



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Report title:	<u>RESTART Thames Valley</u>
Date:	15 th March 2024
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Purpose of the report:	At the request of the PCP
Recommendations:	For noting only

1. Executive Summary

This report is an update on the work of RESTART Thames Valley. An initial report was provided to the Police and Crime Panel in March 2023 focusing on a year-long pilot programme that started in May 2022 and which focused on supporting people leaving prison, including women and those on short-term sentences. This update focuses on developments since then notably an extension to the original pilot, changes to funding and the revised programme focus on delivering a service primarily to male prison leavers leaving HMP Bullingdon.

2. Background

The RESTART model was designed to help reduce reoffending of prisoners being released into the Thames Valley. The key element linked to breaking the cycle of reoffending was providing support to prisoners prior to and post-release from prison. The model was aimed at individuals not subject to Integrated Offender Management or MAPPA arrangements but who were nevertheless characterised by recidivism resulting in repeat prison sentences.

The initial pilot ran from May 2022 to end of April 2023 and the Executive Board (chaired by the PCC) agreed in January 2023 to extend the pilot for a further 12 months (to end of April 2024), jointly funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and the Director of Probation, South Central. This arrangement was further extended to enable delivery to continue until the end of October 2024 with a clear understanding that delivery will come to an end then. Plans are being developed to manage the ending of this intervention.

The delivery focus throughout has been to work with partners across the region to develop solutions to key challenges faced by people released from prison. Such challenges include the provision of and access to support, access to accommodation and work opportunities and engagement with numerous service providers. The initial 12-month pilot programme supported specific groups, including women and people on short-term sentences, and incorporated frontline support workers providing dedicated support to improve access to accommodation and work opportunities. This included a meet-at-gate service encompassing transport, accompaniment, advocacy, referral and smoother access to services.



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The second phase of the project focused on providing support, largely based on the above criteria, but primarily in relation to male prisoners leaving HMP Bullingdon. At this stage provision for women being released from prisons was separated from the remit of RESTART and provision for women is dealt with through a different delivery channel.

The initial pilot engaged multiple partners including the Probation Service and other experienced voluntary and community organisations covering the force area. Leading the delivery were Aspire Oxford, Browns Community Service CIC, Connection Support, Parents and Children Together (PACT) and Thames Valley Partnership. The second phase had a condensed frontline delivery service to work within a lower budget envelopment and was driven by Aspire Oxford, Connection Support and Thames Valley Partnership.

The RESTART model benefits from user-friendly engagement access by prisoners to frontline workers and the ability to form working relationships with prisoners while they are still in custody as well as the meet-at-the gate provision are considered to be strengths. Feedback from staff at HMP Bullingdon has been very positive in relation to this ease of access. Feedback from practice leads has identified that support in relation to accommodation issues is the most significant factor facing prison leavers. Substance misuse is identified as the second highest problem issue.

As of the end of February 2024 387 cases had been recommended to RESTART since the programme inception. Prisoner self-recommendations are a key component of this delivery model.

Independent evaluation to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the programme is being commissioned and this will include analysis and recommendations about how the key learning points might be applied to resettlement priorities post RESTART. Furthermore the Ministry of Justice Local Leadership and Integration Fund assigned a national evaluator (TONIC, University of Kent) who recently concluded the evaluation of the first phase of RESTART. Concurrently a University of Oxford DPhil Sociology candidate is conducting research at a regional Thames Valley level and publishing a dissertation on RESTART delivery.

The current phase of the RESTART project is funded until the end of October 2024. Planning work is being commenced to define the exit strategy and to consider how the strengths of the model can be applied to the Thames Valley criminal justice partnership landscape post October 2024.

3. Partnership briefing update

An Executive Board for the project consists of:

- The Police & Crime Commissioner, Thames Valley (Chair)
- The Regional Director for Probation, South Central
- The Prison Group Director, South Central



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- The Governor of Bullingdon Prison
- The Senior Commissioning Manager for NHSE South East
- The Programme Manager of the Local Criminal Justice Board, Thames Valley
- Representatives from the Department of Work and Pensions

This Board meets quarterly and is responsible for receiving information from the RESTART Team, individuals and groups with lived experience, partners and services who interact with the Restart team and more. This information includes barriers and escalations for the Executive Board to problem solve and identify resolutions / options.

Key Delivery Roles

- The Probation Service and Prison Service, in particular Resettlement staff at HMP Bullingdon, provide a key role in communicating and liaising with frontline workers and people being released from prison.
- The OPCC leads on Project Management, ensuring due diligence and transparency of process. They also act as the decision maker for the allocation of demand from referring partners into the Restart Team.
- Core delivery partners (Aspire Oxford, Connection Support and Thames Valley Partnership) host Restart frontline workers, offering meet-at-gate, transport, accompaniment, advocacy, referral, smoother access to services and other issues raised through service user input.
- The Restart Service Delivery Manager monitor progress through shared Outcome Stars and are responsible for ensuring the frontline workers attend whole-system learning events, acting as one unified team.
- Meganexus extend the capability out into the community through the functionality of a case monitoring tool.

Next Steps / recommendations

The project runs until the end of October 2024 and although there has been positive feedback relating to the impact of RESTART on prison leavers the use of a full evaluation will be enabling in terms of establishing particular strengths and opportunities moving forward.

As indicated a full plan outlining requirements in relation to Exit considerations is being developed. This will require engagement by all partner deliverers.

The Panel is asked to note the content of this submission.