Reducing Recidivism amongst Young People in Custody through Welfare Lead Rehabilitation
This report describes how recidivism in young people could be reduced by learning from best practices of juvenile prisons elsewhere in Europe. In England and Wales re-offending by young people who have been in custody is alarmingly high, however it is difficult to ascertain a reason for this. By researching countries with low recidivism rates it may be possible to find better methods of working with young people. This research is a comparative study of the prison service for juveniles in England and Wales with juvenile institutions in four countries that practice welfare lead rehabilitation. The research involved visiting institutions in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Germany and comparing and contrasting the establishments visited with YOI’s in England and Wales, from the perspective of a prison officer, and drawing recommendations from the findings. The research showed that countries with lower recidivism rates had practitioners that were highly skilled and trained, especially in Motivational Interviewing and Pro-social modelling; prison environments were set up as social therapeutic communities and young people were assessed by their needs over and above their potentials risks. The recommendations in this report, even in a time of austerity, are pragmatic and if considered could result in fewer young people re-offending and thus fewer new victims, but also result in fewer young people becoming traumatised by their experience of prison and resorting to violence, self harm or suicide as a means of coping.
Introduction

Young people in custody in England and Wales often come from complex and challenging backgrounds, however it does not end when they come into custody, as custody itself can be a terrifying experience that can cause damage to young people. Once released from custody young people are then often back into the same complex and challenging environments they were in before they entered custody, which although often unavoidable uppins the importance of providing effective rehabilitation within custody, ideally combined with effective resettlement. However the statement that we must provide better methods of rehabilitation is easier to state than the answer. Previous research has been conducted within England and Wales however rarely does research extend over multiple countries especially from the perspective of a prison officer focusing on how prisons are run on the ground level.

This report is the findings and discussion of research conducted by visiting four countries over a period of five weeks researching how prisons, in countries that traditionally have welfare lead juvenile justice systems, rehabilitate young people in custody. Based on the findings I wish to argue a case for better staff training, more emphasis on environment planning, greater focus on the needs of young people not only on the risks they could potentially pose and units to be the centre of social skills learning by learning from positive role models. If considered there could be a reduction in recidivism and therefore ultimately imprisonment rates, but for those in custody a healthier environment would lead to more contented young people and staff, lower levels of self harm and suicide, a reduced number of assaults and violence, less staff sick and turnover, lower financial costs and lastly a better understanding of what young people need to develop and grow into healthy adults as they are after all still only children.

‘when the doctors, chaplains and prison visitors have come and gone, the convict stands deprived of everything that a free man calls life. We must not forget that all these improvements, which are sometimes salves to our consciences, do not change that position.’ Winston Churchill
The heart of this research centres on what are the best methods for rehabilitating young people using welfare lead principles. Welfare lead rehabilitation is a system focused on the needs of young people, not the deeds of young people, where the response to young people is from the desire to help them become law abiding healthy adults, not from an overbearing societal response calling for greater punishment and misplaced responsibility. “Welfarism is derived from the notion that a child should be treated differently to an adult where offending is concerned, with an emphasis placed on meeting the child’s needs. In contrast to this, the justice approach focuses on matching the levels of formal intervention to the gravity of the offence rather than to putative needs…..both have unintended consequences, with welfare tending to increase formal intervention and control unnecessarily, and justice ignoring individual needs and sometimes human rights” (Stephenson et al, 2011, p2). In England and Wales it could be argued that our juvenile justice system is based on a justice model were young people receive formal intervention that is proportionate to the severity/gravity of the offence, rather than the level of perceived need (Goldson, B, 2008) of treatment. Offences have set tariff guidelines and prison as such is seen as a means of punishment, where everyone is equal in the eyes of the law, no matter their circumstances or vulnerability.

In contrast, in countries such as Norway, Sweden and Finland sentencing of young people is based on the needs and deeds of the young person and once in prison the level of treatment is highly calculated against their needs, and the primary concern is with the young person’s welfare. The greater the need of treatment the young person has, the greater the formal intervention. Conversely the lower the need, regardless of offence, the lower the intervention, which is reflected in extremely low imprisonment rates as it is well recognised that prison is not the best place for young people. Conversely because of the belief in young people needing treatment over punishment juvenile institutions have a strong focus on treating young people and employ and train their staff to be social workers, councillors and therapists.
Germany is different in that it is a mixture of Justice and Welfare. Young people receive set custodial tariffs however within prison, or at least in the county of Baden-Wuttenburg, young people are placed into treatment programmes, whether it is education, inclusion in a social therapeutic environment or living in a mutually supportive unit.

This report does not go into a comparison of the social-political differences between the countries however it should not go un-noted. There are great differences between the UK and Scandinavia in relation to their views on young offenders. The greatest demonstration of this is the difference between the treatment of the killers of Jamie Bulger in the UK and Silje Raedegard in Norway. In Norway the young boys, although killers of a 5 year old girl, where treated as children who needed treatment and care not criminalisation. Whereas in the UK both boys were used as symbols of a wider case that young people are out of control and fully capable of evil deeds, where “today’s young offenders can too easily become tomorrow’s hardened criminals” (Straw, 1997). The result of the paper ‘no ore excuses’ was the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998 which introduced the statutory aim of the Youth Justice System (YJS) and therefore acts as the backbone of the system that we know today. The aim of the YJS in England and Wales is; ‘to prevent offending by children and young persons’ (Crime and Disorder Act, 1998, Sec 37). Therefore it is actually a legal requirement that we prevent offending, not just deal with it after. This changes the whole ethos of work with young people; it justifies early intervention, collation of personal information and the retention of that information. The Crime and Disorder Act in a sense seems to paint all young people as potentially criminal, who need the help of a new agency, the YJS, to prevent them from committing crime. On top of this is the abolishment of Doli Incapax, lowering the starting age of criminal responsibility to just 10 years old demonising even young children. In Scandinavia this is not the case, young people are represented better by the media and the public, and therefore there is less sense of a self fulfilling prophecy coming true.

This is not about extending our preoccupation with children at risk or our measurement of this; it is about identifying and addressing how young people feel and what they need if they do have to come to prison. It is about providing more than their basic needs, but at least those basic
needs of a child; a supportive nurturing environment. Young people are not a collection of risks and this research aims to illustrate how other countries have achieved a needs-led social welfare approach to rehabilitation.

Findings

Bjørgvin Prison – Norway

Bjørgvin Prison is a detached juvenile unit just outside the security perimeter of Bergen Prison, housing up to two young males at a time. It has a recidivism rate of 36% (Graunbol et al, 2010) and very rarely has incidences of violence or self harm. Currently the unit is a temporary measure until a new four bed place is built within the same grounds, however although the new building will have a better lay out and larger capacity it will stay maintain the dedicated staff and rehabilitative focus that it has today.
Bjørgvin Prison is not what you would expect, in that the word prison is misleading; it has no barded wire, no officers in uniform, and few of the dehumanising aspects normally associated with the prison environment. The staff include nine therapists (teachers, social and welfare workers) and nine non-uniformed prison officers, of which there are approximately four working everyday and two at night. However their job roles far outstretch the role of prison guard, they are highly trained and work with juveniles because they have a motivation to make a difference. The officers are the young person’s main carer and source of social learning. A typical day for a young person might include having breakfast with the staff, attending school lessons in the unit, going on the weekly food shopping trip with the officers, taking books back to the local library and cooking dinner for everyone. Of which the food is of a very high quality and the staff’s meals are paid for by the prison meaning that staff eat the same food at the same time as the young people.

The physical environment is based on a house and feels very relaxed. The kitchen and living room are open plan and open out to the garden which in turn is only surrounded by a single fence. There are no physical barriers between the living space, outdoors or the bedrooms, reflecting the normality of a home.

School is conducted one to one for approximately four hours a week over a range of subjects by a teacher from the local school. Another hour a week is spent with a child psychologist. The rest of the time is spent with the staff either outside the establishment, attending vocational training, or pro-social learning from everyday activities you would complete if you were not in custody, such as hiking, shopping, visiting the gym. However during all the time spent with the young person staff use motivational interviewing to attempt to bring about change in the young persons mindset about their offending and their future. This is used in the smallest of conversations to the more in-depth discussions. What is significant is that staff are trained in motivational interviewing as well as in the rights of the child and their development needs. A lot of what the staff do is try and gain trust in the young person and then talk to them about how they feel and why they feel that way, and in a sense bring the young person around into thinking in a socially acceptable manner, but one where the young person is the lead participate.
On entry all young people have a document about their motivations for committing crime completed. It is the initial blueprint for motivational interviewing. It consists of an interview and goes through the reasons why the young person committed crime, how they felt about it, how they think others felt about it. Who is in their support network when they committed the crime, now that they are in prison and in the future. It has a section on what they think the positives and negatives are for their crime, of giving up crime and of continuing to commit crime. It has a large section on drugs and alcohol, looking into all the motivations. It has a section on violence and why and when they are violent, who it is to and in what context and importantly whose fault they think it is. Opinions are sought on society and what they think of authorities, family, friends and school.

**What can be learnt from Bjørgvin Prison?**

That staff training is central to providing young people with the best chance of effective rehabilitation. Staff at Bjørgvin Prison were extremely knowledgeable on children’s needs and rights as well as being highly motivated to help young people. The training the staff received in motivational interviewing was clearly demonstrated in the work they completed with young people on a daily basis.

The layout of the environment can make a significant difference to the atmosphere of the unit, as although security and potential violence was recognised the environment significantly reduced the likelihood of issues due to the lack of small spaces and restriction of movement to a space the young person can retreat to in times of stress.

An entry document based on the young person’s opinions of their offending and the reasons surrounding it, rather than an assessment of their risks is completed. Although elements of risk enter into the motivational interviewing document it is used as a starting point of rehabilitation, not as a tool to measure the amount of risk an individual poses. In short it is based on the needs, both psychological and physical of the young person, not the needs of the establishment to accurately predict manageability.
SiS Youth Klarälvsvägen Farm – Sweden

SiS Youth Klarälvsvägen Farm is not a prison, but an institute, it does not have prison officers, but treatment assistants and it does not solely care for young offenders, but a mix of young offenders and those in need of closed care but who have not been criminalised. Recidivism rates, across Sweden, for those released from custody are 43% for 15-17 years and 52% for 18-20 years old (Graunbol et al, 2010). However this is only the figure for those released after being in custody under youth custody (LSU) which is when a young person is sentenced for a set period of time, such as is practice in the UK. Many of the young people in youth detention centres in Sweden are there under the Persons Act (the Act with specific provisions for the care of young) which involved social services sending a young person into closed care for a period of time for assessment and treatment. Klarälvsvägen Farm has a total of 18 spaces for both LSU and those placed under the Persons Act, however it is specifically for those between 16 and 20 years old with severe psychosocial problems and ongoing criminality and abuse. “The goal of therapy is to motivate each boy to change by teaching him to behave in a different way than he used to. It will hopefully lead to the boy maturing, managing themselves better, stopping the inappropriate and anti-social behaviours, learning new and pro-social behaviour and taking better responsibility for himself” (National Board of Institutional Care, 2013).
Young people within eight weeks of entering the institute have an individual treatment plan designed which involves the input of the young person, their family and the institute staff and is the beginning of the behavioural therapy the institute specialises in. The eight weeks before the plan is created is in order for the young person’s behaviour to be analysed, to determine how he acts and reacts in his environment, what his triggers are and how he thinks about situations, all of which is essential before any behavioural therapy can begin. The treatment plan focuses on the young persons needs inside and outside the institute and is reviewed every six weeks, at which point a copy is given to the young person and their family. This is also the document staff follow and take an active part in its content and development.

Due to punishment being less effective at changing behaviour than positive reinforcement, punishment in the traditional sense is absent at Klarälsvägen Farm. If a young person misbehaves it is seen as a point that needs to be raised on the treatment plan and treated with cognitive behavioural therapy, such as aggression replacement therapy. Only if the misbehaviour is security related it may lead to lack of freedom, such as not being allowed on walks outside the grounds, but this is not a punishment per se as a precaution. Positive behaviour is rewarded with greater freedom and more activities, such as an interesting game called Frisbee golf.

Staff at the establishment are highly trained, although not in traditional prison officer skills such as control and restraint but in CBT and General Daily Life training which appeared to create a much stronger rapport with practitioners and young people.

**What can be learnt from Klarälsvägen Farm?**

That prison assessments should not be rushed as time is needed for observation and for the young person to begin to relax. Although eight weeks is too long for many of our young offenders due to the short periods of time they spend in prison, it should not be the case that a assessment such as RAM is completed within hours of entry when the young person is often exhausted from spending days in a police cell and court and often in shock or denial at their situation.
Methods such as CBT and General Daily Life training are important if prison is to have a lasting affect. It is not enough to manage young people in prison but while a young person is developing to be able to teach them how to cope with their emotions and learn new pro-social skills should last with them for the rest of their life.

That punishment is not always the answer to undesirable behaviour, and in the case of SIS Klarälvsvägen Farm, were the only isolation room is used only until a young person has calmed down and only ever for a maximum of 24 hours, yet they still look after challenging and aggressive young men it is worth questioning why we still rely on traditional punishment when it has proven to be ineffective.
In Finland at the time of researching there was only one young person in custody, which is remarkable as 30 years ago Finland had one of the highest incarceration rates in Europe and it now has one of the lowest. For this reason the research focused on young adults (18 to 20 years old) in custody and young people (15 to 18 years olds) on community orders. Recidivism for young people in custody is 100% however this is due to the data being based on only 5 young people. Recidivism in the community for young people is 22% (Graunbol et al, 2010). Young adults in Kerava prison reside in a separate unit and under slightly different rules. The unit is quite small, holding approximately 10 young adults, and it is set up in a relaxed manner with a kitchen and a living area with the young adults having the responsibility for cleaning. The staff are officers but they work specifically with young adults and do not wear uniform, they have also had extra training. The majority of young adults in Finland have substance misuse issues when they enter custody, therefore a lot of the work in Kerava is based on substance misuse and motivational interviewing. Working activities are varied and had purpose, ranging from ironmongery to horticulture to rearing lambs. This provided a great link to the outside in that all goods were sold to the public, whether it is a custom made piece of iron to a wendy house and plants in the garden centre just outside the prison gates, where prisoners are also employed.
However the vast majority of young people who have been criminalised are placed on community orders, of which the most widely used sentence is a conditional sentence which is a standard length of one year and three months, which can be extended for six months for non-compliance. In more serious cases a sentence called juvenile punishment can be issued which lasts from four to twelve months but the level of supervision is much higher. Young people have to meet with their probation officer who works through a manual of motivational interviewing styled discussions. Topics include anger management; criminal behaviour; motivational change; identity and social skills; community support and how to access it; and substance misuse.

Probation officers are highly skilled at motivational interviewing and engaging young people, the rapport they build with the young person is paramount to their work, as after all it is the young person that decides to turn up for the meetings.

**What can be learnt from Kerava Prison and Helsinki Community Probation?**

That the lines between inside and outside prison need not be so defined. The vocational courses had real merit with their real life scenarios and demand. The revenue gained also, in a small part after the cost of materials and tuition, helps to recoup some of the costs of prison. More importantly it builds a better understanding with the public of what prisoners do with their time and what they can achieve.

From the probation office their use of motivational interviewing in a structured manner with a manual of subjects that can be tailored to the individual is a good way to keep the engagement and motivation of the young person and ensure sentence compliance, whilst achieving low rates of re-offending.
JVA Adelsheim and CJD Project Chance Creglingen – Germany

JVA Adelsheim is the central juvenile prison for the county of Baden-Württemberg and holds convicted and remand juveniles from the ages of fourteen years old up to and including twenty year olds. Recidivism in Baden- Württemberg after three years is 69% with a 36% reincarnation rate, however after a education course the re-incarnation rate drops to 21% (Kriminologischer Dienst Baden-Württemberg, 2010). Much of the prison is run similar to a prison in England and Wales however there are unique departments, one of which is the ‘just community’ house. It holds 25 young people and follows the principles of a just community by Lawrence Kohlberg, detailed in Kohlberg and Hersh (1977). The group elects two house representatives, democracy is used to decide on rule changes and punishment for members of the group failing in their responsibility. In group meetings morals are questioned and the group has to think about situations and decide on an action, thinking as a collective not individually. Although stages of moral development are not measured the aspects of moral education are there and moving towards a stage where “moral conflicts are now seen and resolved in group or social terms rather than in individual terms” (Kohlberg and Hersh, 1977, p56). Ultimately the highest level of moral reasoning would be where the “perception that underneath the rules of any given society lie moral principles and universal rights, and the validity of any moral choice rests on the principles that choice embodies” (Kohlberg and Hersh, 1977, p57). At
this level it would be right to question laws and regimes that violate moral rights and principles, and if necessary act against them, however it should be noted that few people reach this level of moral reasoning.

Elsewhere in JVA Adelsheim there are extensive workshops with the possibly of gaining qualifications in butchery, baking, ironmongery, carpentry, car mechanics and more. The work the young people complete is live projects, for example the cars being worked on in the car mechanic workshop are the cars of the prison employees and genuinely need fixing. There is a bakery the staff can buy bread and other baked goods and every year there is a Christmas market where the goods the young people have made are sold, heightening public awareness of the prison and the skills the young people have.

CJD Project Chance is a training centre for fourteen to twenty one year olds in the small community of Creglingen in the German countryside. It has 15 places for young people who have a sentence of between six months and three years. It is an open prison, young people work long days restoring a former monastery, which is also their home for the duration of their sentence. Through restoring the monastery they learn skills in all forms of building work and architecture. There are no prison officers, only social workers and educators, the project is instead run through a positive peer culture. A positive peer culture is based on the principle that you can never change the dynamics of a group but you can change its values from a self destructive individualistic view of the world to a group of people who care, trust and support each other. Meetings are held everyday with the whole group where current affairs are discussed and roles decided on. The group monitors everyone else; tasks such as cleaning and timeliness are marked by the group and they also support and teach each other.

The idea of offending as individual pathology is negated in much of the work in Germany where there is recognition of the importance of group dynamics and peer support. The case of reducing recidivism is built on the idea that if you feel you belong to a group your self esteem will rise, along with your sense of social responsibility and ability to engage with others in a pro-social manner.
What can be learnt from JVA Adelsheim and CJD Project Chance Creglingen?

That group dynamics between prisoners are importance and should not only be associated with negative outcomes. If fostered in a skilled and calculated manner a positive peer culture can be created without creating a gang. It is however a long process to begin and needs extreme care and skilled practitioners. It also has the affect of providing young people with a voice and a means to evoke change that is meaningful to them.

The significance of ‘live’ jobs in prison workshops and the sense of importance this can bring. Similar to Kerava prison in Finland, by providing young people with real projects and goods that are for the public it brings meaning to training and heightens public awareness of the work completed in prisons.

‘The mood and temper of the public in regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilisation of any country. A calm and dispassionate recognition of the rights of the accused against the state, and even of convicted criminals against the state, a constant heart-searching by all charged with the duty of punishment, a desire and eagerness to rehabilitate in the world of industry all those who have paid their dues in the hard coinage of punishment, tireless efforts towards the discovery of curative and regenerating processes, and an unflagging faith that there is a treasure, if you can only find it, in the heart of every man these are the symbols which in the treatment of crime and criminals mark and measure the stored-up strength of a nation, and are the sign and proof of the living virtue in it.’ Winston Churchill
Recommendations

Mandatory Motivational Interviewing training for all staff

Prison is not always successful, with “reconviction rates for young people on release from custody high, with approximately 70% re-offending within 12 months (Home Office, 2003), and one study suggesting that 27% re-offend in the first month after release” (Youth Justice Board, 2005) something needs to change. This is particularly the case when prison can be very distressing for young people “Research shows[s] that custody can intensify [young people’s] difficulties, by dislocating children and young people from their families, communities, and from mainstream and children’s services. As a result, young people in custody can become particularly vulnerable” (Youth Justice Board, 2005, p5). Young people’s experience of custody can be extremely frightening, with young people coping by using violence, self harm or indifference. In order to reach the aim of the youth justice system and improve prison efficiently this fear needs to be broken down, as effective intervention work can not take place in a feared environment, and the best way to do this is through high quality interaction immediately on entry into prison between young people and practitioners.

In Norway and Sweden a method of doing this is by using motivational interviewing (MI) from the moment the young person enters their establishment, and it works. Young people re-offend less at between 36% and 43%, and self harm and violence is extremely low. However prison officers do need to be trained in MI in order to use it, however if it helps reduce recidivism, violence, self harm as well as associated staff sickness and stress then it will be a investment easily justified. “Motivational interviewing is a directive, client-focused method for enabling motivation to change by exploring and challenging ambivalence towards dealing with young people’s behaviours” (Stephen...
et al, 2011, p78). This involves working with the young person to reveal their own reasons for their behaviour and motivations to change. The style should be empathic, collaborative, and use reflective listening and open-ended questions to discuss reasons for and ambivalence about making changes (Miller & Rollnick 2002, in Doran, Hohman and Koutsenok, 2011, p20). Although MI was initially designed for people with substance misuse issues it can be transferred to a young offender institution environment as they have time and opportunity to invest resources to it, which is our staff and the work they already do with young people, it would just be a change in the methodology of communication. MI doesn’t mean that the young person needs to have a motivation to change at the start, which in a young offender institution it can be rare to find a young person with their own true desire to change, therefore training staff to use MI on young people could be hugely beneficial to reducing recidivism and make a real difference to young peoples lives and has the possibility of making personal officer work more meaningful. MI could be used as a mechanism of building engagement; gaining responsivity and helping young people see a pathway out of offending.

The stages of MI are to work through a series of thought processes, described by (DiClemente and Prochaska, 1998, in Passmore, 2011, p37) as the Transtheoretical model. “The Transtheoretical model describes how people prepare to change through a series of stages from precontemplation, through contemplation, planning, action and how successful change is maintained” (Passmore, 2011, p37). The stages are shown in a figure below adapted from Passmore (2011) with an example of a relatively simple thought process example.
There are studies to support the effectiveness of MI. A study based in New Zealand by Anstiss et al (2010) on adult males in custody showed “Once released into the community MI prisoners had a 21% lower reconviction and a 17% lower re imprisonment rate than their treatment as usual counterparts” (Anstiss et al, 2010, p704). This was based on a study of offenders with a range of criminal behaviours including violence, sexual violence and burglary, some of the most common criminal behaviours young people are sent to YOI’s in England and Wales for. Significantly the length of time was relatively short, with one hour sessions a week for an average of three to five weeks in length, however the mean age for this study was 34 years old and therefore working with young people may take a bit longer.
Other studies that show a reduction in recidivism after MI include Austin et al (2011) who has detailed four principles of MI supported by Rogers (1959) and a fifth principle I have added from Anstiss et al (2010) that are the essence of how MI should work within the stages shown in the previous diagram.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discrepency</th>
<th>• Amplifying the discrepancy between a value like spending time with family and recent behaviour such as offending which leads to spending time in custody</th>
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| Resistance        | • A resistant young person should not be met with counter resistance  
                     • Resistance is used as a signal that the practitioner is going in the wrong direction or too quickly |
| Expressing Empathy| • Charatistic of the person centered nature of motivational interviewing is expressing empathy  
                     • Shown through reflection and effective listening techniques |
| Supporting Self Efficacy | • Fostering individuals belief in an ability to change  
                       • A young person may not believe in their ability to change therefore we need to believe in a young person and help them to believe in themselves |
| Avoiding Arguing  | • This can also be seen as pro-social modelling and displaying the behaviour you wish to see from the young person and avoiding circles of negatively |

If you combine MI with all the other agencies and the services on offer in YOI’s then you have the potential to change not only young people’s perspective on the world but also their outlook and perspective on life in preparation for resettlement back into the community.

As an intervention it would need to be effective and therefore following the principles of effectiveness as identified by McGuire and Priestley (1995) and Lipsey (1995) and discussed in Stephenson et al (2011). The base of the MI would need to look at the young persons criminogenic needs and therefore be relevant to the young person; this

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means that most of the sessions will need to be one to one. The dosage would be individual and therefore need to have flexibility with the practitioner determining the number of sessions based on progress of the young person. In order for the sessions to be community based they would need to always refer back to the young persons community life, their natural life outside prison, and how MI can help them on the outside, this should not just be a prison intervention on how to cope inside prison. The sessions need to be at a time when the young person is going to be responsive, for example, taking a young person out of their association time for their session will not get the best response and they may ‘rush’ the session in order to return to association. MI can not work alone, it must have intervention modality and be multi – modal, it is useless to talk about starting a new education course when a young person is released from custody if no one has checked to see if the course is available or attempted to organise a placement. Lastly the most important factor is programme integrity, staff need to know why they are using MI, how to use it and have a desire to use it.

MI in many ways is concerned with raising a young persons self esteem and therefore it will hopefully lower incidences of self harm and suicide, particularly as statistics show that 10% of suicides occur within the first 24 hours in custody, and 21% within the first week (HM Prison Service, 2000) and “children in custody are 16 times as likely to kill themselves as children in the community” (Narco, 2010). Therefore the more we as practitioners can do to help young people the more we can start to reduce any iatrogenic effects young people gain from their experience of custody and the more we are truly working towards reducing re-offending for the long term future.

**MI and the benefits for Prison Officers**

The use of MI in an ongoing gradual intervention would ideally improve staff-prisoner relationships as both will begin to understand each other better. “The role of staff-prisoner relationships is crucial to prison life....right relationships can provide security, order, legitimacy and social support” (Liebling, Price, shefer, 2011, p119). However prison officers can be under significant ongoing stress that affects them and the prisoners under their care. In various studies by Liebling cited in (Liebling, Price,
shefer, 2011, p65-66) it details the stress prison officers can be under. It states that 95% of over 200 staff interviewed reported in their view that prison officers suffered unreasonable levels of stress in the job. And that almost half the officers knew an officer who had committed suicide, a further 10% know officers who had attempted suicide and two of the officers discussed their own suicide attempts.

“The role of the prison officer is arguably the most important in a prison” (Liebling, Price, shefer, 2011, p204). “Prison work involves more than common sense, although because of the experience laden nature of the best of their work, officers often mistake a highly skilled performance for common sense” (Liebling, Price, shefer, 2011, p205). Prison officers do work in challenging conditions and do fantastic work therefore to equip them better with more skills such as MI would strengthen the work they do and if managers were trained in MI they could use this skill to support their staff to eliminate desensitisation which exposure to prison can create. “Officers may become numbed to experiences which should trigger ‘corrective’ responses. Prison work demands of staff that they cope with brutality without becoming brutalised, that they experience feelings without being able to express those feelings legitimately or with out the risk of being ridiculed or rendered ineffective” (Liebling, Price, shefer, 2011, p160). If we can support our staff we can lower staff sickness, reduce turn over, and in turn provide good healthy role models for the young people in their care.

Greater emphasis on pro-social modelling and learning social skills

Norway, Sweden, Finland and Germany all believed that providing young people with good role models was essential to reducing recidivism. That it is not simply enough to provide education and interventions but that staff needed to show young people how to live in a socially acceptable manner. In Sweden staff would go to the gym to work out and teach young people how to look after themselves, in Norway staff took
the young person to the supermarket to get the weekly shop, in Germany the young people have home economics classes where they learn how to cook simple low cost food, and other household tasks such as how to use a washing machine. While in nearly every prison in this study staff sat down to eat their meals with the young people, with everyone in some way participating in cleaning up. However all these countries take learning social skills one step further and use pro-social modelling.

Pro-social modelling is a method a practitioner uses to model pro-social values and behaviours on their client, as well as challenging the client and using positive and negative reinforcement.

“Pro-social modelling involves the worker keeping appointments, being punctual, honest and reliable, following up on tasks, respecting other people's feelings, expressing views about the negative effects of criminal behaviour, expressing views about the value of social pursuits such a non-criminal friends, good family relations and the value of work. It involves interpreting peoples motives positively e.g. "most police are people trying to do a job and they have similar needs to most of us" rather than "all police are pigs". It involves being open about problems the worker may have had which are similar to the offenders e.g. "I spent a period of time unemployed at one time and I found it depressing". It also involves being optimistic about the rewards which can be obtained by living within the law” (Trotter, 2006, p144).

It is important however with social modelling that cultural differences between practitioners and young people are recognised. Trotter (2006, p149) explains that issues such as domestic violence, child neglect, work ethic, punctuality can all mean different things in different cultures, and as we are all influenced by our social, religious, racial and economic milieu we need to actively try to gain a understanding of our client and ourselves.

It is possible to be trained in pro-social modelling however in the young persons estate officers complete pro-social modelling on a frequent basis without knowledge of it. Smiling to encourage a pro-social value, such as expressing a desire to start a workshop, or praising someone for coming to you with an issue they have rather than resorting to a physical altercation, or challenging them on their opinion of their YOT worker
who because of their recently refused bail they particularly dislike at that moment in time. However most officers would see this fantastic work they do as common sense, however it is much more valuable than this and if used consistently by all officers all the time, it can help young people to begin to understand what is socially acceptable and start to question their previously held values and beliefs.

Therefore instead of training, which is costly and assumes that officers do not already complete this work, a greater awareness and emphasis on examples of best practice and opportunities to complete pro-social modelling and learning social skills would be more beneficial.

Assessments such as the ‘risk assessment and management’ document to contain more on the needs of the young person and how we can meet these needs in custody. With sentence planning completed and run by officers on the landings based on needs focused assessment

The document ‘risk assessment and management’ (RAM) is used on every young person who enters custody, it is created on E-asset; a computer programme designed to be shared by a variety of professionals, from YOT’s to Prison officers. RAM is designed to be used by prison officers within hours of the young person arriving in custody. It records answers from the young person on their risk to themselves, to others and from others, the RAM is also designed to include information from other documents such as Asset and post court reports. In terms of prison management it is extremely useful, it enables officers to organise how to work with the young person in order to keep them safe and ensure the smooth running of the establishment. A case manager will then also be assigned to the young person who will work with the young person on their case arrangements, bail applications, housing on release, and in maintaining a link with the YOT and community outside prison. There
does however seem to be a gap between the work officers complete on the unit, the work the case manager completes and the criminogenic needs of the young person. For example in Sweden young people are assessed within eight weeks of arrival into custody allowing time for the staff to get to know the young person and for the young person to settle into prison. At this stage it should be clearer what the young persons triggers are and how they interact with others. The assessment details how the young person feels about every aspect of their life and where they currently have difficulties, whether it is with peers, drugs, education or other. This then creates certain risk factors that can then be managed but it is after the main issue has been identified. All staff then have a responsibility to look into the young persons issues and try to resolve them, as there are no case managers, most of the work is completed through the use of MI, pro-social modelling and then the young persons desire to change. There is a strong focus on communication and everyone being aware of the young persons situation, their achievements and their set backs, as if everyone is aware then everyone can work using the same goal.

In practice this would be a challenge for officers in YOI’s where both staff and young people are in constant transition, however with young people on fixed DTO’s for example it is realistic that they will work with a group of officers throughout their time, providing they remain on the same wing.

**Research into how elements of a social therapeutic community approach could be implemented**

“Research on democratic therapeutic communities (TC) demonstrates their effectiveness both in lowering reconviction rates and in improving behaviour and psychiatric symptoms. TCs however are not so widespread in the UK and Europe, and small TCs in prisons tend to be short-lived or under regular threat of closure, and under researched.
Exceptions to this are Grendon Prison, the Special Unit at Barlinnie Prison (which closed in 1995) and a number of Social Therapeutic Institutions in Germany” (Rawlings, 1998, p4). Both the institutes researched in Germany ran as therapeutic communities, where democracy, peer support, confrontation of peers and collectivism were central to their rehabilitative values. JVA Adelsheim worked on a ‘Just community’ model and another wing was a dedicated therapeutic community for violent and sexual offenders, and CJD Creglingen worked with a positive peer culture, however they were all in essence therapeutic communities. In the UK there have been therapeutic communities in young offender institutes, however they have come and gone, remain isolated or are specifically for drug abuse or those in need of psychiatric help. Examples include the Albratoss unit at YOI Feltham, the Chiltern Unit in YOI Ayselbury, and YOI Glen Parva, however this closed in 1996. During the time YOI Glen Parva was open, a total of 15 years, despite increasing severity of offences and high levels of inmate disturbance prior to referral, only four outstanding assaults were recorded (MacKenzie 1997 in Rawlings, 1998, p39) significantly there were also no suicides (Rawlings, 1998, p39). Although research has been completed and social therapeutic units have been run in YOI’s they have only been on a small scale. Institutions in Germany that are running therapeutic communities are larger and for young people that are not only drug users or in need of mental health support. They use democratic methods and rely heavily on peer support. Reported effects include a reduction in violence, self harm and upon release recidivism. The challenges of setting up a therapeutic unit for offenders in YOI’s are vast as well as potentially costly therefore research into how it can be implemented would need to take place if we wish to empower our young people and provide a prison service that works at reducing re-offending.
**Limitations**

This research is not gold standard evidence based research however it is a comparative study of YOI’s in England and Wales and establishments in countries that traditionally focus on the welfare of young people over their deeds. It is therefore designed as an eye opener on alternative solutions to rehabilitation for young people, from the perspective of a prison officer.

Of the countries visited few had issues with gangs within the prison environment. All countries had large motorbike gangs however they did not cause issues in young offender institutes and therefore this study was not able to observe alternatives to working with young offenders in gangs, which would be another extremely beneficial study. All the recommendations noted however could have an effect on gang behaviour, in particular motivational interviewing which can question a young person’s motivation for being in a gang and the future consequences.

Research on better methods of safeguarding young people and how to deal with self harm and suicide ideation could not be found as the UK already does excellent work in this field. Our ACCT (assessment care, custody and teamwork) document is used for any prisoner in the UK who has indicated they will self harm or commit suicide; has already self harmed or attempted suicide or when staff are concerned that either may occur and feel extra support is required. This document is unique to any found in the establishments visited, as well is the situation where prison officers are the professionals who deal with self harm. In every establishment self harm was seen as a medical issue and as such officers were detached from it, therefore it could be assumed that officers in the UK have a greater knowledge and experience of self harm and how to discuss self harm with those in their care.

Secondly safeguarding young people from harm and influence from young adults is common practice in the UK, however it is not elsewhere in Europe where young people from the age of 15 are often living in custodial environments with young adults up to the age of 21.
This is often a result of necessity rather than choice due to the low levels of young offenders in custody not warranting separate young offender institutes. Although there were no reported incidences of any issues of young people and young adults mixing and living together there is still the risk that it may happen, which in the UK we have almost, with the exception of split sites such as YOI Feltham, negated completely.

Conclusions

If recidivism in young people that are released from custody is to change then alternative methods of rehabilitation need to be researched and considered as real alternatives. Looking to best examples from abroad can provide an invaluable start to penal reform and provide ideas that can be adapted for use in the UK. However although reducing recidivism should be the ultimate aim it should not be the sole aim. Young people in prison are often from some of the most disadvantaged, damaged and distressed families, neighbourhoods and communities (Goldson and Muncie, 2008) and therefore effective preparation for resettlement needs to be of central concern, whether through learning social skills or developing a motivation for change. Another concern is that “the vulnerabilities of children in custody are often compounded by the very experience of detention itself. Indeed, the conditions and treatment typically endured by child prisoners routinely violate their emotional, psychological and physical integrity” (Goldson and Munice, 2008). This is what needs to be eliminated in order for children to be safeguarded and develop into healthy adults who are able to desist from criminal activity when they are released, often into the same damaged and disadvantaged communities they left when entering prison. Therefore the more that can be completed in prison to increase the welfare of young people the more young people are less likely to be affected by the negative effects of living in a prison environment.

The biggest resource the prison service has is staff, the prison officers on the landings with young people. They know their young people and often complete exemplary work with them which often goes
unnoticed. However staff need greater support and training if violence, self harm and re-offending is to be reduced. Countries that have a strong focus on the welfare of their young people also have a strong focus on the training of their staff, training them to be prison officers with the highest understanding of human rights, social needs, motivational interviewing skills and knowledge of how to run social therapeutic communities. The affect on young people is seen in the greater level of rapport and trust they have with the staff, the advance in communication and the way young people often choose to continue contact with their personal officer even after release. The benefits of a healthier environment, if considered, could have a positive effect on young people but also the health of staff, from reduced sick leave, depression, suicide, and desensitisation to violence and stressful situations.

There are many other excellent examples of work in the establishments visited however the recommendations in this report are those that if further researched and considered could be transferred to establishments in the UK effectively, and for those establishments with a desire for penal reform, realistically.

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