

SWIA

HMP Barlinnie Prison-based Social Work Service

Glasgow City Council

1. INTRODUCTION

In spring 2010 the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) carried out an inspection of social work services in every prison establishment in Scotland. This report sets out the findings of the inspection of services in HMP Barlinnie where we read a sample of social work case records, interviewed a small number of prisoners, social work staff and a range of Scottish Prison Service (SPS) service providers, staff and managers. This report also draws on information contained within Glasgow City Council's self-evaluation questionnaire in respect of prison-based social work services.

Prior to the fieldwork phase of the inspection we also interviewed a cross-section of prisoners across Scotland about the quality of prison-based social work services. In addition, we surveyed all prison-based social work staff as well as community based social work staff supervising offenders on release from custody. We will be reporting on the results of these surveys in a national report (published later this year) where we will also collate the findings of the case file reading exercises we carried out, report on our discussions with national stakeholders, and draw together common themes that have emerged from our inspection activity across the prison estate.

This report refers specifically to the prison-based social work service provided within HMP Barlinnie. The purpose of this report is to assist Glasgow City Council – and where appropriate, its partners – in making improvements to the prison-based social work service.

Our inspection addressed 6 key questions:

- What difference did prison-based social work services make to meeting prisoners' needs and reducing the risks they presented to others?
- What did prisoners and key stakeholders think about prison-based social work services?
- How efficiently and effectively did prison-based social work services operate?
- What systems were in place for monitoring the performance of prison-based social work services and for improving the quality of these services?
- How well supported were prison-based social work staff to carry out the work required of them?
- How good was the leadership of prison-based social work services by the senior managers and elected members responsible for these services?

2. CONTEXT

HMP Barlinnie, located in Glasgow, is the largest prison in Scotland. Although its Victorian buildings have undergone a significant amount of refurbishment, facilities in some parts of the prison remain in need of modernisation.

The prison receives male adult prisoners from courts (mainly those in the West of Scotland) including remand and convicted prisoners serving less than four years. As a consequence the prison deals with a high turnover of admissions, transfers and releases. It operates well over-capacity. Data provided immediately prior to the

inspection (a snapshot taken on 26 February 2010) showed that the establishment had 1015 available contracted prisoner places and the actual prisoner population on that day was 1351. This number included 51 long-term prisoners held there awaiting transfer to another establishment, nearing completion of their sentences or transferred temporarily to HMP Barlinnie because of disruptive behaviour in another prison.

Since 2007, the Scottish Prison Service has been in discussion with the Association of Directors of Social Work and other relevant stakeholders regarding the development of a service level agreement (SLA) for prison-based social work services. SPS has sought to develop a standardised national SLA document, that would be used as a basis of future discussions with individual councils. The SLA (draft version) specifies core and local priorities. The core priorities focus prison-based social work activities on prisoners who would be subject on release to statutory supervision in the community. The local priorities allow SPS and the relevant council to agree activities outwith the core tasks that may improve multi-disciplinary working and address specific needs within the prison establishment. The discussions between SPS and councils are ongoing.

Social work services in HMP Barlinnie were provided by Glasgow City Council's department of social care services. There was no formal agreement in place for provision of this service.

The prison-based social work unit was managed by a service manager who was also responsible for managing criminal justice social work services in one of the city's localities. The unit complement consisted of:

- two team leaders;
- eight social workers;
- two social care workers; and
- administrative support.

At the time of our inspection, there were vacancies for a team leader and a social worker.

The work of the team included:

- tasks associated with short and long-term prisoners who would be subject on release to statutory supervision in the community¹;
- tasks associated with prisoners convicted of schedule 1 offences;
- provision of a duty service; and
- delivery of one-to-one offence-focused interventions and groupwork.

For a number of years Glasgow City Council had also funded the *Open Doors* project, a resource that provided group support for vulnerable prisoners with mental health problems or disabilities (a service available both to prisoners who would be subject to statutory supervision on release as well as to those who would not be). Following a recent decision by the council to withdraw funding for the service due to

¹ The short-term prisoners subject to statutory supervision post release were mostly sex offenders.

financial pressures, senior SPS managers in HMP Barlinnie and in the council had agreed to jointly fund the project, initially for a one-year period. The prison-based social work team leader managed the three staff in the Open Doors project.

The annual budget for the prison-based social work service in 2009/10 was £457,990.00². The SPS provides Glasgow City Council with the funding for the service and the majority of that funding pays staff costs.

3. FINDINGS

What difference did prison-based social work services make to meeting prisoners' needs and reducing the risks they presented to others?

The Scottish Government's Concordat with local government sets out a common purpose for government, supported by agreed objectives, outcomes and performance indicators. In short, these are aimed at making Scotland a healthier, wealthier, smarter, safer and stronger, greener place to live and work. More specifically in criminal justice terms, the outcomes focus on making communities safer, reducing the risks posed by offenders, and helping offenders successfully resettle in their communities.

The prison-based social work team were measuring how many tasks they completed (outputs) but had not yet begun to define and measure the difference these made (the outcomes). Although confident that they were making a positive contribution to meeting prisoners' needs associated with offending and reducing the risks they presented, team members were unable to quantify these changes.

Area for improvement

The council, in collaboration with SPS and other providers, should develop ways to measure the differences services make to prisoners' needs and to the risks they present.

The team performed well in delivering many of its targets, for example contributing to integrated case management (ICM) case conferences and delivering timely reports to the Parole Board. They were not managing to interview prisoners who would be subject on release to statutory supervision in the community within seven days of notification of admission to the prison. This was due partly to delays in notification and partly to delays in the team's allocation process. The team had recently identified the latter and staff were taking action to address this.

What did prisoners and key stakeholders think about prison-based social work services?

Almost all those short-term prisoners we spoke to who would be subject to statutory supervision in the community on release were content with the accessibility of the social work service. All had an allocated social worker and many had had multiple contacts with their allocated workers over the time of their sentence. Most reported

² This figure excludes the Open Doors budget and pro-rata costs of the Service Manager.

that they found it straightforward to make a confidential referral to the services and normally received a timely and appropriate response (usually within a few days).

The *Open Doors* project issued feedback forms to prisoners who participated in their support sessions. The service had not aggregated and analysed these forms but we examined a random sample and found that participants' comments were predominantly favourable.

The group of long-term prisoners that we met was less positive. They commented that the speed at which the SPS induction process³ was carried out left some prisoners confused (a few described the process as similar to 'speed-dating'). All reported that, following this induction, they had not had an admission interview with the prison-based team within the required timescales. A few said that although they had been held in HMP Barlinnie for some time they had yet to have any contact with a social worker. Their perception was that, in common with other services in the prison, social work services gave no priority to long-term prisoners who would not be serving, or who had not served, most of their sentence in HMP Barlinnie. Prisoners beginning their sentences considered that they were 'in limbo' as they could not begin the work required of them to progress in their sentences. Many of the prisoners had considerable experience of attending ICM meetings during their current or previous sentences. They were of the view that the quality of the social worker's input to the meeting was influenced by the amount of contact the professional had had with a prisoner over the preceding year.

The team and its managers recognised that they needed to be much more proactive about gathering and analysing such feedback from prisoners and their families.

Area for improvement

The council, in collaboration with its partners, should make sure that there is appropriate contact and interventions with long-term prisoners while they are being held in the establishment.

Views of other stakeholders, including SPS staff and managers and other service providers, about the prison's social work services were generally positive. Many described the good working relationships they had with the services and commented on the valuable contribution they made. SPS managers were content with the quality of the work carried out by the team and particularly welcomed their involvement in programme delivery and one-to-one offence-focused interventions.

How efficiently and effectively did prison-based social work services operate?

SPS staff delivered the induction process, providing prisoners with leaflets about the social work service. A social work duty system was in place to deal with any subsequent referrals from prisoners. A number of these referrals were inappropriate. SPS managers acknowledged that this was due in part to the lack of a defined

³ The induction process aims to provide prisoners with important information on the routine and regime operating at the prison, as well as the arrangements for accessing specific services.

'personal officer' role in the establishment. They had made attempts to address this although it had proved difficult because of the high volume and turnover of prisoners. Social work managers also recognised that they needed to refresh information provided to prisoners about their services to make it clearer what help social work could and could not provide them with.

The team had the advantage of co-location with a large housing casework team⁴ that could deal with housing enquiries for prisoners with a Glasgow connection. This team of staff was also managed by the city's department of social care services.

The bulk of the prison population consisted of prisoners who would not be subject on release to statutory supervision in the community. Many of these had served repeated short-term sentences. There was consensus among all agencies in the prison that they were not managing to meet the high level of need within this population. The social work service was keen to secure additional resources to develop its provision in order to meet this need and, in so doing, reduce the risk of repeat offending. Such a development might go some way to achieving this objective but would clearly need to sit within a coherent multi-agency plan involving all service providers.

In their self-evaluation, criminal justice managers emphasised the struggle they faced in meeting the demands associated with those prisoners who would be subject on release to statutory supervision in the community and their other commitments, including groupwork delivery (staff were involved in helping to deliver only the programme for sex offenders). They pointed to the impact on their workload of the increasing number of prisoners recalled from licence. This created additional demand for admission interviews, ICM meetings and reports to the Parole Board.

Staff were delivering one-to-one offence-focused interventions with some prisoners in situations where they considered it appropriate to do so. Given the team's staffing and workload capacity we would have anticipated that there would have been prioritisation criteria in place for delivery of such interventions.

ICM case conferences were working well as forums in which relevant agencies and the prisoner shared information and agreed a plan of work. Team members played an active role in these, including chairing the meetings on occasions. However, the links between all relevant agencies did not always remain as strong during the period between ICM case conferences (up to a year). While the *Open Doors* staff attended weekly multi-agency meetings held to discuss new referrals for, and updates on, prisoners with mental health or dual mental health/addiction problems, the prison-based social work team acknowledged that contact with addictions staff had gradually decreased over time. This meant not only that social work staff were not involved in some groups that helped to take forward care plans for prisoners with addiction problems but also that they were not fully involved in strategic planning to meet the needs of such prisoners.

⁴ A team leader, six housing case workers and one casework assistant

Area for improvement

The council should collaborate more closely with partner agencies, in particular addiction services.

The team was making limited use of the SPS electronic database *PR2*. Staff did not always check the system for information and they did not enter data, other than reports and risk assessments on prisoners transferring across the estate. This meant that other agencies could not readily determine what services the prisoner was receiving from social work. In addition, social workers were not always using the system to gather relevant information to inform their risk assessments. The prison-based social work service had not been pro-active in pursuing agreement with SPS on how they should use the system.

Area for improvement

The council should reach agreement with SPS on its use of *PR2*.

The team had an expectation that other agencies would pass on child concern referrals directly to children's services in the relevant council. However, team members were not routinely checking *PR2* to determine whether any of these referrals related to those prisoners who would be subject on release to statutory supervision in the community. Social work managers accepted that there was a need to improve the systems for monitoring and reporting on these types of referrals.

Area for improvement

The council should make sure that there are efficient processes in place for monitoring child concern referrals.

There had been no discussion either within the prison-based service or with SPS and other providers about implementation of adult protection procedures in the prison setting and when planning for release. Although developments within adult protection are relatively recent this is an issue that the prison-based social work service and its partner agencies need to begin to address.

Area for improvement

The council should initiate discussions with partners about the implementation of adult protection procedures within the prison setting and when release planning.

What systems were in place for monitoring the performance of prison-based social work services and for improving the quality of these services?

First line managers signed off risk assessments and periodically sampled case records, though they did not use a standard template for doing so. There were no systematic quality assurance processes in place and the team was not included in the city's wider performance management framework. Senior managers of the service stated that this had been an oversight that they planned to rectify by the end

of 2010. The lack of systematic performance and quality assurance information meant that the service was unable to clearly report to SPS and to their own management on the extent and quality of their services. As an example, although *Open Doors* was valued by prisoners and staff, it had been many years since there had been a systematic assessment of the differences it made to prisoners' lives. The change in funding arrangements had therefore been tied to an agreement to evaluate the impact of the project.

Although team members had had access to the council's database *Carefirst* for a number of years they were not able to secure the performance reports they needed from the system. This situation had persisted for some time with no obvious resolution.

Area for improvement

The council should ensure that there are no unnecessary delays in introducing a performance management and quality assurance framework for prison-based social work services. This should include resolving difficulties around the capabilities of *Carefirst*.

How well supported were prison-based social work staff to carry out the work required of them?

Staff we met evidently enjoyed their work and were committed to providing a good service. They were nevertheless anxious about the potential impact of a future service level agreement that could limit their professional roles. They would have welcomed the opportunity to increase their involvement in programme delivery and one-to-one offence-focused interventions. A number had had training in delivering programmes such as *Constructs*.

The team had recently experienced changes in staff, some of whom had been in post for many years. There had been a lengthy period with only one team leader in post. Although this had been a difficult time for staff, SPS managers considered that reduced staffing levels and changes in staff had been well-managed with no obvious disruption to service. While the departure of staff constituted a loss of experienced staff, social work managers acknowledged that this also presented a chance to refresh the service.

Team members received good access to training opportunities, assisted by their connection to the council's intranet site through which they were able to identify what training was available. Managers nevertheless recognised that they needed to do more to include team members in developments in, and opportunities available to, the city's wider criminal justice service.

How good was the leadership of prison-based social work services by the senior managers and elected members responsible for these services?

Elected members demonstrated their interest in the prison through their membership of the prison visiting committee and Glasgow's community justice authority, although they did not demand or receive reports about the performance of the prison-based social work services for which they were responsible.

Senior managers within the prison considered that they were well-served by the city's head of criminal justice and by its executive director of social care services (a former manager of the prison-based social work service). However, quarterly scheduled meetings between senior prison managers and the council's head of criminal justice social work services were happening irregularly.

The external manager of the prison-based service (the service manager) maintained a regular presence within the prison and kept staff informed about wider developments. Team members welcomed the support he offered, particularly during the period when they had been without a first line manager. However, the demands of covering for team leader vacancies in both the prison-based and community-based services for which he was responsible, had made it more difficult for him to fully carry out his strategic responsibilities. For example, there had been limited formal contact with the head of offender outcomes and there had been no meetings for some time with the SPS manager responsible for overseeing the social work service. The need to establish systematic liaison was all the more necessary given recent changes of personnel in this post.

Working relationships between senior managers in the council and in the prison were generally positive and they were able to resolve issues as they arose. They clearly shared a similar vision about the types of provision needed to address the risks and needs of their prisoner population. Along with other providers in the prison they identified a number of important gaps, including a lack of both domestic violence and parenting programmes and of an addictions programme in Glasgow that could provide released prisoners who returned to live in the city with a follow-on to the prison's addiction programme⁵. However, there was no systematic, strategic dialogue between the agencies that focused on joint planning. This was a significant missed opportunity.

It is important that partner agencies re-establish routine dialogue to move forward their discussions about local priorities for the forthcoming service level agreement and to deliver their shared vision.

Area for improvement

The council's senior managers should re-establish routine formal contact with their counterparts in SPS to establish and take forward a vision and joint planning for prison-based social work services. This should extend to wider partnership working to meet the needs of the prisoner population.

⁵ Substance related offending behaviour programme (SROBP)

4. SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Almost all 'statutory' short-term prisoners we spoke to were positive about the quality of the team's work. Long-term prisoners were less positive and, in particular, told us that they did not think that social work services were assisting them to make progress in their sentences. Admission interviews for both long and short-term prisoners who would be subject on release to statutory supervision were not always happening.

Stakeholders, such as SPS staff and managers and other agencies working in the prison, considered that the services helped achieve better outcomes for prisoners but the services were not yet able to provide supporting evidence for this. They needed to develop better processes for doing so.

The team was working closely with its partners in ICM case conferences to determine appropriate interventions for prisoners based on assessments of risk and need. Outwith these meetings, links with partner agencies were less robust. The team was not making appropriate use of the electronic information-sharing system. It also needed to tighten processes around child and adult protection.

Prison-based social work staff enjoyed their work, received good access to training opportunities, and were well-supported by their managers. Reduced staffing levels and changes in staff had not led to obvious disruptions in the social work service. Senior managers in the council had good working relationships with their counterparts in SPS but formal contact had become less routine.

We think that Glasgow City Council should consider the following areas for improvement:

1. The council, in collaboration with SPS and other providers, should develop ways to measure the differences services make to prisoners' needs and to the risks they present.
2. The council, in collaboration with its partners, should make sure that there is appropriate contact and interventions with long-term prisoners while they are being held in the establishment.
3. The council should collaborate more closely with partner agencies, in particular addiction services.
4. The council should reach agreement with SPS on its use of *PR2*.
5. The council should make sure that there are efficient processes in place for monitoring child concern referrals.
6. The council should initiate discussions with partners about the implementation of adult protection procedures within the prison setting and when release planning.

7. The council should ensure that there are no unnecessary delays in introducing a performance management and quality assurance framework for prison-based social work services. This should include resolving difficulties around the capabilities of *Carefirst*.

8. The council's senior managers should re-establish routine formal contact with their counterparts in SPS to establish and take forward a vision and joint planning for prison-based social work services. This should extend to wider partnership working to meet the needs of the prisoner population.

5. NEXT STEPS

Prison-based social work services, in conjunction with their partners in SPS, should ensure that they disseminate the findings of the inspection to key stakeholders including the prisoners to whom they provide a service. They should work with their stakeholders to develop an action plan that addresses the areas for improvement identified in this report. This action plan should be in place within three months of publication of the report.

SWIA has allocated a link inspector to each council in Scotland. Through these link inspector arrangements SWIA will monitor the progress of Glasgow City Council in implementing the action plan in collaboration with its partners.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Explanation
Community Integration Plan (CIP)	The Community Integration Plan (CIP) is the SPS document that contains important information about the prisoner, their progress during the custodial sentence and their plans for release into the community.
Integrated Case Management (ICM)	ICM is the multi-agency approach used within the prison setting, which aims to reduce re-offending by ensuring that risks are identified and appropriate plans put in place for prisoners.
Links Centre	Links centres provide a location within which prisoners can access a number of community-based services. These services offer a range of information, advice and/or support: e.g. in relation to housing, employment, addiction, benefit entitlement and family relationships.
Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)	MAPPA is the framework used by the responsible authorities (i.e. police, local authorities, the SPS and NHS Scotland) and a range of other agencies with a duty to co-operate to manage sex offenders in the community. The fundamental purpose of MAPPA is public safety and the reduction of serious harm.
Personal Officer	The personal officer is an SPS officer who offers direct support to a prisoner(s) during their custodial sentence and ensures that all service providers meet the agreed outcomes identified in the CIP.
Prisoner Records 2 (PR2)	PR2 is the SPS computerised prisoner record system.
Risk assessment	Risk assessment is a means of quantifying the probability that an event will occur/recur, or that an event that does occur will be harmful.
RA3 & RA4	A screening and detailed framework to help assess the risk of harm
RM2000	A risk assessment tool that predicts reconviction for a sexual offence within a defined period using information about the offender rather than clinical assessment
SA07	A risk assessment tool that predicts reconviction for a sexual offence, helps monitor factors underpinning acute escalation of risk and provides a breakdown of areas of need that may be treatment targets.
Schedule 1 Offenders	Offenders convicted of specified offences against children (specified in Schedule 1 of the Criminal Procedure [Scotland] Act 1995). The categorisation is life-long.
Statutory Supervision	Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to supervise all offenders who receive a custodial sentence of four years or more, as well as those sentenced to under four years who are made the subject to a Supervised Release Order/Extended Sentence Order and certain sex offenders who require to be supervised under Section 15 of the Management of Offenders Act 2005.
Voluntary Throughcare	Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to provide advice, support and assistance to prisoners who request such a service within 12 months of release from custody.