

Notes of the online expert group meeting on Mental Health in Probation

Research and Policy on Mental Health in Probation

Date and time: 27th January 2021, 10.30-12.00h CET

Online platform: Zoom

Notes

Participating Experts:

Charlie Brooker - Honorary Chair based at Royal Holloway, University of London

Brian Santry - Regional Manager at Probation Service, Ireland

Christina Power – Clinical psychologist, Irish probation service, Ireland

Kristiana Lapina - Senior expert at State Probation Service Supervision and Probation Program Department, Probation Program Unit, Latvia

Pia Andersson – Senior manager and expert at the Criminal sanctions agency, Finland

Duygu Altin – Senior probation officer, Turkey

Cristina Sanchez – Probation officer, Catalonia – Spain

Laura Zemlicof – Pronation officer, Switzerland

Miriam Sevasta - Director of Probation and Parole, Malta

Chantal Avellino - Senior forensic psychologist, Malta and Chair of the Expert group on Mental Health

Sandra Scicluna – Professor at the University of Malta, Malta

Willem van der Brugge – Secretary General, Confederation of European Probation

Anna Esquerrà Roqueta – Policy and Liaison Officer, Confederation of European Probation

Welcome, purpose of the meeting and short introduction of participants

Chair of the CEP expert group - Chantal Avellino and CEP Secretary General - Willem van der Brugge

Willem van der Brugge, CEP Secretary General, and Chantal Avellino, chair of this expert group, welcomed all participants at the expert group on mental health. After the official welcome there was a round table and each participant introduced themselves briefly.

Willem van der Brugge informed the members of the expert group that the Council for Penological Cooperation (PC-CP) working group of the Council of Europe is working on a recommendation on Probation and Mental Health. For doing this the PC-CP is working together with Professor Charlie Brooker, professor and researcher at the University of London | RHUL · Centre for Criminology and Sociology. Professor Charlie Brooker will send out a survey on Mental Health in Probation to the different EU member states. Before sending out the survey he would like to ask members of this expert group to give feedback on the survey he drafted.



Professor Charlie Brooker is now going to present his latest research on Mental Health and will also consult the expert group members on several issues regarding the survey on mental health and probation.

Presentation - Research on Mental Health and Probation

Professor Charlie Brooker - Honorary Chair based at Royal Holloway, University of London

Professor Charlie Brooker provided CEP with the following text in order to summarise his presentation at the expert group on mental health. Please see also the presentation from Professor Charlie Brooker on the CEP website. Available on the following [link](#).

The attached presentation attempts to summarise a series of research studies undertaken largely at the University of Lincoln and at Royal Holloway, University of London. The slides outline a series of studies that are mostly focused on mental health issues for probation.

The research questions addressed are various and, in the first instance, this text aligns the slides with the questions posed.

Slides 1-12: We ask 'what is the likely prevalence of mental health disorders in the probation population'? We also estimate the extent of comorbidity.

Slides 13-17: In this series of slides we examine the extent to which offender managers recognise mental health disorders on their caseload

Slides 18-25: In these slides we examine both the barriers and the facilitators to people on probation accessing health services

Slide 26: This slide gives details of other papers, written at the time, that examine personality disorder and suicidality.

Slides 27-30: These slides outline recent research on suicide and probation. The paper by Philips and colleagues examines prevalence in England in detail. The other paper by Sirdifield et al is a recently published systematic review of suicide and probation.

Slides 31: Notes that two other recent systematic reviews have been undertaken Brooker and Sirdifield. One on mental health and the other on substance misuse.

Slide 32: This slide gives more detail about the findings from the systematic review of substance misuse.

Slides 33-35: Examine health care funding by Clinical Commissioning groups in England and show that there is very little spend.

Slide 36: We give the link for the commissioning guidance we produced as a result of a recent study.

Slides 37-38: We reference a recent national healthcare strategy for probation produced in England by the National Probation Service



Slides 40-43: We detail findings from a recent study by Fowler et al undertaken in London which shows the results of screening for a mental health problem in probation and then offering a CBT type intervention. The study had good results although the sample suffered from attrition.

Slide 44: References a small survey undertaken across the EU in 2012 which obtained a poor response

Slide 45-46: Summarise the research and are reproduced below

The Issues Worth Considering

- *Recognition and assessment of mental health problems and suicidality by probation staff – Who does this? How?*
- *Healthcare funding for probation where needs are highly complex (dual diagnosis and personality disorder) - How much is such healthcare funded?*
- *The lack of rigorous research on effective mental health interventions for probationers – much more research is needed*
- *If mental health problems were detectable, but they are complex, how do you develop pathways between probation and mental health services? – a key questions when most mainstream MH services are averse to taking ‘offenders’*
- *High levels of suicide a significant issue in their own right – this is a serious issue in England and other EU countries such as Sweden*

Conclusions

- *The evidence base has been systematically reviewed in three main areas: mental health, suicide and substance misuse. We know there is little information, world-wide, on effective mental health/substance misuse interventions*
- *We have useful descriptive data on the epidemiology of mental health disorders and suicide data from England, Sweden and Ireland (although, as yet, the data from Ireland is unpublished)*
- *We also know that healthcare/substance misuse services in probation in England are under-funded and indeed, almost unrecognised by CCGs in England as a ‘need’*
- *There has been one recent study of a CBT type intervention in London where of 569 people that met screening criteria only 75 completed treatment.*

References

For copies of any of the papers referenced here please contact Charlie Brooker at charlie.brooker@rhul.ac.uk

Professor Charlie Brooker asked expert group members to give feedback on the survey. Expert group members will send their comments via email.



Summary, next steps, and close of meeting

CEP Secretary General - Willem van der Brugge

Willem van der Brugge closed the meeting and thanked the participation from expert group members and also from Professor Charlie Brooker. He also mentioned that when Professor Charlie Brooker will have the results of the survey CEP will organize an expert group meeting to share the results.

Utrecht, February 2021

