

Briefing to support the *Strengthening probation, building confidence* consultation, September 2018

About this briefing

People in contact with the criminal justice system are often faced with a combination of problems including substance misuse, mental ill health and access to appropriate and secure accommodation. These issues are experienced simultaneously and compound one another so that their journey away from the criminal justice system can become all the more complex.

This briefing introduces the work of the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition and highlights the importance of partnership and coordination at a local level in effective rehabilitation. Exploring four key themes from the consultation document, it shows how learning from MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas could help support the development of a more integrated and coordinated probation system.

About MEAM

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) is a coalition of Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind. It was formed in 2008 to improve policy and services for people facing multiple disadvantage and represents over 1,300 frontline organisations.

The MEAM coalition partners welcome the consultation on stabilising the current probation system and improving probation services beyond 2020. We are pleased to see the focus on steps to create a more integrated and collaborative probation system and the proposals to improve how probation works with wider partners.

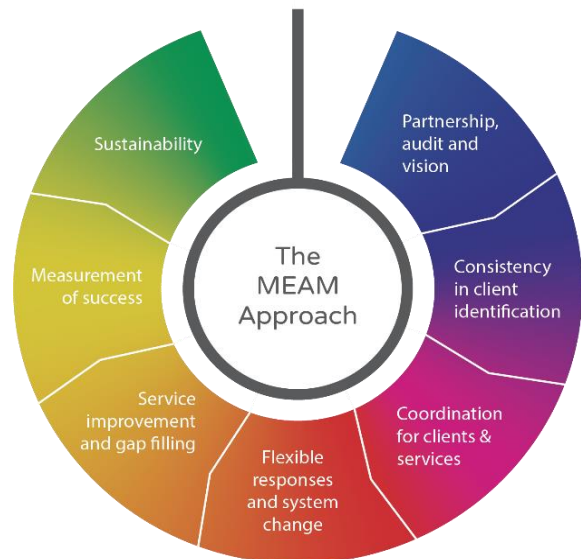
Multiple disadvantage

People facing multiple disadvantage experience a combination of problems including homelessness, substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system and mental ill health. They fall through the gaps between services and systems, making it harder for them to address their problems and lead fulfilling lives.

Working together, the MEAM coalition supports 35 local areas across England to develop effective, coordinated approaches to multiple needs that can increase wellbeing, reduce costs to public services and improve people's lives. Twenty three of these areas are using the MEAM Approach and 12 are part of the Big Lottery Fund's Fulfilling Lives programme.

The MEAM Approach

The MEAM Approach provides local areas with a non-prescriptive framework from which to design and deliver better coordinated services for people facing multiple disadvantage. Our team of regional partnership managers supports local areas to look at seven elements, and to design and deliver a new way of working that reflects their local environment and current service structure. At all times, the work remains owned and driven by the local partnerships. Using the MEAM Approach helps local areas improve outcomes for individuals and reduce the use and cost of wider services.



1. Partnership and coordination for effective rehabilitation

Why is this important?

We welcome the focus on reducing the use of short term custodial sentences. There is a growing consensus that short custodial sentences do not work. We know that they often result in the loss of accommodation and disrupt engagement with community mental health and substance misuse services. The opportunity for meaningful rehabilitation is limited.

What learning can be gained from MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas?

Through local partnership working there is an opportunity to use alternatives to custodial sentences. Work in MEAM Approach areas is showing that joint assessment, decision making and a shared accountability between services can make the use of rehabilitative treatment requirements for both mental health and substance misuse a more successful mechanism to move an individual away from the criminal justice system.

Case study: Southend Complex Needs Panel

A partnership of local agencies in Southend-on-Sea have come together to use the MEAM Approach to better coordinate services and systems for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Through a Complex Needs Panel they are working collaboratively to navigate people who have frequent contact with the criminal justice system away from custodial sentences and into effective rehabilitation with Community Sentence Treatment Requirements.

A continued rise in rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour linked to drug and alcohol use called for a new partnership approach to offending in the area. The Complex Needs Panel consists of representatives from housing and social inclusion, community mental health, drug and alcohol treatment services, the police, probation, anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, and other relevant agencies. Together they make an assessment of appropriate candidates for community treatment requirements, make collective decisions as to the level of risk, the services an individual will be required to engage with and for what period of time. Conditions including locations an individual is not permitted to enter are agreed and through the sharing of knowledge as to where these restrictions could impede attendance at certain services, practical alternative arrangements are made.

2. A coordinated response to bridge the divide between prison and the community

Why is this important?

We welcome the focus in the consultation on improving the process of leaving prison. We know that significant numbers of people are released from prison without stable accommodation, around 4 in 10 people who are sleeping rough have a mental health condition and that continuity of support back in the community for mental health and substance misuse is currently inadequate.

What learning can be gained from MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas?

Coordinators in MEAM areas are playing a role in bridging that divide. That coordinated response starts within prison and in the crucial first days after release. Using a strengths based approach they engage when the person becomes able and in the way they need.

Importantly, the role of coordination goes beyond the traditional role of support worker, working with other local partners to address the gaps in services and systems their work uncovers. In MEAM Approach areas this is achieved by the use of operational and strategic groups. Operational groups of frontline services meet regularly to discuss casework and develop flexible responses. This is fed directly into a strategic group of senior decision makers who explore and address any systemic barriers that are highlighted.

Case study: Anne and Marie, Counting Every Adult Service in Cambridgeshire

Marie remembers the day she first met Anne. It was in the healthcare wing of a local prison. “The moment I walked in I knew she was in the wrong place. We talked about how we could help her, but mostly about what she wanted me to do to help.”

Anne had mental health problems and had been sleeping rough. “I found my life spiralling out of control,” says Anne. “The things that mattered to me had become finding enough food to eat and a roof over my head. I felt as though society had thrown me away. Whenever I went anywhere, people would glaze over and go ‘oh no, not her’.” Then she was referred to Marie from the Counting Every Adult Service in Cambridgeshire, which was developed using the MEAM Approach. Anne says: “When I met Marie in prison, she smiled at me, she gave me a hug; she treated me like a human being. Marie said she would walk with me every step of the way, giving me the stability I needed to rebuild my life. Marie was a place of hope for me. I felt as if somebody was actually listening to my voice for the first time in a long time.”

The flexibility of Marie’s role means she is able to develop relationships with the agencies that can deliver a coordinated response for people with multiple needs in the days before release from prison. Working closely with colleagues in the CRC, housing, mental health, substance misuse and others, she can prepare a transition to services within the community and prevent the ‘cliff edge’ caused by short sentences in which accommodation has been lost, access to GPs, mental health and other primary care has been severed and the need to rebuild these connections can be overwhelming. In some cases, working with a coordinator like Marie to attend mental health, substance misuse and other services can become part of the individual’s rehabilitation requirements.

Marie sums up the change this kind of approach makes possible: “We’ve shown that we can work with people that otherwise would be thrown away by society. And we really are making a difference to people’s lives.”

3. A workforce with the right training and skills

Why is this important?

The probation service relies on the skills of its workforce. This must include the skills and training to work effectively with people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Eighty-five percent of people with the most complex needs have experienced some form of trauma in childhood. For women in particular, this frequently continues into adulthood, where they experience domestic abuse and violence. It is clear that effective support and a journey away from the criminal justice system starts with the ability to form trusting relationships with services.

The future probation workforce strategy must therefore include developing the skills for working with complex trauma, to use person centred approaches and to develop relationships with local partners to coordinate more effective rehabilitative interventions both on release from prison or as an alternative to custodial sentences altogether.

What learning can be gained from MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas?

In MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas, the role of workforce development has been key to better coordination of services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage. Their experience has taught them that success begins with the recruitment of people with the right values, the capacity to be confident in the face of complexity and the willingness to persevere so that they can meet an individual where they're at; when they're ready. In probation, this can only be achieved where probation services operate within a wider partnership of statutory and voluntary sector agencies where accountability for rehabilitation is shared and where flexible approaches are embedded within the system. This partnership approach lends itself to workforce development opportunities between actors in the local system.

Case study: Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead and Northumbria CRC

Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead (FLNG) is one of twelve partnerships currently funded by the Big Lottery Fulfilling Lives: supporting people with multiple needs programme.

Fulfilling Lives clients often had and continue to have regular contact with criminal justice services. In 2016 FLNG and Northumbria CRC established a secondment which sought to build a reciprocal understanding of each other's services, establish better working relationships and to improve understanding within the CRC staff team of the needs of people experiencing multiple complex needs. FLNG hosted a member of CRC staff for a period of four months in which they held a mixed caseload of Fulfilling Lives and CRC clients.

As a result Northumbria CRC are exploring a new model of working and plan to embed the skills and learning developed by the CRC seconded worker into this new model. They are seeking to introduce guidelines for all staff on the five key skills needed to support and engage service users with MCN (maintain professional roles and boundaries, build trusting relationships, validate and support service users positive life choices, collaborate with service users to develop strength building plans, motivate and encourage service users both practically and emotionally). Responsible Officers are encouraged to use their professional judgement and discretion when working with service users with multiple and complex needs and support their effort to move away from the criminal justice system.

4. Commissioning a system wide response

Why is this important?

A collaborative and system wide approach to the design and delivery of rehabilitation and resettlement is key for the future of probation.

HMPPS senior leaders in each region could play a key role in facilitating collaborative commissioning processes. To do so effectively, this will require the inclusion of a wide range of actors including housing, health, mental health, substance misuse, specialist provision for women and others.

What learning can be gained from MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas?

From our work in local areas it is clear that a number of partners across local systems can and do play an important role in supporting those in contact with the criminal justice system and reducing reoffending. Successful MEAM and Fulfilling Lives partnerships include a significant role for the voluntary sector as well as other bodies including Police and Crime Commissioners. Both have a good understanding of local need and work together to commission and deliver services that work directly with and support the outcomes of their local CRCs and the NPS.

Case study: Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in Surrey sits within a partnership that is currently using the MEAM Approach to design and deliver better coordinated services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage in the county.

Through their involvement in the partnership, the OPCC recognised the need for a diverse range of support to move away from the criminal justice system; and the need to commission services that support people both within prison and during the transition back into the community.

Currently they commission services that range from a mentoring project in a local prison working with people both prior to and on release; a Forward Trust programme aimed specifically at prisoners with drug and alcohol issues; the provision of accommodation based upon Housing First principles as well as 25 additional bed spaces across 7 properties in partnership with Transform Housing; and a shared subscription for all local partners to the Cleansheet service supporting prisoners and ex-offenders into sustainable employment. They are also currently working with a local women's centre to develop alternatives to custodial sentences through a female specific Check Point programme.

The OPCC recognises the importance of working with a range of partners including a strong and sustainable voluntary sector and that they can only play a role in commissioning a responsive local system when these partners are present.

Conclusion and contact

The future probation system must be equipped to work more effectively for people experiencing multiple disadvantage. Our work in local areas has shown that this can only be achieved where there is an emphasis on partnership and coordination across the local system. The current consultation provides the opportunity for national policy to support and promote this way of working.

We believe that the learning and experiences from MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas can help shape the work to reform probation. We would be happy to discuss any aspect of this briefing in more detail, provide further evidence or arrange visits to local areas to discuss their work.

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