SECURE STAIRS - Embedding a trauma-informed culture in Youth Offending Institutions (YOIs)

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Introduction

Numbers of children and young people (CYP) in custody in England have fallen significantly over the last 15 years – from 2,800 under 18 year olds in 2005, to 780 in 2019/20 (YJB). The remaining cohort are characterised as a complex and 'hard to reach' group with multiple needs across multiple domains – including high levels of substance misuse, mental health and neurodevelopmental needs (YJB, 2020). Around 40% have experience of being in care (compared to 0.5% of the general population), most have been excluded from school and at least 80% have significant histories of adversity in childhood (YJB, 2016).

SECURE STAIRS is an NHS-E, HMPPS and DfE-funded project to embed trauma-informed culture, thinking and practice in youth custody settings across England.

CNWL NHS Trust provides the CAMHS services in HMYOI Cookham Wood and HMYOI Feltham where the SECURE STAIRS principles are being embedded. This has involved a dramatic shift in the role of the Health & Wellbeing teams in both settings. The staff teams have gone from providing individual mental health care and treatment to young people within these establishments – to delivering a systems-wide approach, involving staff training, provision of reflective practice and facilitation of multi-agency formulation meetings.

Improved understanding of the needs and appropriate interventions for children and young people.

Overarching Aims

- Comprehensive formulation-driven care for each child/young person.
- Improved unit environment less high-risk behaviours in units, higher staff satisfaction.
- Improved relationships and communication with staff and other children/ young people.
- Children and young people feel safe and supported.
- Development of an evidence base to demonstrate performance.
- Effective multi-disciplinary team collaboration.
- Development of and monitoring of individual goals for each child/young person's stay in a secure setting with input from child/young person's 'home' environment.



London NHS Foundation Trust

Central and

North West

- Staff with skill sets appropriate to the interventions needed
- Emotionally resilient staff able to remain child-centred in the face of challenging behaviour
- Cared for staff: supervision and support
- Understanding of child development, attachment, trauma & other key theories
- Reflective system, able to consider impact of trauma at all levels
- 'Every Interaction Matters' a whole system approach

The enabling of reintegration of children/young people into mainstream provision, where this is appropriate.

- An improvement in the stability and wellbeing of staffing groups.
 - Scoping the presenting situation
 - Targets identified that staff, young people & home agree on
 - Activators. Interventions are based on a multi-factorial formulation that identifies the activators for the CYP
 - Interventions. 'Specialist' and core interventions tailored to each CYP's needs
 - Review progress towards agreed targets regularly
 - Sustainability always in mind.

Feedback

"[I learnt...]How it can be applied to any team and situation and how trauma impacts organisations and teams and how I can see that in the team and myself in the way we behave with each other."

Methods

- Delivery of training for operational staff (Prison Officers and Custodial managers)
 - and partner agencies on:

R

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- Child Development
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

'[The training] helped me to

- Attachment theory
- Trauma in individuals, teams and organisations
- Wellbeing and resilience
- Facilitation of multi-agency formulation meetings for all children and young people
- Co-ordination of enhanced support for those with exceptionally complex needs.
- Facilitation of a reflective culture through the provision of group and individual reflective practice for officers and CMs.
- Bespoke workshops for senior managers on compassionate leadership and organisational trauma.



understand the reason behind the behaviour'.

'It helped me see things in a different light' - Staff



- Senior Manager

'Staff are helpful ' 'I always have the option to talk or not'

-Young people

'...a huge thank you to you and all of the team for the [formulation] meeting and for all that you have done for him over the last year."
- parent

Lessons Learnt

"Culture change is a marathon... not a sprint"

Embedding culture change is a challenging task and requires a long-term focus with dedicated and persistent leadership!

References

- 1. Taylor, J., Shostak, L., Rogers, A. & Mitchell, P. (2018). Rethinking mental health provision in the secure estate for children and young people: a framework for integrated care (SECURE STAIRS). Safer Communities 17 (4): 193-201.
- 2. Youth Justice Board (2016) Understanding and Improving Reoffending Performance: A summary of learning from the YJBs Reoffending Programme with implications for practice. London. Youth Justice Board.
- 3. Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice (2020) Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the Youth Justice System 2018/19. London: Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice.

Although the project sets out an over-arching set of principles to follow – each establishment has adapted these to local ways of working and has overcome unique barriers. These included working in physical locations that were not designed for the task at hand, with limited access to meeting rooms and technological solutions. Staff have been creative to find ways to overcome this – including repurposing rooms and making the most of informal interactions to build relationships. COVID presented both additional challenges and also presented a unique opportunity - with staff from different areas coming together with a shared sense of purpose.

It is important that staff and young people alike do not feel like they are being 'done to'. Coproduction with young people and staff about how to operationalise the SECURE STAIRS principles in each establishment has been fundamental. For example - co-facilitating specialist training with Custodial Managers and using community meetings to gain input directly from young people.

Finally - this journey has highlighted the importance of being persistent, innovative and adaptable. These core values and others can be seen represented in a word cloud that was created during a team away-day at HMYOI Feltham (pictured opposite).

"You cannot care for others if you do not feel cared for yourself"