

United Together Pre-release Programme evaluation report

July 2020


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About us



 **Active Lancashire** is the strategic lead for Sport and Physical Activity in Lancashire. Sport and physical activity have the power to influence behaviours and develop skills which can have a broader, positive impact on people's lives. Our work in leading and facilitating effective partnerships across the county from key influential decision makers, through to community grass roots organisations aims to encourage Lancashire residents to engage in sport and physical activity and lead a happy, more prosperous life.

 **The Challenge through Sport Initiative (CSI)** is a bespoke behaviour change programme. It is an innovative peer led project using physical activity to deliver better outcomes for adults in recovery from substance misuse. It now engages wider groups of people including those with mental health issues, ex-offenders, the homeless and people with other addictions such as gambling. It is an ambitious partnership project which aims to encourage more active and healthier lifestyles. Free sessions are delivered across Lancashire by peer support workers who began as participants on the project themselves.



Engage in Sport



Improve Health



Inspire Communities

Executive summary



Project summary

The United Together Pre-release programme is a new initiative to provide an essential link to the wider United Together programme in the community. The aim is to provide a joined-up approach which engages those near to release whilst still in prison and then supports them immediately from release to help them overcome key barriers they face and to reduce the likelihood of them re-offending. On release participants are met by our Challenge Through Sport Initiative (CSI) Support Workers with lived experience, who develop personal action plans with each individual and then link them into support from a whole range of support in the community including our Football Trusts.

The pre-release programme has been developed to provide that initial contact with those in prison and to offer them the opportunity to undertake accredited training and personal development which will build confidence and trust with agencies who are then able to support them following release. The offer also includes training for the workforce within our Football Community Trusts who will deliver some sessions in the pre-release programme and offer support in the community. Many of these staff have not worked with similar cohorts of participants previously. Finally, the training offer is also planned for prison staff to upskill and increasing their knowledge of how to provide a more varied sport and physical activity offer.

The development of this programme took much longer than we originally anticipated and there were many challenges to overcome. However, a key driver for the successful delivery to-date was the consultation which our CSI team undertook with prisoners and with the staff. This provided a much clearer picture of how those in prison felt and what they ideally would like to see on release from prison.

Executive summary



Outcomes

During the first year of the project we have:

- Upskilled 26 Football Club Trust staff who found the training really useful and felt more confident in how to engage and support those in prison
- Delivered 1 week-long training block to prisoners, leading to the personal and emotional development of 12 prisoners
- Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the prison staff training had to be postponed for a later date; however, the prison staff that attended the first round of training for prisoners expressed an increased interest to support the programme and get more involved with delivery

Challenges

From the beginning of the project we had to overcome a number of challenges, from getting the Governor and the prison staff on board to overcoming some negative experiences that prisoners already had from external agencies. As this was the first time that we were setting up a project within a prison, it meant that we were not aware of the processes and procedures and we were learning as we were going along. Broken communication between the partners, not suitable rooms, outdated or missing equipment and limited offers for ex-offenders from some of the Football Community Trusts were also some of the challenges the delivery team faced and managed to overcome successfully.

Executive summary



Key Achievements

- Developed a successful partnership for delivering the programme in prison and worked alongside with the Twinning prison programme
- Set up a Steering group consisting of Active Lancashire, the Cumbria & Lancashire Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), the National Probation Service (NPS), The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), Great Places Housing Association, and Burnley Football Community Trust.
- Physical activity sessions helped prisoners stay engaged with the project and form a great friendship
- The delivery team gained the prisoners' trust by being understanding and adopting a strong but not dictate delivery
- The prison staff expressed an increased interest to support the programme and get more involved with delivery
- The CSI Team have been invited to talk on the NW Prison Radio Show and promote the project
- Interest from other prisons to deliver the project. DWP has expressed an interest in expanding the United Together project to young offenders 16-24
- Started a partnership with the Violence Reduction Unit (Police) as a result from this work
- Great Places Housing association decided to expand their involvement with the project and provide holding accommodation for offenders upon their release
- Despite the initial resistance, we have a meeting with the Governor of Preston prison to discuss the project further
- All partners and specifically NPS are more aware of the workforce development issues that need to be addressed

Executive summary



Lessons Learned

1. Setting an in-prison programme is not straightforward but a lengthy and time-consuming process
2. Key stakeholders need to be on board from the beginning of the project and can play a vital role in facilitating or impeding the development of the project
3. Creating a strong partnership can provide a better support to those coming through probation.
4. Upskilling the Football Community Club Trusts and prison staff is a crucial part of the project as it helps them increased their understanding of how to keep ex-offenders engaged
5. Sport and physical activity have the power to keep people engage and break down barriers. By upskilling and empowering the prisoners, it can change their mind-set of how they stay on track upon release
6. Prisoners have negative experiences of external agencies, thus it is important to have a delivery team that can offer empathy and share their lived experience with them
7. A lot more questions need to be asked before a person is released. People's concerns need to be listened to before they come out of prison or once they are working with probation
8. Mental health and substance misuse assessments would be useful to be done before the person leaves prison
9. Support that starts in prison and continues upon release is important especially for people with complex needs and can help break the cycle of re-offending.
10. Contact with probation services officers in the community would be useful especially regarding accommodation and specific patterns of behaviour
11. Contact with the person's family or friends who support them need to be made prior to their release
12. Support should be easily available not only to the ones leaving prison but to their families or support networks. This will give them the tools to understand some of the person's behaviours.

The national and local picture

There is no doubt that people who are about to be released from custody face multiple challenges and barriers as they re-enter society. Many of them are struggling to reintegrate back into the local community increasing the risk of reoffending. Increased support immediately prior and after their release is important for smoothing the transition.

In 2019 in Lancashire there were approx. 840 people in prison approaching release and 1620 people who have been released on license¹



In 2018, the reoffending rate in Lancashire was 29.2%³



Over half of prisoners were assessed on reception as having English and math abilities of a primary school pupil⁵



1 in 7 people leaving prison are homeless²



Only 17% of ex-offenders manage to get a job within a year of release⁴



About the project

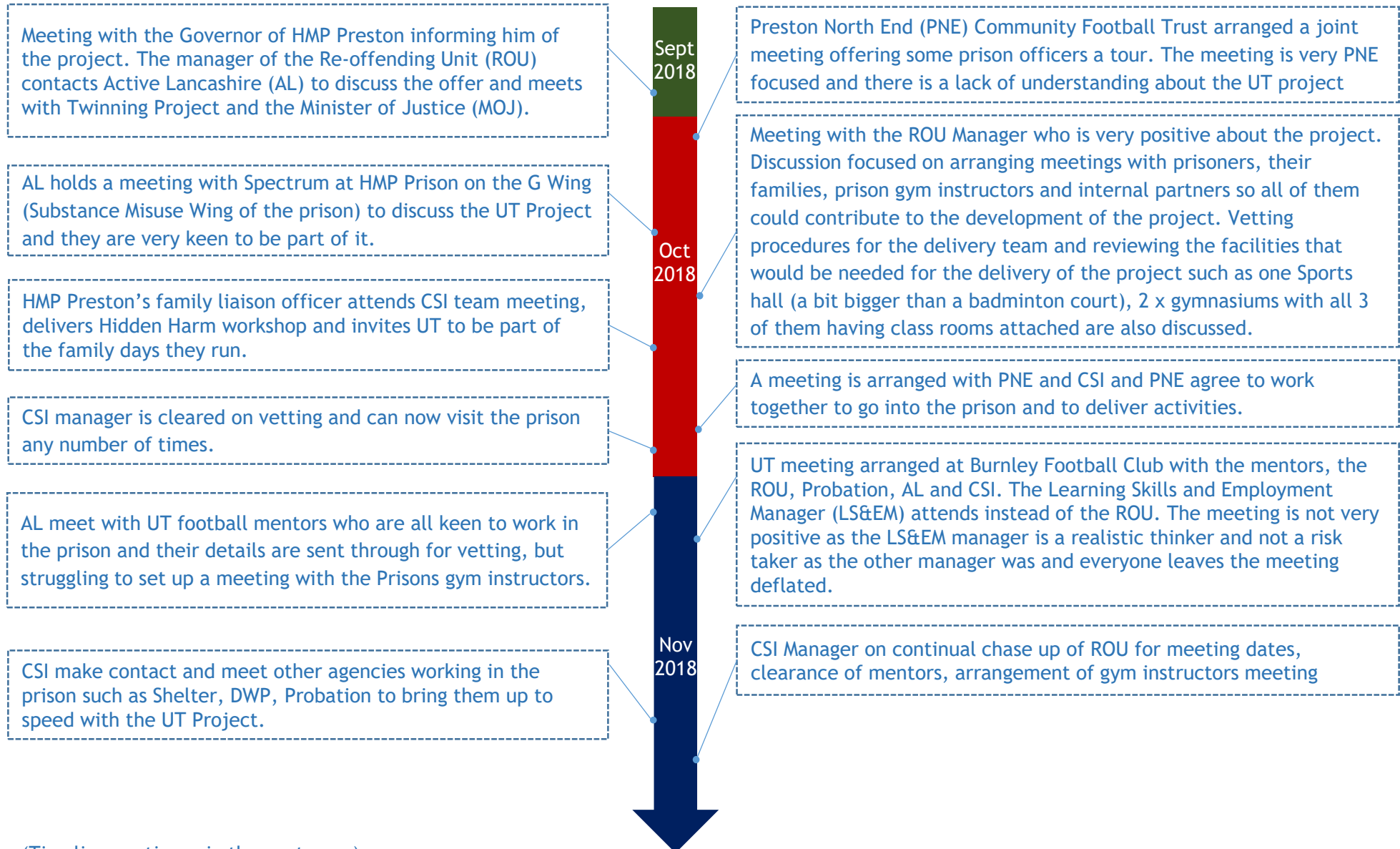


The United Together Pre-release programme is a new initiative to provide an essential link to the wider United Together programme in the community. The aim is to provide a joined-up approach which engages those near to release whilst still in prison and then supports them immediately from release to help them overcome key barriers they face and to reduce the likelihood of them re-offending. On release participants are met by our Challenge Through Sport Initiative (CSI) Support Workers with lived experience, who develop personal action plans with each individual and then link them into support from a whole range of support in the community including our Football Trusts.

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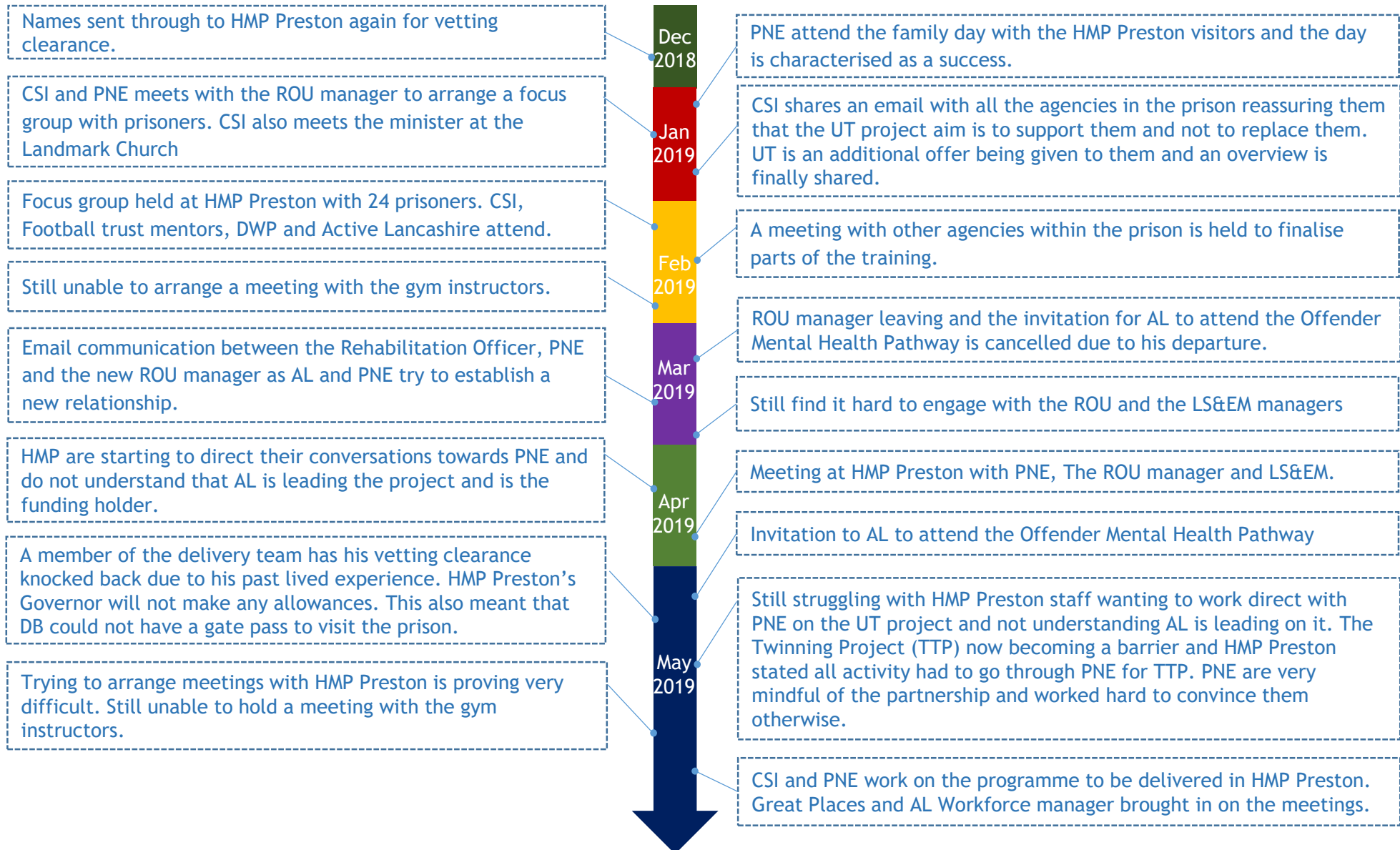


A timeline of the project development



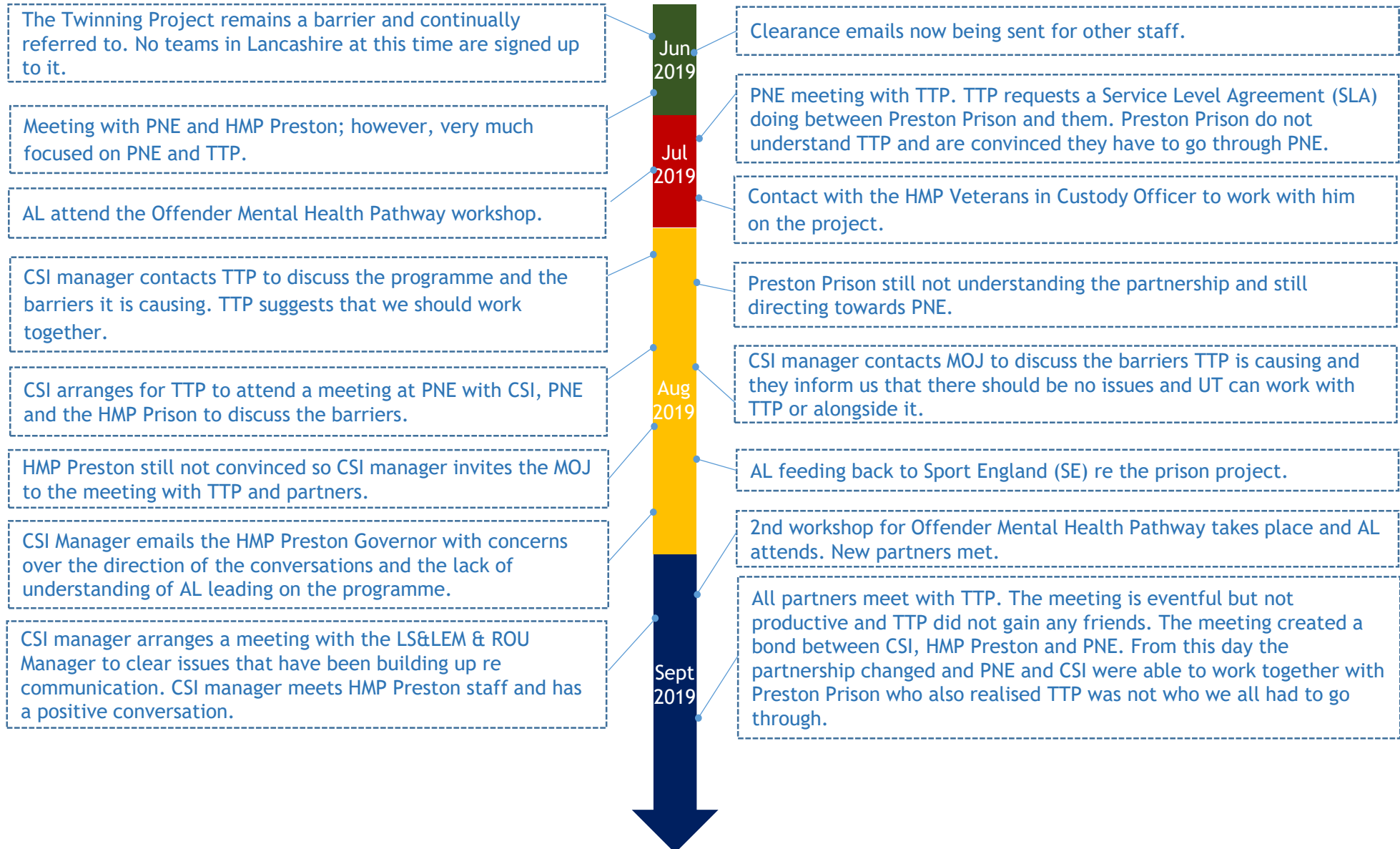
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A timeline of the project development (cont.)



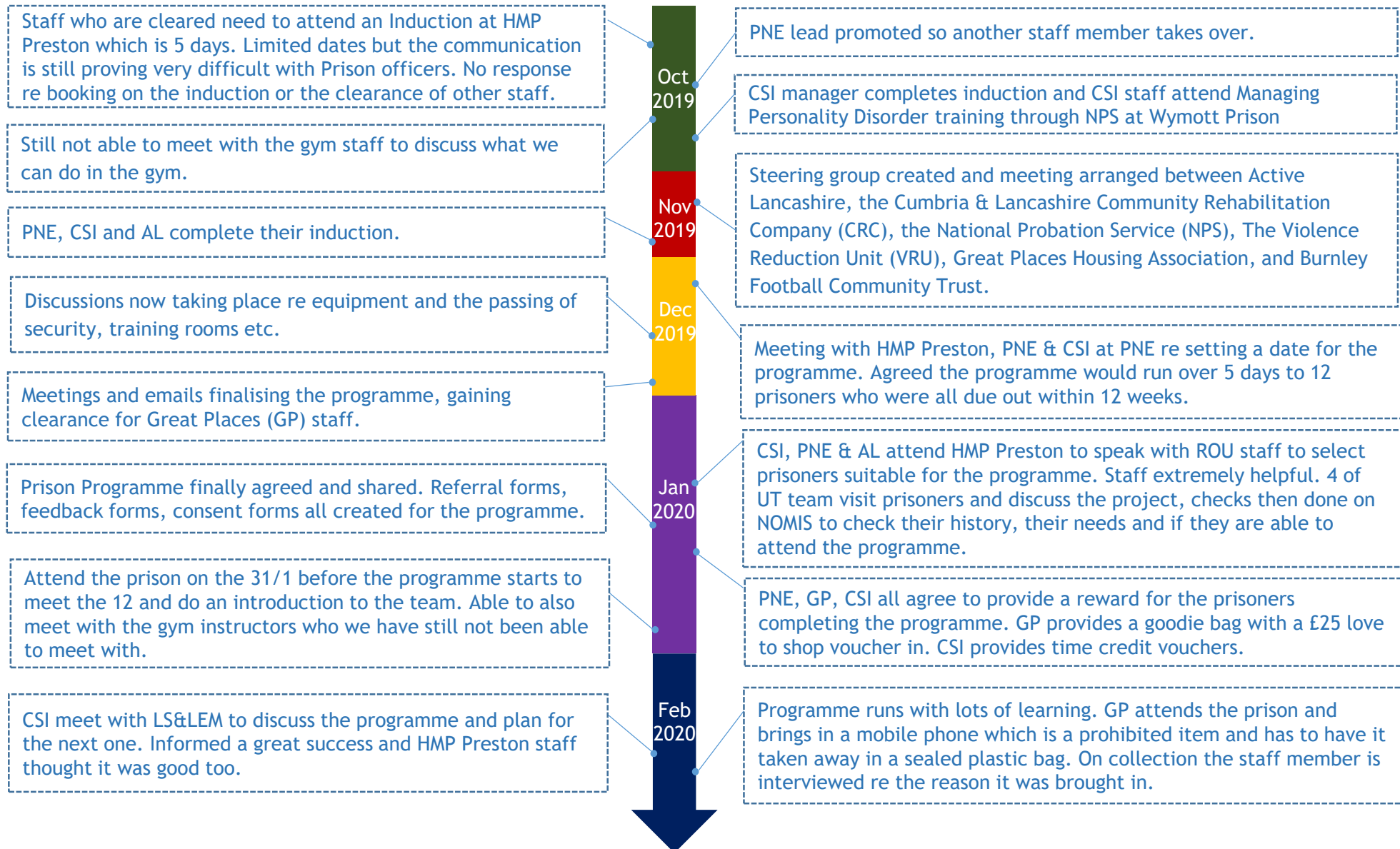
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A timeline of the project development (cont.)



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A timeline of the project development (cont.)



Aims



Support prisoners reach their full potential by providing a pathway of personal & professional development

Develop a workforce who can use a tailored sports offer to engage, motivate and inspire individuals during their transition from custody to community



Methodology



For the development of the project

Forming a partnership with PNE and Great Places and start working together as a team on developing the project

2 focus groups were organised with key stakeholders including prison staff and prisoners

For the evaluation of the project

We utilised a mix approach to measure the impact and engagement with the project, consisting of:

- gathering feedback from prisoners throughout the week
- session attendance logs
- 2 case studies to showcase the impact the project had on participants and
- 1-2-1 interviews with members of the delivery team

Training development



To shape the programme, an initial consultation was carried out with prisoners, prison guards and all the partners in the Re-Offending Unit. In the 2 focus groups, participants were asked about what type of support they would like during their first two weeks of being released, what training opportunities they would like to attend and what activities would be of interest to them. The findings of the focus group have provided valuable insight regarding the kind of package of support that needed to be developed. Specifically, stakeholders identified the following 8 areas:

Ongoing peer support

Financial Support and Form completing

Universal Credit support


Realistic goals and target setting

Volunteer opportunities and feeling part of a community

Housing Needs addressed early

Gym and fitness opportunities

Awareness of criminal convictions support



The pre-release training offer provides high quality engagement and training whilst in prison, informs prisoners of the offer once out and engages people in activities and learning. The 5-day programme was developed in collaboration with Active Lancashire, CSI, Great Places and the Football Community Trusts and was approved by the Re-offending Unit.

Pre-release offer



Goal setting session



4 Accredited workshops (Mental Health Awareness, Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Physical Activity, First Steps into Coaching and Multi Skills Activator)



Train like a Pro module, the module covered counts towards a qualification if anyone continues the course after released



Pre-employability and training support



Wellbeing and stress management



Multi-skills tournament

Project targets

The initial proposal was to deliver 12-week sessions in prison (4 in Year 1 and 6 in Year 2), leading to the personal and emotional development of **25** prisoners in total. However, it was highlighted by the prison staff that the spreading out of the sessions across several weeks would have a negative impact on engagement. Thus, we decided to deliver the training sessions within a week.

2 week-long training blocks delivered in prison

2 training sessions upskilling Football Trust and prison staff

100 individuals engaging with the United Together project and benefiting from individual or group mentoring sessions

70 individuals linked with Football Trusts

45 individuals progressing on to training, apprenticeships, or employment

Due to Covid-19 pandemic the delivery of the second training course and the training session for the prison staff had to be postponed.



Football Community Trusts staff training



26 staff from Football Community Trusts participated in Level 2 Multi-skills development in sport qualification and Mental Health Awareness course.

Many of these staff have not worked with similar cohorts of participants previously and the training helped them gain a better understanding of the complex barriers prisoners face and how best to engage them in taking part in sport activities. This training has also taught the staff the importance of coaching the person in front of them in a non-judgemental way, rather than taking into account any past experiences the prisoners have been involved in.

The Level 2 Multi-skills Development in sport qualification, enabled staff to understand how to develop balance, agility and co-ordination through the delivery of activity and games to adults who had limited sport or physical activity skills.

Participants said that the training made them aware that they should not take for granted that all participants have good balance, agility and co-ordination. The training also increased their understanding of how to break things down to simple activities, to develop these fundamentals movements through games and activities.

Staff from Preston North End Community Football Trust, a key delivery partner for this work, took part in the Mental Health First Aid awareness course. Participants said that they had little awareness of the physical impact that people with mental health issues experience and the benefits which physical activity can provide. Coaches felt more comfortable that they could adapt their sessions to provide more of a focus on supporting mental wellbeing.

In prison training



The first training block took place in February and lasted a full week with both morning and afternoon sessions.

In total **12** prisoners participated in the first round of the project.

Prisoners attended all the sessions and stayed engaged throughout the week. The prison staff stated that this has never happened before and it was very common for prisoners to disengage after a couple of sessions.

Upon their release, all **12** of them engaged with the United Together project and continued receiving individual support based on their needs.

A detailed description of the training sessions and feedback from the prisoners follows.

Goal setting session

What support will really help you to take off?



What might blow the balloon off course?



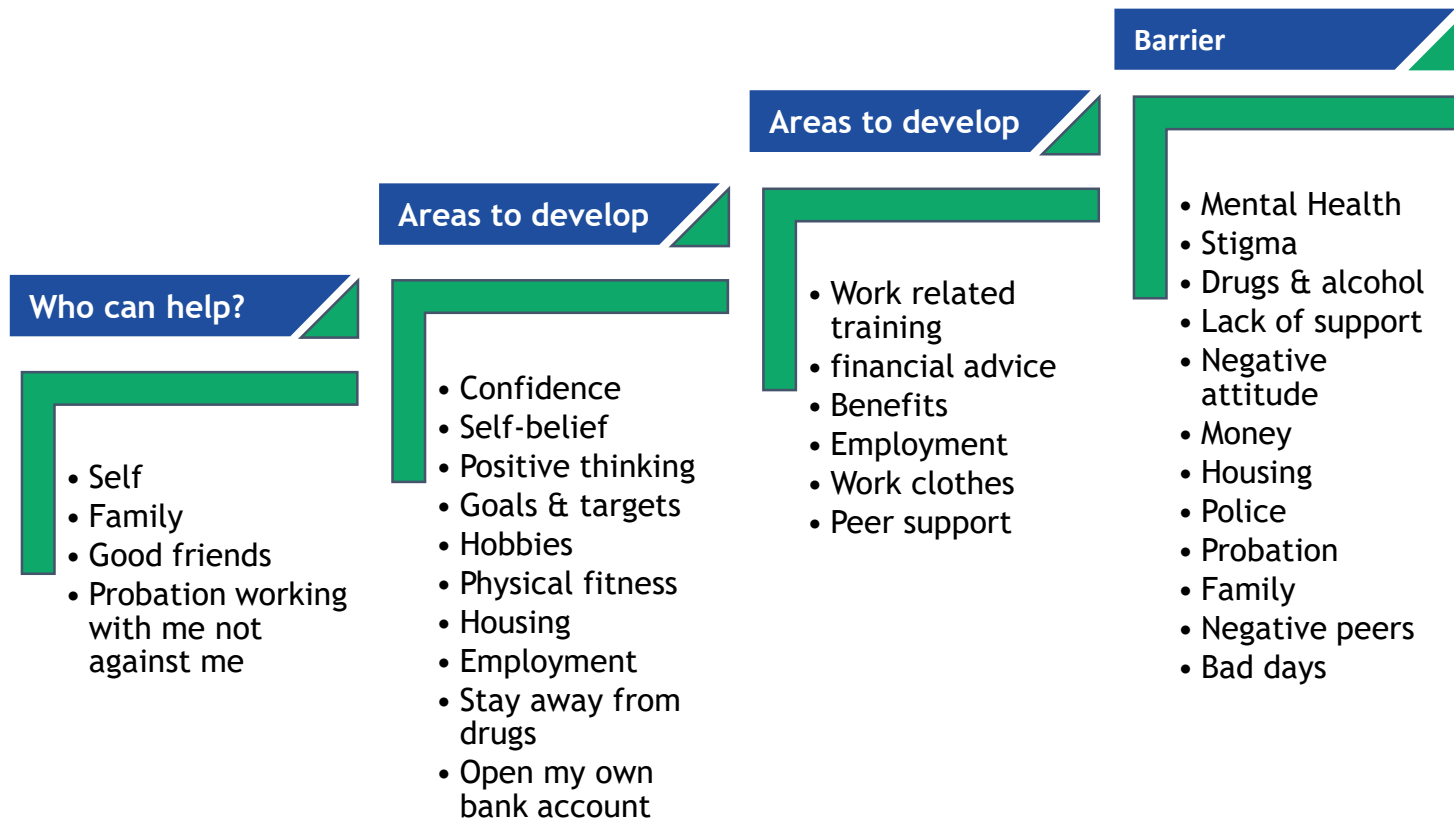
The week started with a goal setting session to give participants something to work towards to. For the goal setting session we used the balloon goal setting tool where participants are asked to reflect on the areas of their lives that need to develop as well as the people that can support them or hold them back.

What do you need to do to develop to help you to take off?

What or who will hold you back?

Who needs to be on board?

During the goal setting session, participants identified facilitators that could reduce their risk of reoffending make their reintegration easier as well as the factors or people that could hinder their attempt to re-enter society after their conviction. The session revealed that prisoners experience complex issues that require the involvement and collaboration of different agencies to address pressing issues such as housing, substance misuse, and financial support.



*9 out of 12 said
that they would
like help finding
a job or gain
some
employability
skill certification
such as CSCS card*



Employment support

Most of the participants expressed an increased interest in gaining employment after their release; however, they acknowledged that they need to work on some areas and put their lives in order before gaining employment. Participants identified the following barriers:

- Discrimination due to their criminal record
- Low self-esteem
- Substance misuse issues
- Learning difficulties
- Social isolation
- Mental health conditions
- Lack of experience
- Lack of family support

*2 participants
expressed an
interest in coaching
after the training*

Mindfulness session



The session was positively received by the group. Participants learned about the benefits of wellbeing and had the opportunity to practice some mindfulness exercises. The session also gave them the opportunity to explore how they come across to other people.

"I feel so positive and more stronger to change my life and make a difference to others and the world"

"I've enjoyed today and learned a lot about my wellbeing and mindfulness. It's made me think a lot about how I come across and how I am going to listen more"

Physical Activity

The inclusion of physical activity in the training programme capture the interest of the prisoners and spending time in the gym kept them engaged throughout the week.

All prisoners, no matter their capability, engaged with the activities the delivery team had organised for them and some expressed an interest in gaining direct experience of leading sport and physical activity sessions after their release.

Without a doubt, the sport and physical activity sections of the programme served as a 'hook' for engaging prisoners and making them aware of the United Together offer and the support that is available for them.

"Good session learnt you can do practical with little equipment very enjoyable"

"Today been very good for me! I haven't been Active for 3 years until today and it has most definitely been a very healthy and fun day...Thank you!"



"It's been a good course and it's nice to know there are other services out there on offer. I will be using them as much as I can on release and grasping what's on offer"

"YES I do trust each and everyone of you now, thank you all for your support and help"

Feedback

Feedback from the participants was positive throughout the week. One of the main factors that contributed to the success of the course is the trusting relationship the delivery team managed to establish with the group.

On the first day the delivery team consisting of Active Lancashire, CSI, Great Places and Football Community Trusts team shared their own and other team member's history and how they had lived experience. This immediately broke down some barriers and the feeling of understanding soon became apparent as a few of the team are ex-offenders, in recovery from substance misuse or experience mental health issues.

As the week progressed every one of them stated they believed the delivery team genuinely wanted to make a difference to their lives and that they were 'not just a tick box'. Participants felt assured in opening-up and sharing with the delivery team their concerns and hopes.

End of the week feedback

‘Really brought the team together’



‘I’ve been sleeping and eating better, more calm, met new friends and peers’

‘It’s the best thing I have been on in Prison’

‘Good course and you can tell the trainers care about what we are going to do on release’

‘It has really made me think different about getting out in the real world and having people there to help when released’

Other outcomes

77 ex-offenders received individual or group mentoring support



31 ex-offenders progressing in employment or training

13 ex-offenders linked with Football Trusts

Case study 1- Kieran



Kieran is now 27 years of age and has been taking drugs since he was around 14.

As a child he spent many days and years in and out of hospital due to health issues. This had a knock on effect with his education and friendships as he was not able to attend primary school when he had his operations. His High School days were very troubled and his behaviour also deteriorated at school. He was later diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD).

At the age of 14 Kieran became involved in a relationship with an older girl and at the age of 15 he became a father to his first child. By the time he was 19, he was the father of 3 young children. The relationship was volatile and Kieran found it very difficult to cope with and easily became frustrated. As Kieran's mental health and substance misuse increased the relationship went downhill leading to Kieran being sectioned on more than one occasion. He spent time in and out of prison and unfortunately on one of his visits inside he started using Spice and became addicted.

Since 2017 he has lived in a flat in a 'not so nice' area surrounded by other people in addiction. On his release he usually managed a few weeks clean before lapsing back into his old behaviours and smoking Spice again. He would

become mentally unstable, seek attention by calling the Police or the Crisis team and then eventually find himself locked up again. This has been an ongoing cycle for Kieran.

The last time he was in Preston Prison, Kieran agreed to attend a 5-day course on the United Together Project. Kieran thoroughly enjoyed the week and interacted well with the rest of those on the course and with the delivery team. He agreed to continue to engage with United Together on his release. Little did he know that this was going to be a turning point in his life and one big roller coaster that was going to help to break the cycle of his behaviour patterns of his previous releases.

When Kieran was released he met up with some of the CSI team and his probation officer. The team also spoke with his Mum, giving her the support she had not had before and it gave her confidence to deal with her son and understand what was happening to him.

It was a rocky road to start with and Kieran started to return to his old behaviours and picked up Spice again. Being in the same environment with nothing different in place he was quickly becoming frustrated and fed up. Another issue was Kieran being released back to the same flat in the same town.

He has had numerous phones taken from him, he has had people enter his house and take his property, he has been used as a punch bag when people were in the wrong mood, he has had people calling at all hours at his door etc. He started to become very agitated and was feeling angry, fed up and wanted to give up.

After seeking advice, the Crisis team were contacted. However, Kieran did not have a mental health assessment prior to his release or one set up once out. When he was first released neither his GP nor the Crisis team would take any ownership for him and he was passed from pillar to post. The GP would not look at his medication and he was actually released from Prison without any medication.

After a long wait he has been assessed by the Mental Health team and he is now under the CMHT. CGL - Inspire was also contacted so that he could be treated for his drug addiction. Inspire became another fabulous solid support and by working together Kieran was eventually recognised that he should be treated for dual diagnosis - substance misuse and mental health issues. During this whole time, the CSI team continued to support him and they have been out to visit Kieran and his Mum at all different times of the day and sometimes 4 or 5 times a week.

After a long hard battle Kieran is now for the first time ever going to go into rehab and he will receive intense counselling too which he has not had before.

There is still a long way to go and a lot of personal issues

to be resolved but by partners working together we have shown what can be achieved. The sharing of knowledge has been key in the case of Kieran. Plus, working with Kieran's mum, she was able to get the support she had never had before and it enabled her to ask questions and learn about her son's addictions and behaviours. It gave her confidence to continue to put up with his moods, frustrations and mental health issues that were getting worse every day.



Case study 2 - David

This case was a result of the good relationship that we have built with the prison staff. David was referred to the United Together Project earlier this year from Lancaster CRC. He has been out of prison 11 weeks now and his first contact was via the phone to one of the mentors due to the lockdown. He was living with his Mum and brother. He was difficult to engage with at first but, after a few phone calls he disclosed that he may have had a drug problem in prison and really didn't want to go back down that road.

It was suggested that he tried supported accommodation, to help maintain his drug free lifestyle. The Supported Housing suggested is an abstinence place where residents are tested for substance misuse weekly. He said he would think about it.

During one of the weekly phone calls the mentor became concerned that David wasn't making much progress in any area of his life. They felt the environment he was living in wasn't the best to change his behaviour as he was not getting the support or encouragement he needed at home.

Eventually David agreed to go into Supported Housing. He was really fearful and it took many phone calls from the mentor and their peer mentor to encourage him to put his mind at rest.

On moving in day the mentor spoke to David in the morning and talked through how he was feeling. He was extremely nervous but he was reassured and the mentor met him there. One of the peer mentors was already there awaiting his arrival. This put his mind at ease.

David has been living in Walter Lyon House for a few months now and has settled in extremely well. His mentor is in regular contact with him and he has taken every opportunity to get involved with all activities in the house.

He has set himself his own goals and has started Couch to 5k, cooking lessons and Yoga. He now sees a brighter future for himself and his mentor is looking forward to seeing how he flourishes along his new chosen pathway.



Challenges



Setting-up the project

The process of setting the process-up was slow and challenging.

- Firstly, the prison staff changed since we wrote the project proposal and we had to re-engage with the new ones and bring them on board. We also experienced resistance from the prison governor who was less open to new ideas and this slowed things down.
- There was resistance from the prison gym instructors and the Twinning programme was an unexpected barrier
- Getting access to the prison has also delayed the start of the project. For example, access by one of our Support Worker who has lived experience (and a criminal record) has been a stumbling block
- Overcoming negative experiences that some prisoners had of external agencies

The prison processes and procedures

- Not fully understanding the release procedures such as what happens when they are released, who is involved, what are their license conditions, where they are allowed to live, or the fact they have to get permission from their probation worker to get a job. In hindsight all this information would have been helpful to have before their release and family/partners spoken too as well to find out what support is in place. The lack of information upfront, increased the workload as we were learning as we went along.
- The delivery team was not aware of break times and how they worked which had an impact on the delivery of the workshops; however, the team was able to re-adjust their breaks to align them with the prison ones.

Challenges



The physical environment

- The delivery team was not familiar with the prison setting and it was difficult for them during the first days to find their way around prison.
- The classroom in the library, where the sessions took place, was very small to accommodate all the participants and the delivery team.
- Missing or outdated equipment resulted in a couple of short clips not being shown; however, the impact on the delivery was not significant. After a discussion with the prison staff, it was agreed that the next workshop would take place in a different more suitable room and all equipment would be checked in advance.

Broken communication

- The delivery team did not have the risk assessments for the library and the sports hall from the prison which made them feel a little bit nervous.
- There was also a break down in communication between all partners regarding the completion of the medical forms for taking part in the activities; however, that was swiftly rectified without having any impact on the participants' activities. It was agreed that the prison risks assessments for the delivery room and the sports hall to be shared with all the partners involved. A clear procedure of who needs to complete what forms and a list of partners that need to be shared with was created.

Lack of programmes in the community

- Some Football Club Trusts had a limited offer for ex-offenders.

Achievements



The project has created a butterfly effect from the energy of the delivery team to the participants and the prison staff

- Developed a successful partnership for delivering the programme in prison and worked alongside with the Twinning prison programme
- Set up a Steering group consisting of Active Lancashire, the Cumbria & Lancashire Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), the National Probation Service (NPS), The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), Great Places Housing Association, and Burnley Football Community Trust.
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- Started a partnership with the Violence Reduction Unit (Police) as a result from this work
- Great Places Housing association decided to expand their involvement with the project and provide holding accommodation for offenders upon their release
- Despite the initial resistance, we have a meeting with the Governor of Preston prison to discuss the project further
- All partners and specifically NPS are more aware of the workforce development issues that need to be addressed

Lessons Learned



1. Setting an in-prison programme is not straightforward but a lengthy and time-consuming process
2. Key stakeholders need to be on board from the beginning of the project and can play a vital role in facilitating or impeding the development of the project
3. Creating a strong partnership can provide a better support to those coming through probation.
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