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| Prison Case Study of Stage 1 Regime:  Delivering Time Well Spent at HMP Leeds |
| Future Regime Design (FRD) Project  HMPPS Prison Reform  riso |
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**Introduction**

**A case study of stage 1 regime: HMP Leeds proposal**

HMP Leeds is a complex Victorian Reception prison with an operating capacity of 1170. Leeds currently holds 512 sentenced and 524 remand prisoners across six main wings and additional specialist units. Three wings (B, C and E) accommodate ‘standard’ prisoners, F wing holds 222 Vulnerable Prisoners (VPs) and A wing holds 165 prisoners on a specialist Incentivised Substance Free Living (ISFL) regime. Under stage 1 plans the prison will designate each unit to a defined purpose, achieving the **HMPPS** **Future Regime Vision** of **cohort-based regime**. A wing will remain ISFL, B will hold short sentenced prisoners, C and E will hold the mainstream population, D will be induction (with D1 landing for Foreign Nationals) and F wing will retain VPs.

**Operational challenges at HMP Leeds**

Like other large Victorian prisons, HMP Leeds has historically faced a number of operational challenges; including levels of violence, self-inflicted deaths and self-harm, and an insufficiency of purposeful education and employment spaces (though the appetite to engage in available activities was described by staff as perennially strong). In the absence of purposeful activity, a high number of prisoners became frustrated, entering a cycle of low-level transgressions and negative behaviour leading them to basic privilege level and prison adjudications. This is exacerbated by the level of overcrowding which Leeds has experienced, being recently identified as one of the three most overcrowded prisons.

Services within the prison became stretched at times, with increasing waiting lists for internal medical appointments compounding the challenges in providing sufficient access to gym, time in the open air and other health and wellbeing interventions. The inadequate provision of facilities and activities increased the importance of whole-wing association as a means of boosting time out of cell. Evening periods were characterised by wings of 120 prisoners unlocked en masse, inevitably leading to conflicts and bullying. In this arena the illicit economy had become entrenched, fuelling the consumption and conveyance of drugs across the prison.

Opportunities to provide specialist support to prisoners with complex needs were limited, creating a disproportionate impact on certain groups, including prisoners with physical or mental health issues, learning difficulties or requiring social care. Prisoners serving sentences were mixed with prisoners attending court and foreign national prisoners, as well as those awaiting sentence and significant numbers of licence recalls. Like other Reception prisons the establishment performs multiple functions and the high churn rate, core court commitments and short nature of many sentences impacted on the level of resettlement support available to sentenced prisoners. Its geographical location and physical design make these issues particularly challenging at prisons like HMP Leeds where the need for post-COVID regime reforms is perhaps most marked.

Like many Reception prisons, the regime during COVID restrictions has been heavily restricted and therefore is not sustainable in its current form. However, like many Reception prisons, the restrictions have proven safer. HMP Leeds has experienced significant reductions in incidents of violence and self-harm during the pandemic where mixing and movements have been heavily restricted. In the pre-COVID year to March 2020; there were 322 incidents of prisoner on prisoner assault, 139 assaults against staff and 1036 incidents of self-harm. In the COVID year to March 2021, prisoner assaults had dropped by 55% (to 144 incidents), staff assaults reduced by 30% (97) and self-harm reduced by 42% (594). Against this backdrop of increasing safety, the prison began to plan for a different post-COVID future.

**A local roadmap to stage 1**

HMP Leeds began planning their post COVID regime at a Senior Management Team (SMT) event in December 2020. The Governor commissioned a local multi-disciplinary team to develop a stage 1 regime. Their stage 1 regime is a proposal at this stage rather than a delivered reality and the prison remains at stage 3. However, these plans provide an illustration of what reforms a complex Reception prison could deliver in accordance with the new stage 1 model. The project team was tasked with delivering four strategic objectives:

* To create a safer environment for both prisoners and staff achieving a clear reduction in violence and self-harm.
* To create a culture whereby HMP Leeds invests in purposeful activity which has true outcomes for the people in our care
* To ensure that staff feel valued and invested in by allowing time for professional development to reduce attrition and work-placed anxiety.
* To operate within the Target Staffing Figure (TSF) ensuring a finance-neutral position but true value for money in the differences staff can make to prisoners’ lives.

The project commenced in January 2021. A full function-by-function review was completed alongside thematic reviews of areas such as security, services for families, foreign national support and provision for short-sentenced prisoners. Consultation sessions were held and prisoner and staff surveys were launched. Evidence was collated and fed into the process of designing a new regime. A staff resources re-profiling exercise was undertaken to identify resource re-allocation opportunities and the new regime model was agreed in principle in July 2021.

**Creating a COVID evidence base: Themes from local surveys**

A total of 411 prisoners (39% of total) and 155 staff responded to the local surveys on future regime.

47% of prisoners stated a preference for COVID restrictions over pre-COVID regime compared to 33% who preferred previous regime (over 50% had not experienced pre-COVID regime so could not say). 75% spoke positively about prison communication during restrictions. 70% stated they felt safer mixing in smaller regime groups. Consistent ‘positive themes’ about COVID regime included less violence, more structure, more time to reflect, smaller groups, in-cell technology, more pay and pin credit and much greater time for staff to engage and solve issues.

94% of interviewed staff had worked at Leeds prior to restrictions. 75% of respondents preferred the regime during restrictions. They supported a proposal to provide more time within the core day for development activity and opportunities for staff supervision and also spoke positively about having more time for prisoner relationships and to resolve issues. Staff testified to an improved atmosphere and reductions in violence and self-harm. Many spoke positively about the level of engagement and support they had received.

**Changing the story: Imbedding a safe foundation to regime**

Though HMPPS is considering submitting a case in the forthcoming Spending Review for additional investment to facilitate better regimes, stage 1 is required at pace and any changes that prisons wish to make must be delivered within existing resources at this stage. The national stage 1 model does not design the regime for prisons, prescribe numbers in activities or the activities themselves, instead it provides prisons with local discretion to design their stage 1 model within nationally set parameters and principles.

In line with Stage 1 parameters, HMP Leeds began building their stage 1 regime by reviewing local group sizes for activities and movements to establish a safe foundation for a new regime model. Under their stage 1 plans the prison will eradicate periods of full wing unlock and whole prison movement and introduce a new ceiling figure of 40 prisoners for all activities based on COVID-bubbles that prisoners had become accustomed to and safe being part of. Safety can come at a cost to overall time out of cell and prisoners at Leeds will experience some reductions. However, the prison plans to make significant changes to the way the day is structured to ensure the critical balance between safety and sufficiency of regime is achieved and that the overall quality of care, custodial experience and resettlement outcomes are greatly enhanced.

The prison core day has been extended and activities on residence will now be delivered across five new periods of 1 hour providing every prisoner with 60 mins per day for exercise, showers and domestics 7 days per week. In addition to the 40 prisoners unlocked on residential units for domestics, a maximum of 40 will go to off-wing activities in 3 sessions with access granted on a rolling basis to ensure parity. Prisoners will not be forced to engage, though new packages of support will be provided to those not engaging to encourage participation as part of a new personal responsibility ethos. To manage mixing more effectively (a local COVID learning point) each wing will be designated to a specific function as part of a new cohort-based model, separating prisoners who would not normally meet and enabling individual units to focus on a primary function and set of services to a particular group with shared needs.

**Harvesting resource to maximise impact**

Reducing the length of activity sessions and the overall amount of time unlocked is only defensible where significant gains are made in resettlement and safety outcomes. Having established a model of safer regime groups and extended the core day to provide consistent and fair access to basic regime entitlements (domestics, showers, time in the open air etc), the project team focused on identifying resources that could be re-prioritised to facilitate improvements elsewhere. The following resource re-prioritisation has been identified:

* **Supervising Officer (SO) hours will be re-allocated** from evening periods to the main part of the day to enhance support for frontline staff at critical periods of maximum activity.
* **Residential staffing has been reduced** as fewer staff are needed to supervise new group sizes. This has yielded 582.5 hours of Prison Officer time for alternative duties each month.
* **Visits sessions in the morning will stop** as these were historically poorly attended. Alternative sessions are being created in evenings based on prisoner feedback. This has yielded additional staff hours as the visits groups are smaller. Video visits have been introduced to supplement reductions in face to face sessions and also require less supervision generating further resources.
* **Wing-based staffing in evening periods has been reduced** from 6 managing a full wing on association to 2 providing patrols and managing prisoners on ACCT. Additional staff are now available to deliver extra key work, supervise Structured On Wing Activity (SOWA) and support prisoners with complex needs. The entire ethos of the evening will be changed from a period of high risk and concern (full wing association) to small groups of structured, purposeful, well-ordered activity.
* **Staffing in selected areas will be changed** as part of the restructure to designate wing functions. For instance, the First Night Centre (FNC) has been changed and a new complex needs unit has been created, this has made the FNC smaller and generated staff hours for reinvestment elsewhere.
* **Legal visits are moving from face to face to digital.** Legal representatives are being encouraged to use digital facilities and not attend in person where this is appropriate. This is not being imposed but suggested and is a result of collaboration with legal representatives. This has generated an additional staff resource for reinvestment and is an example of sustaining COVID change for long-term legacy value.

**So what is new?**

**New units focusing on the needs of each cohort**

Under the new cohort-based approach, wings are being re-purposed to create specialist environments providing more tailored services (in addition to separating sentenced and remand prisoners and retaining specialist areas for Vulnerable Prisoners and Foreign Nationals. These include:

* **A new stabilisation and induction unit:** The prison Reverse Cohorting Unit (RCU) will be converted into a new induction unit and prisoners will stay there for longer (14 days) enabling a full assessment of their needs and allocation to appropriate activities.
* **A new complex needs unit:** The old first night centre has been repurposed to a complex needs unit catering for the small number of prisoners causing a disproportionate number of incidents.
* **A new dedicated short sentence unit:** This unit will have its own unit-based regime focusing on immediate resettlement needs including housing issues, debt management, health improvement and support to reconnect with family.

**New staff roles to deliver critical improvements**

The staff resource released through some of these changes enables the prison to create a richer, varied and fulfilling working experience for frontline staff by creating new opportunities for them to specialise. These include the following new or expanded staff roles:

* **Increased key worker provision**: The prison will deliver 5 sessions of key work per month (national requirement is 4) and facilitate time for key workers to have development time with a Senior Probation Officer (SPO) under a new Supervision Model
* **Sports and games officer**: A sports and games officer has been detailed daily to supplement provision of traditional PE and gym activities based on residential units (to alleviate pressure on gym time and enhance health and wellbeing).
* **Two family ties officers:** have been created to support reducing reoffending and extend falconry classes (existing activity) to the newly created cohort of most challenging prisoners.
* **Designated ACCT assessor:** A detailed ACCT assessor has been included 7 days per week to enhance support to prisoners in crisis. The workload is not new but the bespoke, designated resource is an addition to provide improved support (this has historically been a shared task that available staff support, impeding continuity and quality of care).
* **Wing Administration Officer:** A part time AO role has been created from existing resources for three days a week to assist in resolving low level prisoner complaints/queries and issues on residential units. Low level complaints were historically the source of frustration and anti-social behaviour.
* **Additional officer on nights:** To provide additional security and support to prisoners on ACCT the prison has enhanced its night complement of officers, improving its resilience to emergencies and incidents.
* **Activities Officers:** A new Activities Officer will be appointed to ensure prisoners are allocated to the correct residential unit based on needs having completed their induction and a tailored assessment.
* **Lock-down staff development periods:** Two lock down training periods have been introduced within the core day each month, providing opportunities to clear backlogs in mandatory training and thereafter to focus on continuous improvement and create specialists in the new roles.
* **A new locally prioritised training plan:** To maximise ongoing value from the resources provided, the establishment has developed a new rolling and prioritised training plan that will be kept under continual review to enhance the skills of its staff.

Like other challenging prisons, HMP Leeds has experienced stubbornly high staff attrition, particularly in frontline roles. The Governor is confident the high-profile investment in staff through the suite of specialist roles and new focus on safety and continuous development will greatly improve staff wellbeing and retention at Leeds.

**New activities to enhance the experience for all**

In addition to re-structuring the core day and focusing on staff development and welfare, it was clear that a commensurate investment needed to be made in enhancing activities for prisoners, aside from those natural improvements that specialist staff will oversee. The prison therefore looked for additional opportunities to re-shape activities to provide better outcomes:

* **Piloting personal responsibility:** Prisons have a statutory responsibility to ensure sentenced prisoners attend work. However HMP Leeds is piloting a new approach based on personal responsibility. Prisoners will be encouraged to attend activities and those who are keen will be given every opportunity to do so and given a voice in deciding what they participate in. Those who are unable or unwilling to engage will benefit from bespoke packages of support, either to encourage participation or to provide alternative activity localised to their wing or cell to offset the absence of activities. Prisoners who are not ‘regime ready’ will not be automatically allocated to activities irrespective of need and suitability. Instead time will be invested in alternative activities they can do and a personal plan will be created with the aim of integrating prisoners into regime once able and ready to participate.
* **New structured on-wing activity (SOWA) in the day:** Those prisoners not engaged in off-wing activities will have increased opportunities to engage in new packages of structured in-cell and on-wing activity including faith, hobbies, key work and in-cell education and gym classes.
* **SOWA in the evenings:** Evening activity will move from full association to small SOWA groups facilitated by designated staff, this will include key work, hobbies, interest groups, mental health support groups, faith groups and gym to enrich traditionally fallow periods of inactivity on wings.
* **Health appointments extended:** New Friday appointments will now be facilitated by freeing up residential staff hours to escort prisoners, this will reduce prisoner waiting times.

**An early embodiment of the HMPPS Future Regimes Vision: creating Time Well Spent**

Building upon a foundation of smaller regime groups and fewer prisoners unlocked at any point, extending the core day and introducing a new suite of structured on wing activities (SOWA) to enrich traditional regime opportunities, HMP Leeds plans to deliver more time in safer purposeful and rich activities for prisoners who want to engage and will devote more time to providing structured packages of support and encouragement to those unable or unwilling to do so.

HMP Leeds is therefore seizing the opportunity of planning post-COVID regimes to counter two of their most enduring operational pressures – safety issues and the insufficiency of purposeful activity spaces. Not all prisons will reach stage 1 with the same challenges or the same reform requirements. Well-resourced, modern Resettlement prisons with high performing, purposeful and safe regimes will look similar to pre-COVID when emerging COVID restrictions at stage 1. Not every site will need or be able to deliver the reform that Leeds is planning, however it does provide a template for others with similar challenges to follow.

The new cohort-based approach is a local demonstration of a future HMPPS objective – to provide sequenced and specific services to each cohort in specialist areas. This will allow staff to focus on developing skills working with each group, even if those groups only remain at Leeds for a short period. Coupled with the investment in a suite of new staff specialisms, this will help improve outcomes for prisoners and greatly enhance the working experience for frontline staff, countering the historically high levels of local staff attrition.

The local plan at Leeds contains other local adaptations of future HMPPS vision. The Future Regime Vision that HMPPS has adopted is to create **Time Well Spent** in every prison. This is based on using resources differently to focus on **people** (the staff specialisms created by Leeds, time for supervision and development and better safety for prisoners and staff), **place** (creating clear focus in each area and structuring activity on residential areas to equip individuals with life skills based) and **purpose** (re-calibrating activities to create better resettlement outcomes, more quality focus and more tailoring to individual needs). The Future Regimes Vision will be delivered through an ambitious three year programme, the Future Regime Design programme. This is in its infancy but stage 1 is the gateway to the future reform we strive for. In the longer term this reform ambition is dependent on capital, but it is greatly encouraging to see the scope of contributory change that HMP Leeds is already planning at stage 1.