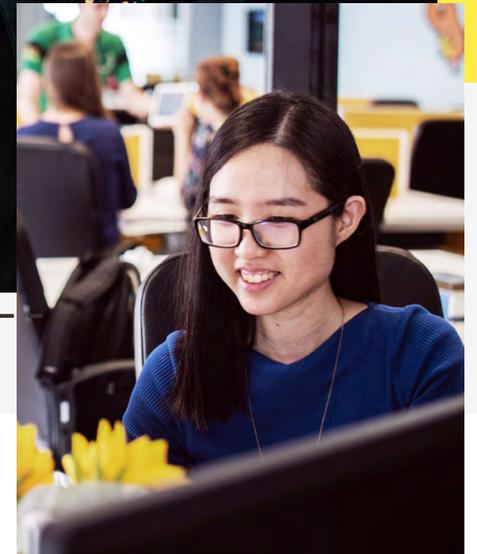
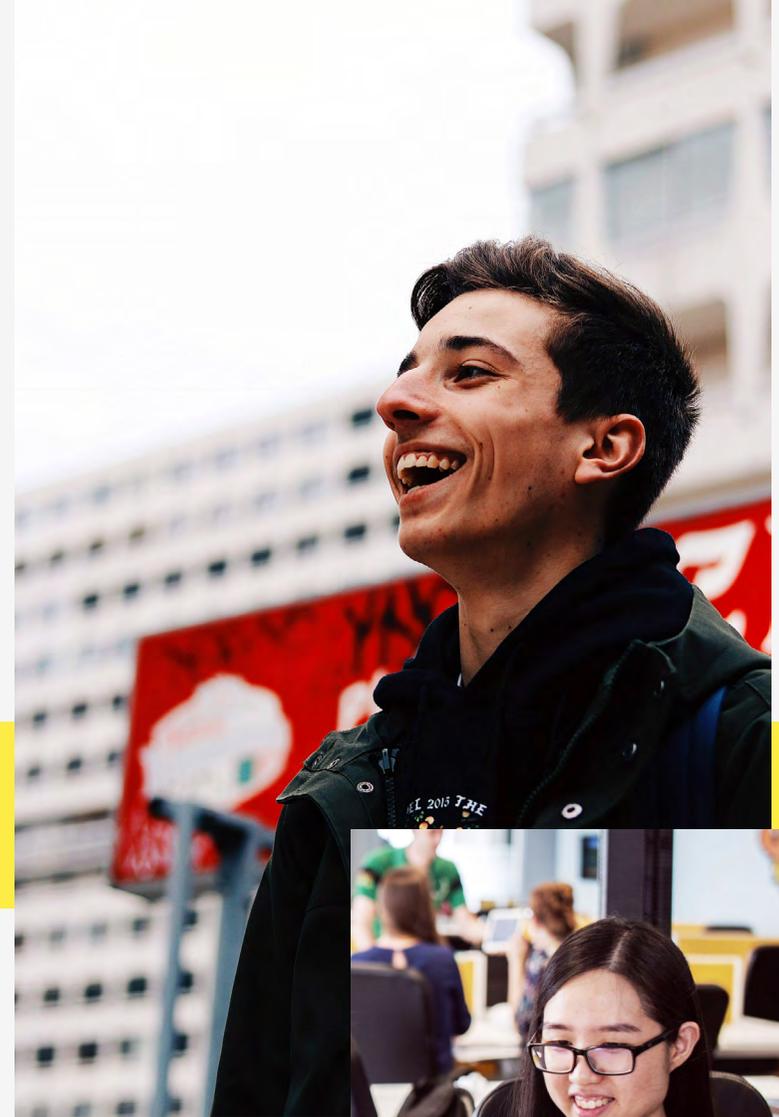


# BRIDGING THE GAPS

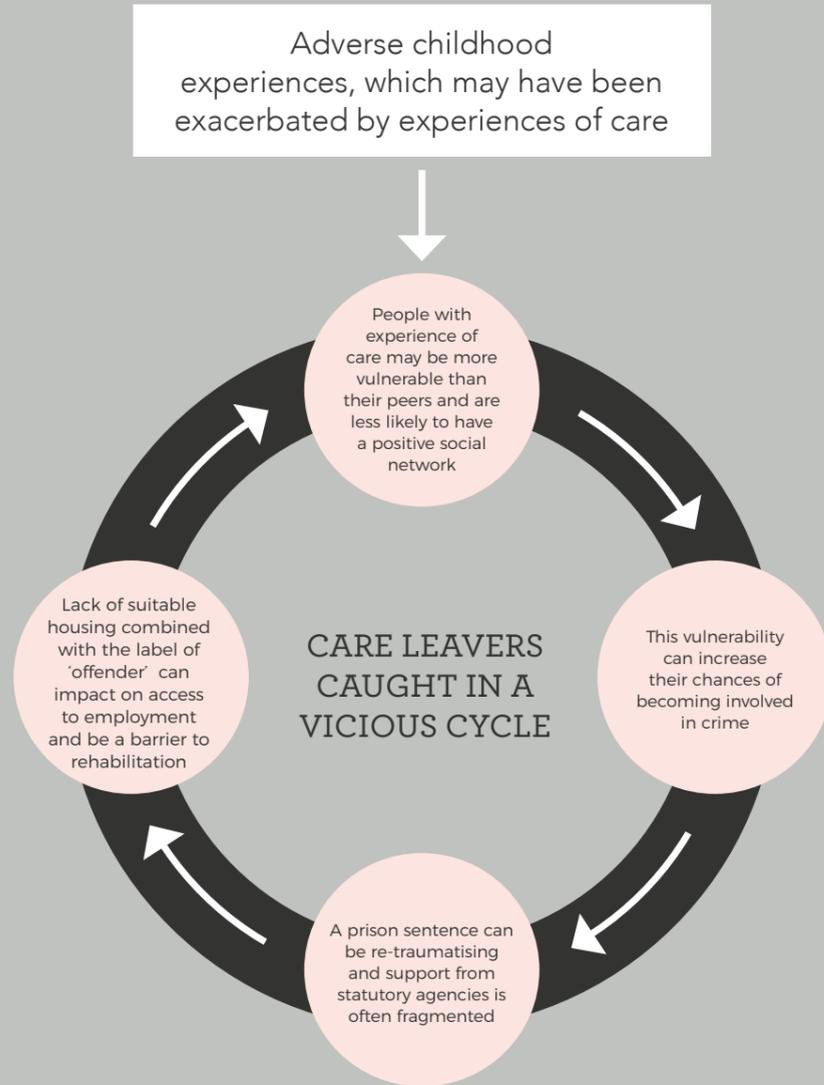
NEW APPROACHES TO IMPROVING  
OUTCOMES FOR CARE EXPERIENCED  
YOUNG PEOPLE GIVEN PRISON SENTENCES

JULY 2020



# SETTING THE SCENE

*Young people who have spent time in care are estimated to be 25x over-represented in the male prison system.<sup>1</sup> Despite the efforts of the many passionate and hardworking staff, the support the young people receive from Children's Social Care and Justice services are frequently fragmented. This, combined with them often having a limited positive social network can increase their chances of re-offending.*



There is an absence of data for this cohort of young people. No outcomes data is collected, for example on: reoffending rates, mental health needs or employment rates post-release. In addition, many of this cohort do not self-identify as care experienced when they arrive in prison.

<sup>1</sup> MoJ 2012.

# OUR VISION

*Young people (male and female aged 18-25) with experience of care are no longer over represented in the prison system*

*Those young people who are serving prison sentences identify and develop a sustainable community of coordinated support that contributes to their rehabilitation*

*There is a system change involving Children's Social Care and Justice services taking an integrated approach to supporting this cohort. Young people know what support they can expect before and following release*

*Improved outcomes for this group include reduced re-offending, having a place they can call home, improved health and well being and an equal likelihood of being in education, employment or training as their peers in the general population*

# OUR JOURNEY

## PHASE ONE OUR STARTING POINT

*Generating deep insights to really understand the problem from multiple perspectives, especially those of young people with experience of care who have been in prison.*

*One key piece of learning was that the fragmented and uncoordinated nature of available support could exacerbate the young people's likelihood of reoffending.*

## PHASE TWO WHERE ARE WE NOW

*Co-designing and prototyping two radical new solutions.*

- 1. Identifying and mobilising a sustainable community of support for the young person whilst in prison and on release.*
- 2. Co-ordinating the assessment and planning of the three key statutory providers so they are integrated and the young person knows what they can expect.*

### PHASE 2 ACTIVITY

Between October 2019 and January 2020 we ran a series of 7 workshops with care experienced young people in prison and the professionals across Children's Social Care and Justice tasked with supporting them.

Together with the young people and our partners in the West Midlands we dived deep into the insights generated in Phase One of the work and co-designed a powerful set of responses. These responses were underpinned by a series of design principles that were agreed in the workshops.

## PHASE THREE NEXT STEPS

*Piloting new solutions in the West Midlands and generating demand with future adopters.*

# INSIGHTS AND LEARNING

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

*Essential principles that should underpin the newly designed approach*

1

*Early identification of care leaver status is crucial for maximising support*

2

*Young people with care experience and the staff supporting them must be clear about who is responsible for offering what support*

3

*Care experienced young people are at the centre of all decision making and service provision*

4

*Staff from the range of services working with this cohort have a shared understanding of the young people's strengths, needs and vulnerabilities*

5

*A collaborative, joined up approach from the services supporting and planning with the young people is in place prior to, during, and after release from custody*

6

*Risk is considered holistically and calculates best interests, risk to self (harm/exploitation) and risk of reoffending after release from custody*

## LEARNING FROM WORKSHOPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN PRISON

### What would encourage you to self identify as having had experience of care?

Understanding why it would benefit me.

A peer worker talking to me about how self-identifying has helped them.

### What do you want from the staff supporting you?

All young people stated they want (i) connection/ someone to talk to (ii) support with family (iii) support with future goals.

From their Personal Advisor (PA) and Probation Officer (PO) the cohort said they would like support specifically with employment, housing and education. From prison staff they wanted support with things that impact on them whilst they're serving their sentence.

This crossover of support confirms the importance of staff working together in a coordinated way.

### Where do you/can you get support?

Many young people reported getting lots of support from prison staff and from family (both birth and foster/ adoptive). There was also a large number of young people wanting support from physical and mental health services as well as drug and alcohol services on release.

These responses remind us that all young people are unique and will therefore need a network of support around them that is specific to their individual needs.

# NEW SOLUTIONS

Using the design principles, we used the workshop spaces to create a new set of solutions. These were:



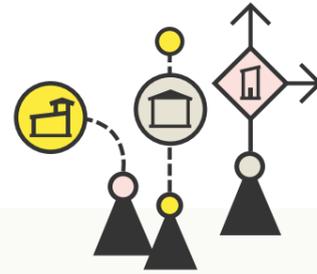
## DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT NETWORKS

Offering each young person the opportunity to identify and develop a lasting support network whilst in prison and on release. This might include extended family members, friends and professionals previously engaged with, e.g. teacher, sports coach. Together this network would offer coordinated support to the young person.



## DEVELOPING INTEGRATED PLANNING PROCESSES

Coordinating assessment and planning between Children's Social Care, Prison, Probation/CRC staff so that the young person is at the centre of plans, does not have three unrelated plans written about them and knows who is responsible for offering them what type of support.



## PROVIDING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Developing a training and support offer so those involved in supporting the young person (both in their personal network and the practitioners) are aware of the strengths, needs and vulnerabilities of care experienced young people and understand each other's roles in the new ways of working.

# PROTOTYPING

Next we put these new solutions to the test by prototyping them with three young people. Prototyping is a disciplined approach to learning through doing. It is a useful way to rapidly test how user friendly and effective an approach or service is. Ensuring the new design really works for the people using, and working in, the services is at the heart of prototyping. It creates an opportunity to take managed risks and create the space for innovation.



# PROTOTYPING WITH CRAIG

*Craig is 21. He is coming to the end of a 2 year prison sentence. It is the responsibility of Craig's Probation Officer to plan for his safe return to the community and provide support so he doesn't commit any further crimes.*



The key services involved in offering support to Craig are Children's Social Care (CSC), the Prison Service, the local CRC and the Probation Service (NPS). It can be very difficult to know who is the correct contact person at each of these services. Often professionals that hold strong relationships with young people are not consulted when their Resettlement Plan is being developed.

We wanted to trial an integrated approach to planning for Craig's future so all the key professionals tasked with supporting him could input to his Resettlement Plan. In particular, Craig's Personal Advisor (PA) has been working with Craig and his family since Craig was 15 and was keen to contribute his insights. We spoke to the Care Leavers Champion at the prison where Craig is serving his sentence and arranged for the PA to join the Resettlement Planning meeting.

During Resettlement Planning it was immediately apparent that the PA disagreed with the Probation Officer's (PO) decision not to authorise Craig to

be released to his mother's house. The PO was concerned that this would constitute a risk and recommended Craig be released to Approved Premises. The PA was concerned that previous referrals to these premises had ended badly for Craig and additionally felt that the decision not to allow him to his mother's house was based on historic evidence, however recent changes in Craig's behaviour and medication meant his mother's house would be the most supportive place for him to live. After much back and forth, the PO agreed to change their recommendation and for Craig to be released to a friend of his mother's.

On the day of release the friend of Craig's mother went missing and Craig became homeless. Fortunately he was found emergency accommodation for the weekend and then stayed in a range of hostels on a night by night basis until a permanent hostel placement was found. Craig visits his mum every day, staying into the evening until his curfew dictates he returns to the hostel.

## KEY INSIGHTS

*Throughout the integrated planning process it is necessary for a lead agency to be responsible for moving things forward as well as there being clear protocols defining how services work together*

*The service providers have differing priorities to consider, e.g. welfare, housing, reoffending, however it is impossible to consider one without the others*

*There needs to be agreements in place for the sharing of confidential information between service providers*

*Calculated risks may need to be taken when considering key issues such as where the young person should live - there will be costs and benefits to all options*

# PROTOTYPING WITH JANE

*Jane is 21 and due to be released after being in prison for 3 years. She has a personality disorder and is assessed as being at high risk of serious harm. She is considered by some professionals as institutionalised due to long spells in care and custody; Jane is fearful of change/release.*



The key service providers involved in planning for Jane's release are the Personal Officer (prison), Personal Advisor (PA) and Community Offender Manager (COM). Currently these professionals are not working together or agreeing actions. This has left Jane unclear of her release plans.

The prison staff wanted to test the new ideas promoted in the workshops. They wanted to enable professionals to take an integrated approach to planning Jane's release and to involve family members in this process.

The Prison set up a meeting that included the additional key people involved in supporting Jane. These were a mental health inclusion worker, the prison chaplain, Jane and her aunt and uncle. A key issue for Jane was that she has been assessed as at being at high risk of harm. The Community Offender Manager felt that Jane needs to go to an Approved Premises (AP) on release. Jane was very anxious about the idea of going to the

AP and stepped out of the meeting 3 times. The PA, Mental Health Worker and Personal Officer were concerned about the impact of another institutional setting and suggested that Jane's aunt and uncle could provide a home for Jane, with support in place. Jane's aunt said they wanted her to come to them and had decorated a room for her. The mental health worker explained that once an address for Jane's release had been agreed she could bring the community health worker into the prison to introduce to Jane.

As a result of the discussions, a risk management plan was proposed for the COM to take to the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements panel for agreement. This included a curfew if Jane went to her aunt's, engagement with a local women's service (starting immediately) and visits from the Police on release. If Jane did have to go to the AP, this would be for a minimum period.

## KEY INSIGHTS

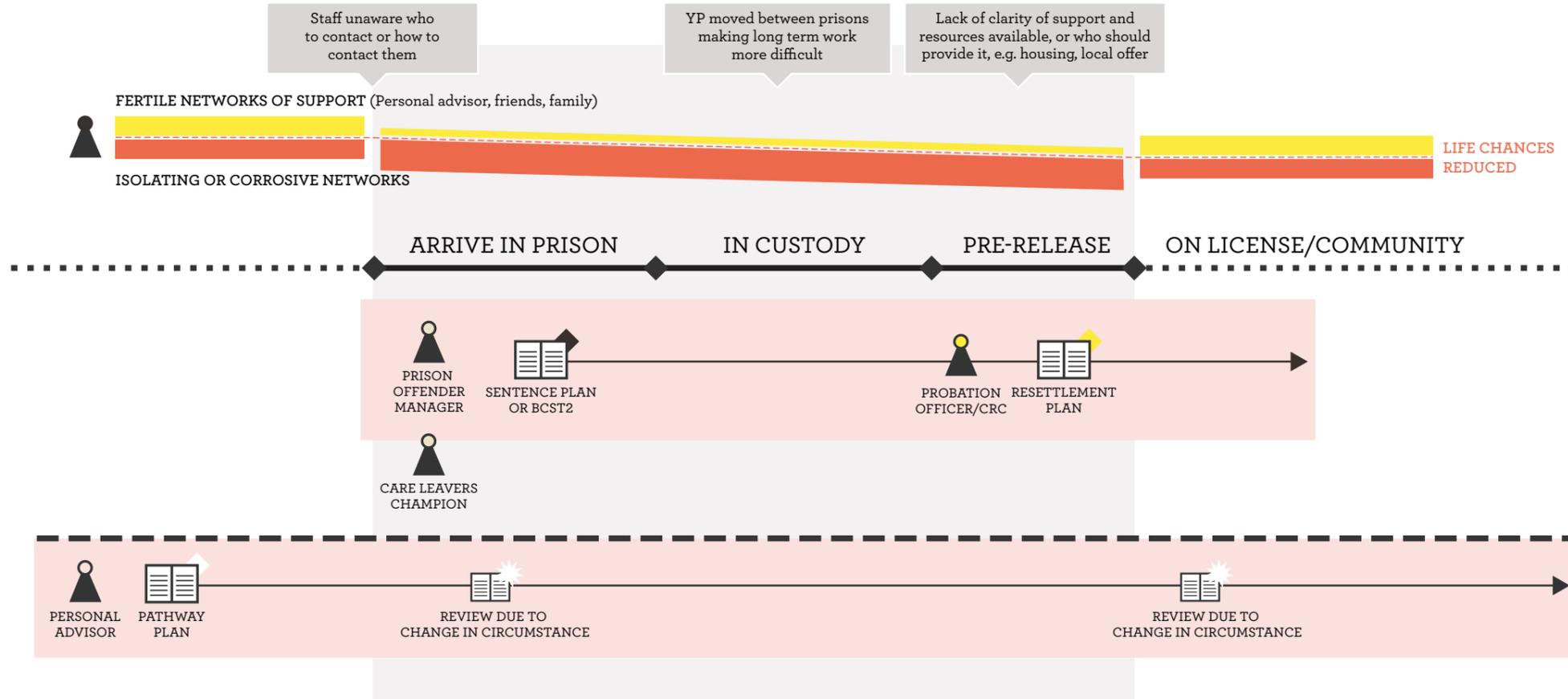
*Planning for release/rehabilitation needs to consider how family members can contribute*

*Integrated planning reduces young people's anxieties providing clarity about the options and the support they can expect*

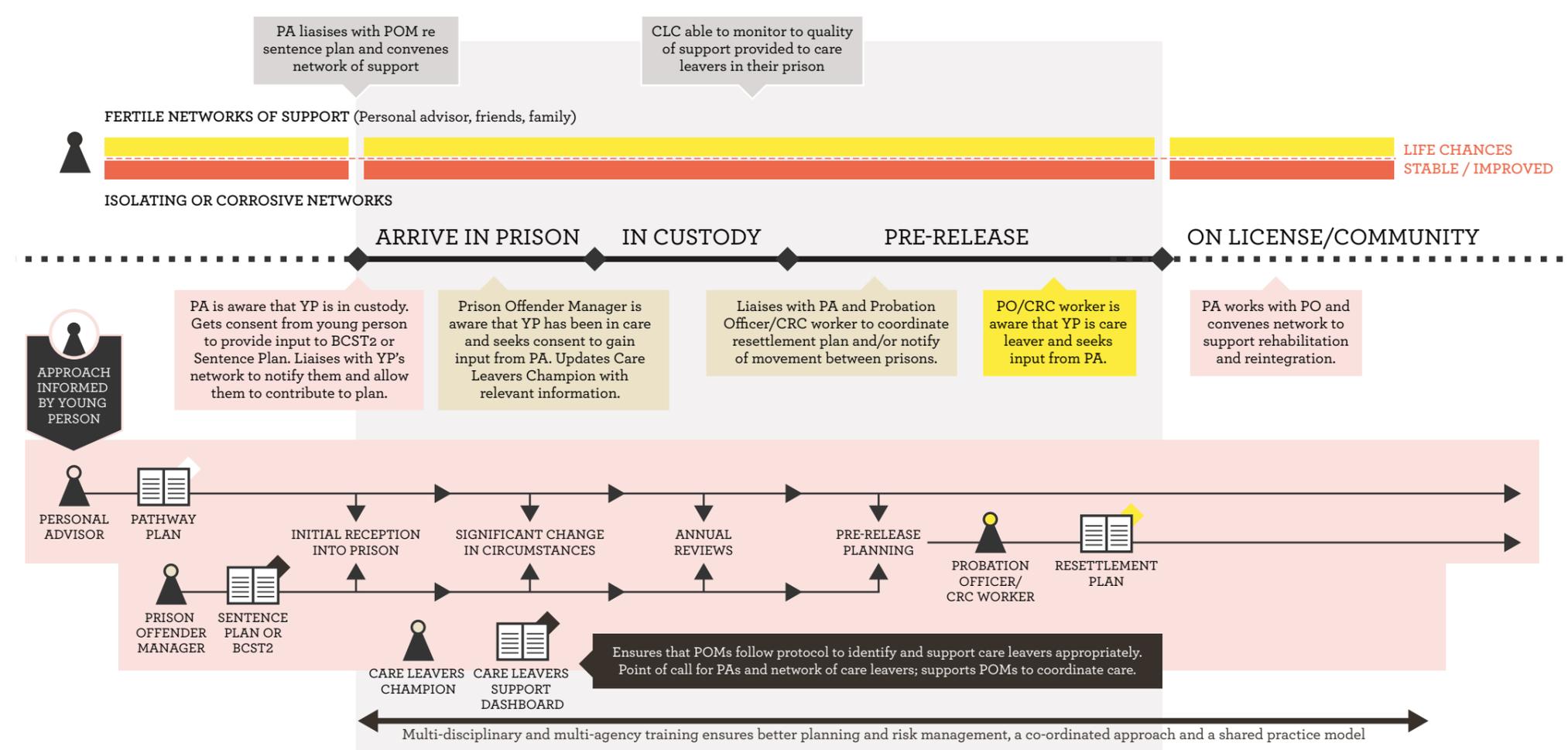
*Staff feedback that 'this is how a planning meeting ought to be'*

# POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

## THE CURRENT SYSTEM



## POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE



# CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

*We identified a set of opportunities for innovation*

## 1

*Early identification of care leaver status is crucial for maximising support*

### CHALLENGES

- Absence of data regarding care experienced young people in prison
- Lack of data impacts on planning for this cohort
- Young people are reluctant to acknowledge Care Leaver status
- Women may be reluctant to self identify as fearful that their children might be taken into care

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Peer mentors encourage those with experience of care to come forward and self-identify
- Information relating to the benefits of self-identifying is shared with all those under 25 entering prison
- PAs get consent from young person to contact Care Leavers Champion to let them know that the young person is in prison (or vice versa)
- Increased awareness of prison staff in how to identify young people with experience of care

## 2

*Young people with care experience and the staff supporting them must be clear about who is responsible for offering what support*

### CHALLENGES

- Young people are not clear of what support they can expect
- Staff are not clear of who is doing what to support young people with care experience and do not understand each other's roles and responsibilities
- Staff don't know who to contact to resolve disagreements or how to escalate if things go wrong

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Protocols that support work with care experienced young people are in place at each stage of a prison sentence and following release
- All staff supporting young people experience a training offer where they learn about the scope and boundaries of each other's roles
- Peer mentors share with young people what support is available and from which service

## 3

*Care experienced young people are at the centre of all decision making and service provision*

### CHALLENGES

- Young people's voices not always heard and do not inform design or delivery of services
- Young people's needs are not always identified or met
- Positive social networks are rarely tapped in to by professionals to provide support
- Resources are not targeted to address needs, risks or vulnerabilities

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Potential to develop a peer support/mentoring offer in custody and support following release
- Informal social networks are identified and developed to offer coordinated support whilst the young person is in prison and on release
- Young people are consulted on their care plan and on the design and delivery of services

## 4

*Staff from the range of services working with this cohort have a shared understanding of the young people's strengths, needs and vulnerabilities*

### CHALLENGES

- Several practice models are in place at the different services supporting young people
- Lack of guidance and training in relation to this cohort of young people
- Work with young people is often not trauma informed
- Different expectations and cultures impact on priorities for each service

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Multi-disciplinary training that develops shared understanding of young people's strengths, needs and vulnerabilities and creates a shared practice model that is trauma informed
- Creation of shared priorities between services supporting the young person
- Training reflects the diverse needs of women

## 5

*A collaborative, joined up approach from the services supporting and planning with the young people is in place prior to, during, and after release from custody*

### CHALLENGES

- Assessment and planning is done in isolation and information is not shared between organisations
- Personal Advisors often have a long relationship with the young person prior to going into prison and on their release, but the Pathway Plan does not contribute to the plans made by the Prison, Probation or CRC services
- Duplication of assessment and plans
- Personal Advisors do not always know which prison the young person is in and who to contact in that prison
- Prisons do not always know who to contact in the Local Authority
- The Community Offender Manager does not always make contact with the Personal Advisor

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Co-ordination of assessment and planning so that actions from all plans can be integrated and aligned
- Responsibility of the Care Leavers Champion based in the prison to ensure that the Personal Advisors are brought into joint planning meetings with NPS/CRC
- Tapping into HMPPS Strengthening Families Strategy

## 6

*Risk is considered holistically and calculates best interests, risk to self (harm/exploitation) and risk of reoffending after release from custody*

### CHALLENGES

- Professionals do not share information regarding risks and/or vulnerabilities
- Barriers to data sharing between organisations
- There is not always an integrated approach to assessing and managing risks

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Co-ordinated approach assists in identifying and jointly managing risks to individuals, the community and working with the police as part of MAPPA
- Calculated risks taken when identifying and engaging members of support network
- Data sharing agreements in place

# WHAT NEXT?

Based on our insights we propose a third phase of this work which will pilot the opportunities that have been identified.

We are ready to pilot these approaches with a cohort of young people in prison and 'through the gate'. As they have been co-designed by and prototyped with a small sample of young people with experience of care in prison and on licence, we are confident in the suitability of the approaches.

In addition, during phase three we would like to deepen insight and prototype new solutions in two other key areas surfaced during our original scoping: housing and peer support/mentoring.

We believe the direct impact of the pilot will be to reduce reoffending, enable rehabilitation and increase the chances of a positive future for our cohort of young people. In addition, it would facilitate greater alignment of support across the young people's personal networks and the development of a common approach to Children's Social Care and Justice Services.

We will gather evidence to demonstrate how and why this approach works and we will develop a business case that shows the potential cost savings made by adopting this approach. This will include demonstrating that spend in one government department would result in savings in another.

Our indirect impact will be through production of visual, easily accessible learning materials from the programme; a set of tools to help future adopters to understand and adapt the model to their context; an ongoing, national programme of engagement with future adopters of the model to generate demand; and an external evaluation of impact.

We have strong commitment from our partners to continue the work and we want to build on that momentum.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*We would like to thank all those who supported Phase Two of the work - in particular the young people who attended workshops; Barrow Cadbury Trust for funding the work, HMPPS; National Probation Service, Reducing Reoffending Partnership CRC, Catch 22/ National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum; Prison Reform Trust; Care Leavers Association, Barnardos, Birmingham Children's Trust, Wolverhampton LA and Coventry LA for their commitment, insight and valuable contributions to workshops and prototyping. In addition this work has been developed at Innovation Unit by Frances Flaxington, Ella Walding, Jessie Ben-Ami and Aviv Katz*

*If you would like to be involved in taking this work forward please contact:*

**Jessie Ben-Ami**

[jessie.ben-ami@innovationunit.org](mailto:jessie.ben-ami@innovationunit.org)



Innovation Unit creates new solutions for thriving communities: solutions which build, support and recognise human potential and the critical importance of thriving relationships.



is convened  
and funded by:



© 2020 Charity number: 1115476,  
Registered in England No: 5836950