



Briefing: Creation and Impact of the West Yorkshire Criminal Justice Network WY-FI Project



Mission Statement of the West Yorkshire Criminal Justice Network

"We work together to achieve a coordinated approach to improve pathways for people on their journey through prison and into the community, keeping them well and preventing re-offending behaviour."

The network was established in 2016, by West Yorkshire Finding Independence (WY-FI) and the Integrated Offender Management Team at Humankind, with a focus on people with multiple needs in the areas of homelessness, addiction, reoffending and mental ill-health.

Today, the West Yorkshire Criminal Justice Network is made up of groups and organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors across West Yorkshire, committed to improving pathways between prisons and communities. The network is self-sustaining, with more than 50 members.

The goals of the West Yorkshire Criminal Justice Network (WY CJN)

- To identify, influence, improve and promote pathways between prisons and communities.
- To ensure appropriate and timely support for prison leavers - with a focus on treatment needs, benefits and housing.
- To encourage multi-agency working and open lines of communication between private, public and third sector groups and organisations.
- To ensure the voice of lived experience is heard

Background Information

In 2016, the criminal justice system went through **significant changes**, which presented challenges for collaborative working within the sector. In response, The WY-FI Project joined up with lead partner Humankind to create the WY CJN.

WY CJN grew steadily in its first year, with members from various sector organisations meeting on a regular basis to make new connections and share good practice. During its second year, WY CJN formalised its approach by agreeing a mission statement and two key areas of focus – **treatment pathways and housing**.

WY CJN members quickly established a need for improved pathways out of prisons and into communities. But as the network grew, combined insight from an increasing number of members revealed that all prison pathways needed to be improved - **into, through and out of prison**.

The importance of multi-agency working



Evidence shows that people with reoffending needs are very likely to have needs in other areas. Over the lifetime of the WY-FI Project, 78% of beneficiaries have needed support with reoffending behavior.

And almost all of these beneficiaries have had additional needs surrounding mental health and addiction.

Despite this, when they were first referred to WY-FI, less than 20% were engaging with mental health services and only 57% were in contact with drug and alcohol services.

This is why multi-agency working across the criminal justice sector is essential to ensure that people with multiple needs are offered appropriate and timely support in all of the HARM areas – homelessness, addiction, reoffending and mental ill-health.

This is one of the key focuses of WY CJN, and as a result, membership has grown to include:

- Local and regional commissioners
- Prison based services
- Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)
- West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company
- Office of Police and Crime Commissioner
- CLINKS
- Community and custody treatment services
- West Yorkshire Police
- People with lived experience, including WY-FI beneficiaries
- Housing organisations
- Plus a range of other service providers from across West Yorkshire

WY CJN members are typically from operational and case management roles. They meet at least four times a year to establish new professional contacts, review working practices and agree strategic areas of focus.

It provides a platform for open, honest discussion, helping to inform and improve ways of working. One example of this is the Horizons Prison leavers Accommodation Pilot, which was launched by the Ministry of Justice in September 2019 to support people leaving HMP Leeds with no fixed abode.

The value of people with lived experience



Lived experience is crucial in helping WY CJN members reflect on their working practices, particularly when considering how pathways between prisons and communities could be improved.

People with lived experience of the criminal justice system – including the police, courts, prisons, probation and rehabilitation – are key members of the WY CJN.

Here are some of the issues that their insight has highlighted:

- Improved communication is needed between services on arrival and exit from prison, especially around the treatment, benefits and housing needs of prison leavers
- People should be supported to make informed, supported choices between taking prescribed substitute medication and embarking on a detox/rehab programme whilst in prison.
- Prison gyms are vital for improving and maintaining mental/physical health and wellbeing.
- Stronger links are needed between prisons and community training/education providers so that people can continue and complete courses they started in prison.
- Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) have the potential to lead to re-offending behaviour, as people struggle to access city or town centre support.

Successes of the WY CJN

Prison Release Clinics

When WY CJN was first set up, it was established that people leaving prison weren't always engaging effectively with services. For this reason, prison leaver engagement became a key area of focus for the network - in particular, improving treatment options, continuity of treatment and outcomes for prison leavers.

As a result, WY CJN has been piloting Prison Release Clinics in Bradford, Calderdale, and more recently, Leeds. The clinics have been designed to provide prison leavers with a range of support, covering treatment needs, benefits and housing.

Prison leavers are offered an initial assessment with a Criminal Justice Worker and are guaranteed an appointment with a doctor within one week of leaving prison.

In Leeds, clinics were launched in August 2019. Since then, attendance at first treatment appointments on release from prison has increased from **26% to 74%**.

West Yorkshire Police Early Alert System

As a result of open discussions at WY CJN meetings, members identified a need to be able to circulate important operational messages quickly to its members. In response, the West Yorkshire Police created an 'Early Alert System'.

Using a database of WY CJN contacts, Jess Clayton from the West Yorkshire Police Force Intelligence Team established a process that allows the police to contact WY CJN members quickly, emailing them with regional issues such as dangerous drug batches, vulnerable prison leavers and used needle crises.

Jess says, “now that we all know who each other is, and we have a way of getting in touch, we can respond much more quickly to let everyone know about operational issues in West Yorkshire.”

Collaborative working

WY CJN helped establish collaborative working between WY-FI and the West Yorkshire CRC, and a combined analysis of WY-FI and West Yorkshire CRC caseloads. This insight revealed that:

- 151 out of 258 WY-FI beneficiaries were also on current or historic CRC or NPS caseload.
- More than 50% of joint WY-FI/CRC cases had positive exits for individuals.
- 69 individuals have had no further offences recorded, have reduced the frequency or severity of their offending or have otherwise completed their orders successfully with no further information recorded.

Lessons learnt - challenges of setting up a criminal justice network

Administrative duties

When setting up any kind of network, it's important to establish responsibility for administrative tasks. These can include:

- Maintaining an up-to-date contacts database
- Organising face to face meetings – including booking rooms/refreshments and sending out invitations and agendas.
- Recording and circulating meeting minutes

Membership growth and engagement

It can take time to build up a network of people and priority needs to be given to its growth. When engaging with potential members, it's important to be clear about the purpose of the network, as well as the investment of time and resource that's being asked of them. The following may help when doing this:

- Writing a mission statement
- Setting specific and measurable goals
- Agreeing the frequency of face to face network meetings
- Deciding on a platform to communicate, collaborate and share - for example Outlook/Teams/SharePoint etc.)
- Agreeing funding sources for ongoing costs and regional events
- Timely circulation of agendas, minutes and papers
- Timely follow up on actions

Future direction of the WY CJN

WY CJN will remain focussed on multi-agency working, with the overall aim of continuing to improve pathways between prisons and communities. Engagement with commissioners at both a regional and national level will be a priority.

WY CJN will continue to look for ways to share and embed the WY-FI Multiple Needs Navigator Model. This will be key, as the National Lottery Community Funding for WY-FI ends in May 2020.

WY CJN is also considering how to align regional and national networks, to ensure clear links, as well as differential, between WY CJN and the regional CLINKS forum.

Conclusion

The WY CJN provides opportunities for agencies and organisations from across the criminal justice sector to connect on a regular basis. This multi-agency network has led to the establishment of new and improved ways of working. It also provides a platform for people with lived experience to share their insight into the criminal justice system. The WY CJN is a good example of why multi-agency networks can be a valuable use of time and resource when collaborative working is required to support individuals with multiple needs.

Connecting people, services and commissioners

The WY-FI Project is part of [Fulfilling Lives](#), a programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Fulfilling Lives works with people who have first-hand experience of substance misuse, homelessness, offending, and mental ill-health to make services and support better connected, easier to access and tailored to the needs of individuals. It is one of five major programmes set up by The National Lottery Community Fund to test and learn from new approaches to designing services which aim to make people's lives healthier and happier.

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