



Surviving in a Revolving Door: A Study of the Evidence about Offending in WY-FI

Executive Summary

Key Findings for Working with Offenders:

The **WY-FI Navigator Model** is effective for many people who have contact with the criminal justice system. WY-FI data shows that over a quarter of people experiencing multiple needs and exclusions are high intensity users of the criminal justice system and this group recirculate from custody to crisis and back to custody. Our headline findings are:

- **Individual cases** need to be examined to unpick the **complex relationship** between **victimhood** and **offending** and find the right support for people with multiple needs.
- When individuals are **excluded** from services, their recovery is pushed back. This **reduces their engagement and their health**, which forces them back into using crisis services in an unplanned way.

Improving Direct Service Delivery:

- For **women** in WY-FI, the criminal justice system has not been effective. Consideration needs to be given as to how to try and mitigate the negative effects of inappropriate sentencing or what the alternatives to short custodial sentences are.
- WY-FI data shows that **housing**-related issues are some of the main barriers to stability for beneficiaries because **housing isn't suitable for the individual's needs**.
- Services are not currently always providing adequate or appropriate **mental health support** to individuals who are known to have been in contact with the criminal justice system.
- **Substance use** is a common factor in the individual events that cause people to have to return to prison

Strategic Leadership

- **Stronger links** between agencies can improve the lives of the people they support, by ensuring that their individual needs are being met. This includes information and risk sharing, **joint support planning** and **co-ordinated delivery**.
- **Workforce development** and **culture change** is needed to ensure that agencies are supporting people effectively through the transition between prisons and communities.

Public Health

- Unsurprisingly, **health inequalities** are both **widened** and **hardened** the more time people spend in custody and the more often they are sentenced
- Investing in **community based services** reduces per-person spending. Over time, people are able to sustain their recovery and they are less likely to reach crisis point and need to use **rapid response services** such as A&E, or require **police intervention**.



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Summary of WY-FI Recommendations for Working with Offenders

These recommendations are as a result of the work WY-FI has done alongside the recommendations and evidence explored by other researchers. We acknowledge that services do everything they can to work with people with reoffending needs. These recommendations are made to improve the effectiveness of interventions for people who also experience multiple needs and exclusions and to highlight areas where a public health approach will reduce the inequalities that people with multiple needs experience.

Improving Direct Service Delivery

Improvements need to be made to local service delivery and **direct support** for people with multiple needs.

- Needs and risk **assessments** should follow **common criteria** and focus to a greater extent on the **vulnerability** of people (especially **women** and **diverse communities**) with multiple needs that come in to contact with the criminal justice system.
- **Community based services** should be explored and promoted as an **alternative to custody** to a much greater extent as a supportive component of treatment or behaviour orders, for example using **gender specific community** services to support women.
- **Excluding** people with multiple needs from services simply displaces the cost and moves them further away from the service that they need. We recommend creating a **culture of engagement not simply of compliance** among service providers.
- **Sustaining accommodation for people leaving prison** or on community sentences means: an expansion of **trauma informed housing support**, actively preparing prisoners for **accommodation on release** and ensuring people are not released with **no fixed abode**. This includes helping people move on from temporary, group residential and institutional accommodation into their **own homes** in a timely and effective way.

The improvement of direct support can only be made possible by **culture change** and by ensuring that strategic leadership and public health approaches are included in commissioning services.

Strategic Leadership

This needs to be at a **West Yorkshire level** through the **Integrated Care Strategy, Public Health Directors, the West Yorkshire Housing Network** and the **Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner**, and include the voice of **lived experience**. Strategic leadership should also include:



West Yorkshire - Finding Independence
Delivering Fulfilling Lives:
Supporting People with Multiple Needs Programme



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- **Stronger multi-agency working** to ensure a holistic package of support that is both **trauma and gender-informed**. Multi-agency working can only be effective if it is driven by **regional leadership**.
- Taking a **trauma informed approach** when **designing** and **commissioning services**.
- Understanding **cultural differences** between and within **diverse communities**.

A Public Health Approach

This approach incorporates **planned pathways** through multiple services and the development of **trauma informed practice** across services. It also includes:

- Access to a wider range of accommodation that provides more structured support and pathways to independent living. This includes accommodation that is dispersed and supported with a mixture of tenants and therapeutic residential care.
- Providing **training for criminal justice system** staff to understand **mental health** and that a large proportion of people they work with will be experiencing mental ill-health, learning disabilities and other cognitive impairments.
- **Widening access to mental health** and emotional well-being services for people with multiple needs, particularly where there is co-occurrence with substance use.
- Pathways through **physical healthcare** need to include specific **aftercare** and **convalescence** provision for people experiencing multiple needs
- **Traumatic events** for children and young adults lead to **multiple exclusions** in later life. Effective **early intervention** for children and families of beneficiaries is crucial.