

OFFENDER NEEDS PROJECT GROUP: Report produced by Forensic Pathways Ltd. Executive Summary

A project group was set up to develop a mechanism to draw together offender needs data within the region. This was to inform programme priorities, service delivery, offender management and the sequencing of strategic interventions to match offender need. The group comprises of public sector prison (Anne Williams, Area Principal Psychologist), probation provider (Tony Brewerton, Regional Project Manager) and ROM team (Michelle Downer/Lisa MacDonald).

The ROM, in partnership with providers, commissioned a report from Forensic Pathways, a private sector company, to provide an insight into offender need within the West Midlands.

The main findings of this report are as follows:

Findings	Reason
Review and improve drug interventions for female offenders.	68.5% of women serving less than twelve months have a drug problem
Male young offenders need alcohol interventions not only to address their drinking but to address their offending behaviour and the risk they pose to other people.	Male young offenders serving less than twelve months have the highest rate of alcohol use. Male young offenders are more likely to engage in alcohol induced violent behaviour.
Female offenders need interventions to reduce their risk of self harm which may be linked to an underlying mental illness.	Female offenders are at a high risk of self harm.
The research supports splitting the alcohol and drugs pathway into two distinct pathways.	There is a greater emphasis on drug interventions than alcohol interventions but alcohol is more of a risk factor.
Add driving offences to the list of trigger offences that result in a drugs test or introduce interventions at the arrest stage.	14% of offences committed by people serving less than twelve months and with a drug problem are driving offences. Driving whilst disqualified is a common offence for offenders serving less than twelve months.
Better mental health interventions are needed both in isolation and in combination with other needs such as drugs and alcohol.	A high proportion of offenders have mental health problems.
Improve financial advice that is available to prisoners. Debt advice and help finding suitable	A high proportion of offenders have financial and relationship problems.

employment may help reduce re-offending especially when motivation to offend is primarily financial. Where appropriate include the offender's family or partner in financial advice.	
Offer more offenders help to get into employment once they have left prison.	The majority of offenders are unemployed.
Use "Trigger Offences" to investigate offender's alcohol problems at the time of arrest and also to deliver interventions to offenders. Forensic Pathways suggests that acquisitive, violent and driving offences be considered trigger offences.	Alcohol interventions need improving because alcohol and risk are linked. Alcohol in combination with other pathways also raises risk. There is also a link between alcohol use and certain crimes.
Extend the Drug Action Team's responsibilities to include alcohol interventions. Alternatively create a separate scheme and/or organisation to address and treat alcohol use.	Alcohol interventions need to be on the same scale as drug interventions
All offenders that commit an offence that is a trigger offence for drug interventions should also be screened separately for alcohol problems and offered appropriate treatment and advice.	Alcohol problems may occur with drug problems but may be overlooked by drug treatments.
Offer drug and alcohol interventions as an alternative to custodial sentences where appropriate.	There are a high number of offenders serving custodial sentence of less than twelve months for minor offences such as shoplifting and these offences may be linked to drug or alcohol use.

Some headlines from the report (N.B. These are in no particular order):

INDIVIDUAL PATHWAYS

Accommodation: Adult female offenders are more likely to be homeless than any other group.

ETE: High numbers of offenders are unemployed at the time of assessment (majority of short-sentenced offenders).

Alcohol: Male young offenders have the highest need overall, compared to other offender types.

Drugs: Female adult offenders are the group with the highest need.

Finances: Female young offenders have the highest need.

Relationships: Female young offenders have the highest need.

Thinking & Behaviour: Male young offenders have the highest need.

Mental Health: Female adult offenders have the highest need.

COMBINATION OF PATHWAYS & OFFENDER NEED

Offender needs relating to one or more of the pathways are directly linked to the offence(s) committed.

Adult Male: Relationships & Finance
Thinking Behaviour & Finance
Drugs & Finance
Relationships & Mental Health

Adult Female: Relationships & Finance
Relationships & Mental Health
Mental Health & Finance
Finance & Drugs
Thinking Behaviour & Finance
Relationships & Drugs

Young Offenders Male: Relationships & Finance
Finance & Alcohol
Thinking Behaviour & Finance
Finance & Unemployment
Relationships & Alcohol
Thinking Behaviour & Alcohol

Young Offender Female: Relationships & Finance
Finance & Alcohol & Drugs
Relationships & Alcohol
Mental Health & Alcohol
Mental Health & Finance
Relationships & Mental Health
Thinking Behaviour & Alcohol & Finance

COMBINATIONS OF PATHWAYS & RISK

Areas of offender need that increase risk:

- Alcohol
- Mental Health
- Thinking Behaviour
- Combination of pathways involving Alcohol
- Combination of pathways involving Mental Health

Risk of Suicide:

Male: Mental Health,
Thinking Behaviour
Alcohol
Accommodation
Finances
Relationships

Key combination: Mental Health & Alcohol
Relationships, Mental Health, Drugs & Alcohol.

Female: Mental Health
Thinking Behaviour
Alcohol
Relationships
Accommodation
Finance

Key combination: Thinking Behaviour & Mental Health
Thinking Behaviour, Relationships, Drugs & Alcohol.

Risk to Others:

Male: Mental Health
Thinking Behaviour
Alcohol

Key combination: Mental Health & Accommodation
Thinking Behaviour & Mental Health

Female: Thinking Behaviour
Relationships
Alcohol

Key combination: Thinking Behaviour & Relationships
Thinking Behaviour & Mental Health

To agree the way forward:

It was agreed by the Joint Offender Need Project Group, that this report is best explored as part of the Pathway Leads “Engine Room” Meeting. Partly, due to account for and expand the existing work taking place within pathways, and the required signed-up working together of key agencies and organisations.

There are data gaps within the report, and the research findings need to be cross-referenced to current work taking place within the pathways.

The report concluded by stating that we should review the success of interventions and issues raised by RRAP. We already review progress in the individual pathways and the Pathways Leads “Engine Room” meeting via the performance framework; but we could also use suggested links in the report to identify softer measures to go alongside this framework?

Also, the report highlights the multiple needs of offenders and requirement of more than one intervention. There is an opportunity, as part of the Pathway Leads ‘Engine Room’ to consider sequencing between pathways, in addition to within.

Overall, there are opportunities which would be worth clarifying and exploring, once we have had longer to check out and compare different parts of data in the report. These include:

- links between different pathways in the “Engine Room”,
- cross-referencing of current provider work to needs identified in the report,
- actively considering risk to self (i.e., suicide and self-harm) in all pathways and not just risk to others,
- further developing sequencing within and across pathways.

To summarise, the offender need report is a very useful tool that can be further developed to full capacity by the Joint Offender Need Project Team supported by the ROM Analyst, and routinely incorporated into the Pathway Leads ‘Engine Room’ to ensure clarity and consistency.

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