctiveness in the work of prison officers: Legitimacy and authority revisited. *European Journal of Criminology,* 8(6), 484-499.
15. Talbot, S. (2018, October 4). Changing the way we manage prisoners. Working in the Prison and Probation Service. *Gov.Uk.*

expected theoretical standards in practice and needs reframing in order to overcome implementation challenges and achieve realistic positive outcomes.[16] Some of the issues identified were lack of interdepartmental communication, lack of continuity and consistency and a lack of understanding of the OMiC model and its practical implementation, among probation staff, prison staff and the prisoners. The model was deemed overly complex and too inflexible to be successfully implemented in practice, particularly within the current context of staff shortages. The model's potential to enhance rehabilitative culture and support individuals in prison has been undermined by limited training and resources, diminishing staff motivation and perceived capability in delivering keywork.[17] Nevertheless, as noted by the Inspectorate, prison staff continue in their efforts to deliver the model, often motivated by short-term positive outcomes observed for the individuals in their care.

It is important to note that the implementation and consistency of the scheme was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in widespread staff shortages, social distancing, and regime changes, along with limited resources being available to prison staff which were coupled with the added strain from the required time, materials, and training investment to successfully implement the model in prisons.

Change Management

Similar issues with effectiveness and inconsistency in implementing new models of work, which deviated from their design, were identified by the Prison Reform Trust (PRT) and Professor Liebling.[18] For example, PRT found that the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) Scheme lacked integration into wider regimes and focused extensively on maintaining control, thus deviating from its rehabilitative principles. A major concern was the accelerated introduction of the scheme overlooked important change management stages, such as communication of vision and goals, training provision and leadership investment. Liebling similarly described a lack of clarity and training, ineffective management and discrepancies between policy and practice related to the scheme. This suggests a pattern of inadequate change implementation in prisons, with differing investment priorities and inconsistent change management strategy.[19] Issues with uncertainty and prior unsuccessful change strategies can lead to frustration and change fatigue, depleting staff motivation and undermining the change process.[20]

Change management models provide a structured framework for considering organisational change processes and a frame of reference that can be applied to the practical implementation of new initiatives to ensure that they are effectively implemented and support organisational transformation.[21] Öhman combined fundamentals of the three most influential change management theories: Lewin's Three-Step Model,[22] Kotter's Eight-Step Model,[23] and Hiatt's ADKAR Model,[24] to develop a five-part Successful Change Process (SCP) model (Figure 3).[25]

The five elements of achieving successful organisational change identified were:

1. Exploring the purpose and need for change.
2. Including employees in the change effort.
3. Recognising the differences in perspectives, believes and expectations of the different generations.
4. Providing training and developing skills, and
5. Leadership-by-example.

Communication, evaluation, and celebration of short-term achievements should be present within each step.

16. HM inspectorate of Probation (2022) Offender Management in Custody (pre-release) – A joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons November 2022.
17. Cracknell, M. (2021). 'Trying to make it matter': The challenges of assimilating a resettlement culture into a 'local' prison. *Criminology & Criminal Justice,* 00(0,)1-18.
18. Prison Reform Trust. (1999). Prison Incentive Schemes. *Probation Journal,* 46(2),130-130; Liebling, A. (2008). Incentives and earned privileges revisited: Fairness, discretion, and the quality of prison life. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention,* 9(S1), 25-41.
19. Bovey, W. H., & Hede, A. (2001). Resistance to organisational change: the role of defence mechanisms. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 16(7), 534-548
20. Cracknell, M. (2021). 'Trying to make it matter': The challenges of assimilating a resettlement culture into a 'local' prison. *Criminology & Criminal Justice,* 00(0,)1-18; Gozzoli, C., D'Angelo, C., & Tamanza, G. (2018). Training and resistance to change: Work with a group of prison guards. *World Futures,* 74(6), 426-449.
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23. Kotter, J. P. (1995). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review,* 73(2), 59-67
24. Hiatt, J. M. (2006). The Essence of ADKAR: a model for individual change management. *Fort Collins Colorado: Prosci.*
25. Öhman, J. (2018). *Developing a model for successful organizational change: Case 3M Nordic Region.* [MS Thesis, Arcada International Business Management]. Theseus.

Note. Model adapted from Öhman (2018)

Figure 3. *The Successful Change Process Model.*

Rationale and Research Objectives

This study investigated the management of change in a young offender establishment (with the support of the governor) using the implementation and effectiveness of the OMiC model as an example of an organisational change strategy. To understand how the policy was implemented, the perceptions, experiences, and attitudes of prison staff and management were explored. The SCP model was applied to provide context to the findings and inform recommendations to address the challenges identified in the implementation of the OMiC model.

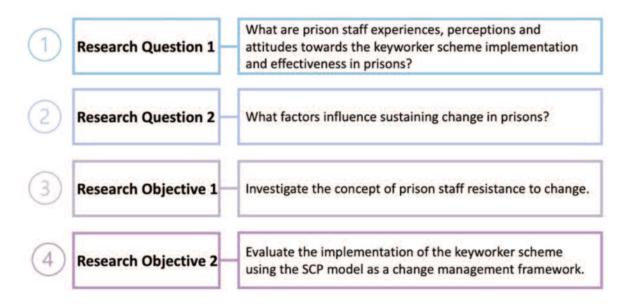The following research questions and objectives were addressed:

①	**Research Question 1**	What are prison staff experiences, perceptions and attitudes towards the keyworker scheme implementation and effectiveness in prisons?
②	**Research Question 2**	What factors influence sustaining change in prisons?
③	**Research Objective 1**	Investigate the concept of prison staff resistance to change.
④	**Research Objective 2**	Evaluate the implementation of the keyworker scheme using the SCP model as a change management framework.

Figure 4. *Research Questions and Objectives.*

Methodology

Design

A qualitative study design was used in this research to gather rich, meaningful data closely associated with participants' experienced reality and interpretation of events. The face-to-face, semi-structured interviews facilitated the researchers' active participation in the study, enabling the collection of valid and reliable responses. Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the raw participant data to provide trustworthy and insightful findings. Ethical approval was obtained from Leeds Trinity University and HMPPS National Research Committee. Data collection took place between 10/02/2022 and 23/04/2022.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used in recruiting participants to enable criteria-driven selection of individuals with experiences directly related to the research subject matter. The eligibility criteria for participation included: 1) Operational prison staff and 2a) Current keyworker with proven keywork meetings in the past three months or 2b) Keywork managers involved in the implementation of OMiC. Eight participants were recruited, including two New Staff Members (NSMs) with no experience of the initial OMiC model launch, four Experienced Staff Members (ESMs) with experience of the initial OMiC model launch and training, and two keywork managers.

Process

Participant responses were structured into thematic network diagrams, representing the frequency analysis for each theme and the relationships between themes. Quotations were included from participants to provide a detailed account of their lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes.

Results and Discussion

Implementation of the OMiC model

The OMiC policy expected that keyworkers be equipped with skills to coach self-efficacy strategies, such as self-management and self-motivation, and foster rehabilitative attitudes. Accordingly, the regime was expected to provide flexibility to enable individuals to take responsibility for their daily routines to aid rehabilitation. However, the researcher's personal experience as a keyworker differed from the policy expectations in terms of facilitating understanding of the role, providing the required skill development, and enabling a flexible environment to conduct quality keyworker meetings. They were unable to support individuals holistically due to the lack of continuity in keyworker allocations, inconsistent meeting allocations and available support. Participants saw the lack of continuity and follow-up as a barrier to encouraging autonomy, however, there was also the perception of wider organisational barriers preventing individuals from taking control over aspects of their lives, which diminished the prospects of the expected long-term rehabilitative benefits for prisoners.

'It's a 'Can you do this for me?' but that's partially also because for a lot of the stuff they want, they literally have no power over it.' (NSM)

'... it's kind of just easier to do it for them because you don't really feel they're gonna do it because you're not having that follow up.' (ESM)

Issues with consistency and continuity in the facilitation of new policies are not uncommon in the prison system.[26] For example, PRT noted the presence of systemic barriers in the implementation of the IEP scheme, such as ineffective integration into the daily regime, rushed introduction and lack of understanding by operational staff.[27] Participants drew attention to significant discrepancies between policy and practice in the sustained implementation of the keyworker scheme. For example, policy objectives regarding continuity and consistency and interdepartmental collaboration, were not effectively implemented, leading to the perception amongst keyworkers that the model 'doesn't work' and is a 'waste of time'.

'...it doesn't work, because we are just chucked onto a different landing every single

> Meaningful data closely associated with participants' experienced reality and interpretation of events.

26.   Liebling, A. (2008). Incentives and earned privileges revisited: Fairness, discretion, and the quality of prison life. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention,* 9(S1), 25-41.

27.   Prison Reform Trust. (1999). Prison Incentive Schemes. *Probation Journal,* 46(2),130-130

day that you're key worker, and you're rarely on key worker' (NSM)

'…the main role of the keyworker, it's to follow them from First Nights through being on the wings to release. I think that's, for most part, what we don't get.' (ESM)

'If we go by the OMiC model, the key workers should be in contact with the POMs in OMU and the POMs should be in contact with the units, which was not possible during covid.' (Manager)

Participants also discussed issues with the practical aspects of OMiC delivery within the establishment, identifying concerns for both prison staff delivering the model and prisoners subjected to it. Overall impressions were that the model did not reflect the policy intentions, referring to it as 'poor', due to implementation challenges, some of which stemmed from the pandemic, such as time allocation for keywork.

'…what key working was originally designed for in the depth of understanding, it doesn't reflect well, any amount of time we actually get with them.' (NSM)

'…the delivery of the key working model is poor due to the influence of covid in the last couple of years.' (Manager)

Participants noted practical difficulties which resulted in reduced engagement from prisoners, arising from systemic blockages, including uncertainty of the offer, and required support, lack of availability of safe and private spaces for keywork meetings, and an inability to set effective goals or follow-up progress.

'…when it first started, then you could use the OMiC room to do your interviews and

stuff which was really good and there were certain rooms on the units that you could use. Now we… have to stay at the door half the time…' (ESM)

'So [now] you could probably set short goals, but then you can't really follow them up to see if they are reached or not because you've got different lads.' (ESM)

'…he had a key worker session the day before with a totally different prison officer… so he's obviously thinking 'What's the point at the moment of talking to a key worker? Of talking to someone different every day?" (ESM)

Vision

Introducing lasting organisational transformation requires clear communication through a variety of channels of the vision and benefit of the change through demonstrating why the change is needed and how it will benefit the establishment, employees and beneficiaries to ignite staff interest and underpin its success.[28] Staff support is essential for policy and change implementation, with evidence suggesting that employees do not typically resist change itself, but oppose uncertainty, impractical ideas, management styles, and systemic obstacles.[29] Ineffective communication, expressed in a lack of feedback and clarity of expectation, has been linked in prison research to increased perceived difficulty of the job, work-related strain and staff burnout.[30] Therefore, effective communication is essential for maintaining employee motivation to ensure the success of the change effort. Participants' comments on implementation suggested that they were not cited on the vision for the model and lacked buy-in to its potential. For example, they referred to keywork as a 'tick-box exercise' and 'pointless' and noted uncertainty about task expectations and performance. Their interpretations of keywork delivery related to increased perceived

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28. Öhman, J. (2018). *Developing a model for successful organizational change: Case 3M Nordic Region*. [MS Thesis, Arcada International Business Management]. Theseus.
29. Dent, E. B., & Goldberg, S. G. (1999). Challenging "resistance to change". The Journal of applied Behavioral Science, 35(1), 25-41.
30. Lambert, E. G., Hogan, N. L., Dial, K. C., Jiang, S., & Khondaker, M. I. (2012). Is the job burning me out? An exploratory test of the job characteristics model on the emotional burnout of prison staff. *The Prison Journal,* 92(1), 3-23.

difficulty of their role and scepticism about implementing change.

> *'I think there's more of a mend it while you go along sort of thing.'* (NSM)

> *So, there is just, it's not [lack of] motivation of getting them done it's just physically can't get it done… it's just hard… to get it done.'* (ESM)

Lack of clarity is considered a key factor in staff resistance towards organisational change.[31] Participants characterised the implementation of the OMiC model as having uncertainty of purpose and direction. For example, keyworkers considered that there was a lack of clarity of the overall role of keyworkers which they wish to see more clearly defined and perceived the model as 'not taken seriously' and executed 'half-heartedly'.

> *'… what I would say is keywork is not taken seriously. It seems almost spare.'* (NSM)

> *'So, I do think it can work when you invest in it… but we've always done things half-heartedly'* (Manager)

Procedural barriers were also evident in participants' accounts, including conflicting security recommendations, such as an inability to grant time out of cell during the evening patrol, yet time for keywork sessions was allocated during the evening patrol.

> *'…that period in the evening is a bit funny because… it technically is patrol state, but it's not. So, we could open the door to do it but it's still not best practice to.'* (NSM)

> *'It's all good keeping these 90 minutes… when they are supposed to be banged up. …*

you can't be unlocking lads unfortunately at that time.' (ESM)

Involvement in the change effort

Unsuccessful change implementation is common within organisations, constituting a short-lived success followed by a return to the status quo.[32] However, the failure to produce sustainable change can result in longer-term dismissive attitudes among employees,[33] diminishing management credibility and fostering scepticism of future change initiatives.[34] Including and empowering employees to support change are integral aspects of successful change implementation in Öhman's model, with staff involvement being seen as providing invaluable input and motivating the development of positive attitudes. Deep organisational structural and cultural shifts are typically required to provide opportunities for employees to be included in change initiatives.[35] Nevertheless, this is possible to implement in a prison context, with Coyle arguing that effective change implementation can be driven collectively by employees at all organisational levels through involvement in decision-making.[36] There was a contrast between NSMs' aspirations for involvement and ESMs' distrust in management, demonstrating lack of rapport between the ranks.

> *'… I've just started picking my own [people to keywork]… if I've had a lad for a day and I feel like I've made progress, or I've got something set up for them for when they get released…'* (NSM)

> *'No, you never get asked [to share ideas], for them you're just a number. Why would they ask us?'* (ESM)

> ## Unsuccessful change implementation is common within organisations, constituting a short-lived success followed by a return to the status quo.

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31. Dent, E. B., & Goldberg, S. G. (1999). Challenging "resistance to change". *The Journal of applied Behavioral Science,* 35(1), 25-41.
32. Roberto, M. A., & Levesque, L. C. (2005). The art of making change initiatives stick. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 46(4), 53.
33. Gozzoli, C., D'Angelo, C., & Tamanza, G. (2018). Training and resistance to change: Work with a group of prison guards. *World Futures,* 74(6), 426-449.
34. Roberto, M. A., & Levesque, L. C. (2005). The art of making change initiatives stick. *MIT Sloan Management Review,* 46(4), 53.
35. Bovey, W. H., & Hede, A. (2001). Resistance to organisational change: the role of defence mechanisms. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 16(7), 534-548.
36. Coyle, A. (2013). Change management in prisons. In *Understanding Prison Staff,* 250-265. Willan.

Employee benefit is an important part of the communication stage in change management models, to reduce resistance and encourage involvement in the change effort.[37] Opportunity for keyworker contribution and development was intended to be an integral part of the OMiC model, which included ongoing quality monitoring, performance development reviews and support through keywork champions. However, participants indicated that these opportunities were no longer available to them, resulting in low perceived value of their involvement in keywork. Importantly, there was a discrepancy between keyworkers and managers perspectives, demonstrating that the benefit to staff was not explicitly considered by management when evaluating the benefits of OMiC.

'…you used to get scored for that quality work… I was so proud of my key working sessions and was getting good scores' (ESM)

'…score them and then let people know as well where their weaknesses are or where their strengths are. They don't really tell you.' (ESM)

'How can we measure the quality of the key working sessions? …in time we will be looking for correlations between key worker delivery and violence, self-harm…' (Manager)

Recognising differences in perspective

Recognising individual-based differences in experiences, perspectives and expectations is another key step in successful change implementation. Knowledge gaps between individuals, such as different training or experiences, and shared direct experiences of ineffective change implementation have been linked to change-related resistance and cynicism.[38] Participants' accounts revealed significant differences in experience between NSMs and ESMs. The latter compared the initial and current implementation and observed that while the initial implementation was aligned with the OMiC policy and worked well in practice, this gradually changed into different practices, which lacked clarity of vision, training, and effective management and which they regarded as unsatisfactory.

'I remember when we started originally, it was really brilliant, because you were allocated time, and that time couldn't be changed.' (ESM)

'Yeah... keywork scheme ... my experience is that when you're doing it, it does work well.' (ESM)

A lack of understanding and communication between the different ranks in the establishment also resulted in frustration between staff and managers.

'The keyworker got less and less and less…' (ESM)

NSMs' accounts demonstrated that they lacked knowledge of the initial purpose of the keyworker scheme and instead grounded their practice on observations of ESMs, who were equally confused.

'… a lot of it is just making up. You personally, as an officer as you go along.' (NSM)

'No one really tells you what is expected of you as a key worker anymore.' (ESM)

A lack of understanding and communication between the different ranks in the establishment also resulted in frustration between staff and managers, indicating mutual blame for the shortfalls of the OMiC implementation.

'I also don't think management style of keywork is very good because … I think that promotes the box-ticking nature of it…' (NSM)

'So, it is not managed well. But at the start it was managed.' (ESM)

37. Öhman, J. (2018). *Developing a model for successful organizational change: Case 3M Nordic Region.* [MS Thesis, Arcada International Business Management]. Theseus.
38. DeCelles, K. A., Tesluk, P. E., & Taxman, F. S. (2013). A field investigation of multilevel cynicism toward change. *Organization Science,* 24(1), 154-171.

'The keyworker meetings are not good, there is no quality, and the quantity is insufficient as keyworkers are not conducting and recording the meetings.' (Manager)

'I was trained about three years ago. It was a very intensive training; it was really good to be fair. There has been nothing since the training.' (ESM)

Training and skills development

Developing skills through training is an essential part of change management models, enabling leaders to clearly communicate employees' roles and responsibilities in implementing organisational change.[39] Coyle proposed that prison leaders should aim to inspire the vision for change and establish the change parameters, by providing training and resources, while allowing staff to take initiative in modelling the practical elements of change delivery.[40] Initial and ongoing training was intended to be an integral part of OMiC. Participants agreed on the importance of skill development for the successful delivery of OMiC, concluding that training provision required improvement, corresponding with Öhman's change management model's recommendations. Organisations often fail to invest the necessary training resources to facilitate and sustain the planned change,[41] and often the initial training does not translate well into the lived experience of the prison environment.[42] This was evident in participants' accounts.

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'Specific training — No! I want to say when we first got trained, they've taught us something, but at that point, I didn't know what anything meant because before I've never set foot in a prison … it's not the same as actually doing it.' (NSM)

Leadership

Successfully implementing organisational change requires effective leadership and cooperation between employees and management. Participants' observations paralleled Liebling's findings of lack of decision-making accountability and ineffective management in the implementation of the IEP scheme.[43] For example, all participants expressed concerns regarding management and the low priority of keywork delivery in the establishment. Frontline staff experiences differed from those of managers, indicating lack of communication and mutual understanding of the purposes and procedures, along with differing perceptions of accountability for the delivery and outcomes. For example, frontline staff emphasised poor management whereas managerial staff emphasised poor delivery.

Employee empowerment is an important aspect of change management models, with a leadership by example strategy, consisting of management 'living the change' and offering support and coaching to inspire employee motivation and participation.[44] The OMiC model recommended effective leadership strategies and continuous support for keyworkers through group meetings to aid motivation and resolve potential challenges. However, participants expressed concerns regarding management and the low priority of keywork delivery in the establishment, referring to the current structure as 'skeleton' like, while managers

39. Öhman, J. (2018). *Developing a model for successful organizational change: Case 3M Nordic Region.* [MS Thesis, Arcada International Business Management]. Theseus.
40. Coyle, A. (2013). Change management in prisons. In *Understanding Prison Staff,* 250-265. Willan.
41. Bovey, W. H., & Hede, A. (2001). Resistance to organisational change: the role of defence mechanisms. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 16(7), 534-548.
42. Coyle, A. (2002). *Managing prisons in a time of change.* London: International Centre for Prison Studies.
43. Liebling, A. (2008). Incentives and earned privileges revisited: Fairness, discretion, and the quality of prison life. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention,* 9(S1), 25-41.
44. Öhman, J. (2018). *Developing a model for successful organizational change: Case 3M Nordic Region.* [MS Thesis, Arcada International Business Management]. Theseus.

agreed that currently the OMiC delivery is not prioritised.

> *'The difficulty is … the prison service…I would say runs quite skeleton stuff.'* (NSM)

> *'Unfortunately, at the moment the keyworker scheme is not seen as a big priority. Therefore, we prioritise everything before the keyworker scheme and that's why people get re-deployed so often.'* (Manager)

Change management models stipulate that motivation for change must be considered and generated before any change can be initiated, with the SCP model including focus on maintaining motivation throughout the change process through continuous communication, evaluation, and recognition of effort. Positive employee attitudes are essential

> ## Positive employee attitudes are essential for the successful implementation of policy in the prison system.

for the successful implementation of policy in the prison system and require clarity and understanding of the policy's benefits.[45] Further, Coyle argued that change is dependent on staff attitudes and motivation, which in turn rely on factors, such as confidence in management and consistency of leadership investment.[46] Participants' positive perceptions and attitudes of the OMiC potential in creating a constructive change in the establishment and motivation to support its efficacy were identified as prospective contributors to future effectiveness.

> *'100 per cent keyworker sessions do work. If you've got the time to do them.'* (NSM)

> *'We saw the initial benefit of the keyworker scheme before covid. It has a massive influence on security, self-harm.'* (Manager)

However, these optimistic views were combined with scepticism arising from past experiences of systemic barriers, inconsistency, and superficial application.

> *'I'll be honest, it is just firefighting. There is very little about it, that is … 'Let's look post your sentence. Let's look at your life. Let's look at how you manage '… There isn't anything to do with how to stop offending behaviour.'* (NSM)

Staff investment is fundamental for the OMiC policy delivery, as emphasised by one manager's reflections on what needed to change to counteract the present pessimistic outlook.

> *'We will need a complete change of mindset to be able to do the keyworker scheme appropriately.'* (Manager)

Recommendations

The research recommendations drew on staff concerns and suggestions for improvement and were also informed by the existing literature on change management and Öhman's SCP framework.[47] The primary recommendation is the adoption of a five-step action plan (illustrated in Figure 5) to refresh the implementation of OMiC at the establishment. Fundamental to the plan is the development of a strong transformational leadership team, determined to remove systemic blockages and adopt robust communication strategies.[48] Replacing the current top-down hierarchical form of communication with an interconnective communication system, through encouraging individuals to express ideas, provide feedback and get actively involved in the change effort would promote positive relationships development and collaborative environment.[49] To optimise effectiveness, communication and evaluation should begin before the start of the change effort and be applied alongside all five stages.[50] Splitting the change effort into small, short-term targets would create space to evaluate and adjust, recognise and reward best practice, and improve the relationship between the leadership team and keyworkers.

45. Liebling, A. (2008). Incentives and earned privileges revisited: Fairness, discretion, and the quality of prison life. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention,* 9(S1), 25-41.
46. Coyle, A. (2002). *Managing prisons in a time of change.* London: International Centre for Prison Studies.
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Step 1 Clarify

Clarifying the vision, purpose and benefit of the OMiC model to staff, though positive, simple and direct communication via all available channels.
Ensuring staff's knowledge and understanding of the OMiC model's priority position, leadership group, practical implementation strategies, development and progression, stakeholders and processes involved.
Defining the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the keyworker role and addressing misconceptions and contradictions between different policies.

Step 2 Involve

Establishing an effective communication system adopting an interconnection approach between different ranks in the establishment
Involving keyworkers in decision-making through open collaboration and communication, opportunities for idea generation and feedback loop.
Focusing on Interdepartmental Collaboration through keyworkers involvement as holistic point of contact in prisoners' journey, sentence planning and rehabilitation.
Planning for forums, group support meetings and team building opportunities.

Step 3 Consider Different Perspectives

Identifying similarities and differences in keyworkers perspectives and attitudes in terms of age, experience and training.
Tailoring the leadership approach and training provision according to the strengths and weaknesses of individual keyworkers.
Accounting for gaps in experience and misconceptions in understanding and ensuring a unified wholistic delivery of keywork through adopting an individualised approach.

Step 4 Training & Resources

Developing a standardized training package based on the OMiC model for initial training or re-training of all keyworkers and ongoing refresher training.
Incentivising and establishing the keywork champion model though additional qualifications, time-provision for assisting keywork and leadership opportunities.
Providing essential resources, skills, support and feedback to keyworkers.
Emphasising the behaviours necessary during the transition period and delivery of the OMiC model.

Step 5 Empower

Creating a strong management team promoting the vision of the OMiC policy and empowering individual keyworkers.
Ensuring Consistency and Continuity in management, delivery and support.
Investing in attitude and motivation improvement through short-term target setting, recognising and rewarding best practice and frequent success planning.
Creating an environment of collaboration, inconsequential freedom of expression and appreciation of keyworker contributions and ideas.
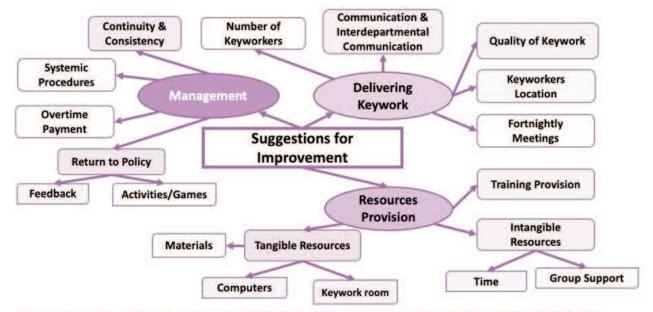
Note. This five-step recommendation plan was adapted from Öhman's (2018) SCP model of organisational change implementation.

Figure 5. *Recommendations for future implementation of the OMiC model.*

Participants suggested improvement in the core areas identified to be implemented ineffectively, including management, continuity, and consistency, keywork delivery and training and resource provision. Notably, ESMs suggested a return to the approach prescribed in the policy, while managers discussed plans to better align policy and practice, suggesting overtime payment as an incentive to motivate staff.

Provision of resources and ongoing training were mentioned by all participants, as was the need for time allocation during the core regime. Tangible resources, such as computers and a keyworker hub, were discussed predominantly by ESMs and managers, who had knowledge of how these were used in early implementation. Managers outlined plans for future implementation including providing keyworkers with opportunities for reflection, peer and group support and demonstrating understanding of the emotional and mental challenges associated with the role.

Other proposals related to changes in keywork delivery, such as improvements in communication and interdepartmental collaboration and quality assurance. In particular, keyworkers discussed implementation practicalities, such as number of assigned individuals, frequency and location of meetings, whereas managers discussed interdepartmental links, future plans and strategies for measuring impact.

Note. Colour Gradient represents frequency of mentions within the transcripts, with darker colour representing higher frequency. Each Organising Theme has the collective frequency of the subthemes.

Figure 6. *Thematic Network of Participant Responses on the Global Theme of Suggestions for Improvement.*

Conclusion

Participants' perspectives revealed major concerns around the practical implementation of OMiC policy, differential experiences of NSMs and ESMs, and opposing perspectives of management and keyworkers of the underlying reasons preventing effective implementation, resulting from ineffective communication strategies. Key elements of the policy, including continuity and consistency, communication and interdepartmental collaboration and keyworker involvement in decision making were not effectively applied in the delivery. Importantly, systemic blockages and misconceptions surrounding policy priorities, were not accounted for in OMiC guidance and this posed challenges rather than solutions for individuals on the frontline.

Using a change management framework to develop the structural, procedural, and motivational conditions would provide a focus to the effective leadership and targeted action necessary to overcome the existing challenges and implement the OMiC policy successfully. While the recommendations are specific to improving delivery of keywork in one establishment, the SCP model framework could be applied to support change implementation efforts in other prisons where OMiC is known also not to be operating as intended as well as to future operational policy changes.