



THE REVOLVING DOORS CHECKLIST

How police and crime commissioners can improve responses to offenders with multiple and complex needs



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Revolving Doors Agency is a charity working to change systems and improve services for people facing multiple and complex needs, including poor mental health, who come into repeated contact with the criminal justice system. Our mission is to share evidence of effective interventions and to promote reform of public services through partnerships with political leaders, policymakers, commissioners, and other experts, and by involving people with direct experience of the problem in all of our work. To find out more about our work go to: www.revolving-doors.org.uk

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Introduction

This briefing focuses on how Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) can help to improve responses to a particular group of ‘revolving door’ offenders – those facing multiple and complex needs, including poor mental health, who come into repeated contact with the police and criminal justice system.

In a time of shrinking budgets, PCCs are in an important strategic position to work with partners more effectively and find new ways of cutting crime and reducing demand on the police. Building on our report *First Generation: One Year On*,¹ we set out a number of practical recommendations based on our knowledge of ‘what works’, as well as highlighting what some PCCs are already doing to drive improved responses to this ‘revolving door’ group.

From this we present our ‘Revolving Doors Checklist’ for PCCs to consider as they continue to review their police and crime plans and develop their strategic approach to reducing crime and reoffending. This suggests how PCCs can:

1. Reduce demand on frontline police through effective diversion and crime prevention strategies
2. Help to tackle ‘revolving door’ offending
3. Involve people with direct experience of the problem
4. Adopt a ‘whole system’ partnership approach to tackling multiple and complex needs locally.



Multiple and complex needs: A priority issue for PCCs

Evidence shows that many people in repeated contact with the police and other criminal justice agencies face multiple problems, including poor mental health, substance misuse, homelessness, and a range of other behavioural, emotional, health and social needs. These needs are complex and overlapping, and because mainstream community services struggle to respond people can end up caught in a chaotic ‘revolving door’ cycle of crisis and crime. As Gloucestershire PCC Martin Surl stated in his police and crime plan:

“The links between substance misuse, poor mental health, social exclusion and offending are so strong that interventions to address any one these issues are likely to benefit the others. Up to 90% of prisoners nationally have a diagnosable mental health problem, a substance misuse problem, or both.”

(Gloucestershire police and crime plan, p55)

In recent years there has been growing recognition of multiple and complex needs as an issue in its own right. The government’s *Breaking the Cycle* criminal justice green paper (2010) acknowledged that “a significant proportion of crime is committed by offenders who have multiple problems”, while the Social Justice Outcomes Framework published by the Department of Work and Pensions in 2013 provides a focus on reducing reoffending among adults who face multiple disadvantages.² There is also a growing understanding of the kind of intensive coordinated support that can help people in this situation to recover and desist from crime³, and independent initiatives are developing in a number of areas to help services better co-ordinate responses in the community.⁴

1. Revolving Doors Agency (2013), *First Generation: One Year On*. How police and crime commissioners are shaping local responses to young adults, people with complex needs and other key groups London: Revolving Doors Agency. Available here: www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/first-generation-one-year-on
2. Ministry of Justice (2010) *Breaking the Cycle: Effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders* London: MOJ & HM Government (2012) *Social Justice Outcomes Framework* April 2013 London: DWP
3. See Revolving Doors Agency (2010) *Thinking Local: key lessons from the National Development Programme & Anderson, S. (2010) Summing Up: Revolving Doors Agency Key Learning 2000-2009*, both available here: www.revolving-doors.org.uk/policy--research/library
4. This includes the Big Lottery’s Fulfilling Lives programme, which is investing £100m over eight years in 12 areas with the aim of improve outcomes for people facing a combination of offending, mental health, substance misuse and housing issues. It aims to bring together services and prevent these individuals falling through gaps. Further details available here: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_complex_needs The Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition have also developed the MEAM approach to responding to complex needs, with further details available here: www.themeamapproach.org.uk

What can PCCs do?

PCCs' broader community safety remit (the "and crime" part of their role) gives them a crucial perspective on the system as whole. There is significant scope for them to use their mandate to drive more effective partnership working in their area, bringing a range of strategic decision makers together to address some of the root causes of offending, and to improve responses to people that currently fall between gaps in the system. Across the country PCCs are starting to drive this change, working with their police forces and other local partners.

PCCs should...

1. Reduce demand on frontline police through effective diversion and crime prevention strategies

Most police and crime plans place a clear emphasis on preventing crime, with many (21 out of 42) specifically highlighting the importance of tackling the 'underlying causes' of crime. This often relates to a range of health and social care issues. For example South Wales PCC Alun Michael is "using a public health approach to tackle crime",⁵ while Humberside PCC Matthew Grove has pledged that:

“ [my] approach to policing and crime reduction will see a greater focus on the underlying issues that drive crime, such as re-offending, drugs and alcohol misuse, mental health, social care and wider socioeconomic factors such as deprivation, education and employment. ”
(Humberside police and crime plan, p5)

These issues generate a high level of demand on the police, whether as underlying problems related to criminal or anti-social behaviour, or through responding to crises to protect the safety of the individual such as the police role under S136 of the Mental Health Act.⁶ Evidence that police officers spend between 15-25% of their time responding to mental health related incidents has encouraged PCCs such as Matthew Ellis in Staffordshire and Martyn Underhill in Dorset to provide a strong strategic focus on improving responses, including adopting 'street triage' approaches that are now being piloted more widely with support from the Home Secretary.⁷

The national roll out of mental health liaison and diversion services provides a further opportunity to improve responses to these issues at the earliest point in the criminal justice system.⁸ However, there remains a key strategic role for PCCs in ensuring that effective diversion pathways and rehabilitative provision is available for a range of complex needs, including those who might be considered

below the threshold for secondary mental health services and might otherwise fall through gaps in the system.

To support earlier intervention in these underlying problems, PCCs should:

- ✓ Engage with their local NHS England Health in the Justice System team to contribute to the planning for mental health liaison and diversion services in their area, ensuring joint-provision of adequate diversionary pathways for complex needs.
- ✓ Support the expansion of 'triage' schemes to identify needs early, and signpost people into community support where appropriate.
- ✓ Review local use of Out of Court Disposals, including conditional cautions, and ensure there is adequate provision of rehabilitative and diversionary options.
- ✓ Ensure data collection and follow up protocols are in place to track outcomes for all those who experience crisis interventions, and develop a targeted approach to respond to 'frequent flyers'.
- ✓ Ensure that there is provision within police custody to support vulnerable suspects, including those with mental health problems or learning disability. This should include arrangements to ensure access to Appropriate Adults.⁹
- ✓ Work closely with Directors of Public and Health and Health and Wellbeing Boards, in recognition of the strong overlap between the health inequality and community safety agendas.¹⁰
- ✓ Consider how the principles of the "Troubled Families" approach, providing co-ordinated support to families with multiple problems, could be applied locally to individuals with multiple and complex needs.¹¹
- ✓ Find out what other initiatives exist locally for people with multiple and complex needs and consider how these are supporting the police and efforts to reduce reoffending.

5. Alun Michael 'Harm reduction: using a public health approach to tackling crime' in Chambers ed., The Pioneers: Police and Crime Commissioners, one year on London, Policy Exchange. P.36. Available here: www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/the%20pioneers.pdf

6. Section 136 of the Mental Health Act enables the police to detain individuals suffering an apparent mental health crisis in a public place who are in "immediate need of care and control".

7. See www.gov.uk/government/news/extending-the-street-triage-scheme-new-patrols-with-nurses-and-the-police for further information on government support for the 'street triage' approach.

8. See www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-funding-for-mental-health-nurses-to-be-based-at-police-stations-and-courts-across-the-country

9. For further information see: Revolving Doors Agency Healthcare in Police Custody: User's Views London: Revolving Doors. Available here: www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/healthcare-in-police-custody-users-views

10. Our briefing for Directors of Public Health is available here: www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/balancing-act/?preview=true

11. The LIFE programme, run by Participle in a number of areas including Swindon, Lewisham and Colchester, provides an example of a successful scheme responding to families with complex needs: www.participle.net/projects/view/3/102

HUMBERSIDE Hull Women's Triage Project

Hull women's triage pilot project is a partnership between Humberside police, Hull Youth Justice Service, and Together Women Project which builds on the success of the Youth Triage system. The project recognises the distinct and complex needs faced by many women offenders and seeks to divert appropriate suspects away from the formal criminal justice process to address the underlying cause of their offending.

The pilot aims to assess all women in custody. Those who are considered suitable to be diverted (who also admit the offence, and with the wishes of the victim taken into account) are given an appointment at Together Women Project within a week. If diversion is not appropriate, the outcome is considered on an upward sliding scale from conditional caution to charge, while retaining a focus on meeting the woman's needs and rehabilitation.

The project will be subject to an independent evaluation by the University of Hull, and there is an ambition among partners for a staged process to expand the triage approach to all adult offenders, subject to positive evaluation and resources.¹²

2. Help to tackle 'revolving door' offending

It is widely acknowledged that a large proportion of crime is committed by a relatively small number of repeat offenders. As Bedfordshire PCC Olly Martins states:

“The revolving door that all too often sees these persistent criminals commit offences, get caught, sentenced, serve their sentence only to re-offend and go through the criminal justice system again and again is an extremely wasteful way of spending vast amounts of taxpayers' money.”

(Bedfordshire police and crime plan, p26)

Many of these offenders face multiple and complex needs: particularly those who have experienced repeated short prison sentences.¹³ Partnership approaches such as Integrated Offender Management (IOM) hold significant potential to reduce reoffending by these individuals if they provide the kind of coordinated support that can help them to turn their lives around.¹⁴

While the landscape is soon to change dramatically as the government's Transforming Rehabilitation reforms are implemented, PCCs will have a crucial role in providing the strategic drive locally to maintain and develop local partnerships and to maximise the impact as new providers begin to work with this complex client group.

PCCs should:

- ✓ Work with partners to ensure that all appropriate agencies are involved in Integrated Offender Management (IOM) approaches at a strategic and operational level, including housing and mental health.
- ✓ Encourage the co-location of partners in IOM to improve joint-working.
- ✓ Conduct a comprehensive needs analysis for short-sentenced prisoners locally to inform improved responses.
- ✓ Encourage the local Crime Reduction Board to review resettlement pathways for people facing multiple and complex needs, ensuring nobody falls through gaps in provision.

3. Involve people with direct experience of the problem

People recovering from a situation where they have faced multiple and complex needs are themselves a valuable resource in helping to tackle this problem. PCCs have a duty to engage with and represent their whole community, and this should include the 'experts by experience' who have been through the criminal justice system and experienced the challenging road to rehabilitation first hand. Involving people in this way can have the dual benefit of providing a unique insight on the PCC's strategic approach, and helping the individuals themselves to build further skills and self-confidence in their own recovery. As one member of our service user forum said:

“By having a chance to have your voice heard you start to get a different sense of identity in a more productive way, rather than knowing yourself as chaos and the rest of it.”¹⁵

12. www.hulldailymail.co.uk/Hull-pilot-sees-women-criminals-given-second/story-18479658-detail/story.html

13. Anderson, S. 'The Social Care Needs of Short Sentenced Prisoners London: Revolving Doors. Available here: www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/the-social-care-needs-of-short-sentence-prisoners

14. See our briefing on Integrated Offender Management, available here: www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/iom

15. Quote from Evolving not Revolving, an impact assessment of the Revolving Doors Agency service user forum (publication forthcoming)

A number of PCCs have engaged with existing user groups in their area, including West Midlands PCC Bob Jones consulting his local ‘experts by experience’ panel. However, all PCCs should seek to ensure that user involvement is embedded throughout their processes, and is meaningful in helping to shape decisions and drive change locally.

To achieve this, PCCs should:

- ✓ Establish a consultation group of ‘experts by experience’ that meets regularly to discuss the PCC’s plans.
- ✓ Make a particular effort to consult with a variety of existing service user forums in the area to inform new strategies and priorities.
- ✓ Ensure service users and ‘experts by experience’ are involved in the commissioning process, for example adopting peer review models as part of contract monitoring.¹⁶
- ✓ Expand opportunities for former service users to become involved in peer support and mentoring schemes, as well as supporting other forms of volunteering.

4. Push for a ‘whole system’ approach to multiple and complex needs

A significant difficulty in tackling the entrenched disadvantage faced by many people in the ‘revolving doors’ group is that their problems cut across different local service systems and budgets. PCCs are in an important strategic position locally, sitting at a fault line of a number of these different systems and with an interest in all of them. As Staffordshire PCC Matthew Ellis states:

“The challenge is getting the ‘whole system’ to work better for all of us. Whilst there have been successes in joint working, the opportunity to do that much wider than ever before now arises... because of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) role. The role is not an answer in itself, but the statutory influence the PCC carries across policing, criminal justice and community safety means that there is an opportunity to raise ambitions, provide a consistently joined-up approach that serves people better and uses shrinking resources more effectively than ever.”
(Staffordshire police and crime plan, p.6)

PCCs have a real opportunity to use their mandate and to drive not only partnerships around specific issues, but to act as a catalyst for system change and more holistic

locally-driven solutions. Some PCCs have begun doing this, with Wiltshire PCC Angus MacPherson committing to a range of “systems thinking reviews” and Bedfordshire PCC Olly Martins using data from a range of sources, including local authority education data, to map the pathways young people take into gangs to inform a more preventative partnership approach.

This thinking should be applied to those with multiple needs coming into repeat contact with the police to identify points of the system where, working with partners, resources could be targeted more effectively. PCCs should also look to use their developing commissioning role to expand opportunities for pooled or community budgets, removing some of the disincentives to partnership working in the system and incentivising greater spending on early intervention and prevention by sharing the resource benefits of reduced demand with all agencies.

PCCs should:

- ✓ Take a ‘whole system’ view, mapping pathways of people in repeated contact with the police and criminal justice agencies locally to inform partnership strategies, better target resources, and identify gaps in provision.
- ✓ Drive forward a ‘whole system’ approach, using their unique position and mandate to embed stronger relationships between agencies and achieve a more integrated and holistic local response to shared problems.
- ✓ Expand opportunities to pool funds and contribute to community budgets in their area to support and incentivise improved multi-agency responses.

16. A useful practical guide on a variety of models of user involvement with ex-offenders is available here: www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/service-user-involvement-guide

Appendix

The 'Revolving Doors' checklist for police and crime commissioners



- Engage with their local NHS England Health in the Justice System team to contribute to the planning for mental health liaison and diversion services in their area, ensuring joint-provision of adequate diversionary pathways for complex needs.
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