

A Day with the Kainos Community, Challenge to Change programme in a Prison

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Introduction

The Kainos community is a charitable organisation whose aim is to reduce of re-offending. It strives to achieve this through the provision of Challenge to Change (CtC), an offending behaviour programme employed in a number of prisons in England. It was brought to the UK in the 1990's (based on an idea from a prison project in Brazil) to reduce unrest and encourage respect and co-operation in prisons. After several years of evaluation and development, Challenge to Change became accredited by the Correctional Services Advice and Accreditation Panel (CSAP) in April 2009. This article has been written after a visit to CtC in a prison in the south of England and aims to outline the principles of the programme, some of its outcomes to date as well as the reflections of the observer.

The Programme

The CtC Programme has been designed to reduce re-offending in medium to high risk offenders by helping to change offenders' attitudes and behaviours, specifically deficits in self-management, poor cognitive skills, poor pro-social interpersonal skills, cognitive support for offending and anti-social attitudes and feelings. This is achieved using a mixed method; a combination of therapeutic community (TC) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

The programme is run across an entire wing, and prisoners who want to take part have to move onto the wing. This means that the prisoners live the programme all day every day instead of going to a different wing for sessions a couple of hours a week. In this way, the CtC programme can be considered highly intensive. They also have strict boundaries where prisoners who are found to be taking drugs or involved in bullying are removed from the programme and moved to a different wing. The prisoners who are eligible to take part in the programme are medium to high risk offenders with at least seven months left to serve on their sentence. The programme is targeted at males of 21 or over as there is limited experience of this programme with younger offenders. The programme does not target a particular type of offence and is therefore open to any offence group. This is because the risk factors the CtC targets such as poor pro-social and interpersonal skills underpin many reactive crimes.

CtC uses cognitive-behavioural methods delivered within a group setting to facilitate learning of pro-social thinking and behaviour, which are then put into practice and further developed, within the safe confines of a Therapeutic Community (TC). The programme consists of 5 modules, an Induction stage, Community Living, Focus, Interpersonal Relationships and Citizenship. These modules were developed using psychological theory such as Prochaska & DiClemente's (1984) Process of Change but also theories of CBT and therapeutic communities. Support for a multimodal approach to offending behaviour programmes can be found in 'What Works' research by McGuire 2002 (Lipsey 1995; Gae, Flanagan, Motiuk, & Stewart 1999 in Tonry, M & Petersilia, J 2000).

The key cognitive behavioural principles underpinning the CtC programme are as follows:

- Rational Choice to provide practical strategies to enhance prisoners ability to think rationally when making decisions,
- Self-Regulation to help engagement in goal directed actions and regulation of behaviour,
- Automatic and controlled processing to target consequential thinking and means end reasoning,
- Affective schemas to help develop adaptive methods of dealing with stressors ,
- General reasoning to reframe anti-social belief systems and
- Perspective taking and empathy to enhance social skills.

These principles were evident in many ways at the CtC programme, through expressions of prisoners learning in the form of artwork on the walls but also from conversations with the prisoners when speaking to them after their community meeting. There was recognition in the prisoners who had become mentors, of the effect their behaviour has on others and how a situation might seem to other people. For example, one person asked me if I was 'one of those trainees' before I could respond, one of the mentors spoke up and said 'come on mate everyone has to start somewhere'.

TC principles employed in the CtC programme are a mixture of two approaches to TC's, Democratic such as the Henderson in 1960, which emphasises that the responsibility for the TC lies with the community in order to model a pro-social environment and where rules are mutually agreed upon by the community. The second is Hierarchical (De Leon 2000) where role models help to facilitate social and psychological change in individuals and the community agrees to abide by the rules of those in higher authority. CtC employs this mixed approach as it acknowledges the hierarchical nature of the prison environment but also encourages honest and respectful peer feedback and the discussion of the consequences of antisocial behaviour within their community, through spur meetings. This mixed approach does differ from the selection of either the hierarchical or democratic TC such as in Grendon, however, a mixed approach is not unusual in modern prison TCs. Vandeveld, Broekaert, Yates & Kooyman (2004) demonstrated how the two approaches can be complimentary particularly when working within a setting such as the prison service where there can often be contrasting pressures from the punitive regime and the therapeutic work.

Programme effectiveness

There has been little research into all aspects of the effectiveness of the CtC programme however the research that has been conducted appears positive. The most recent evaluation with the MOJ produced the following results:

- After a one year period proven re-offending for Kainos graduates was significantly lower than for a comparison group ($t(N=340) = -2.2026, df=339, p=0.028$) (Ellis 2012).
- The frequency of court convictions and cautions after one year for Kainos graduates was significantly lower than for the comparison group ($t(N=340) = -2.8962, df=339, p=0.004$) (Ellis 2012).
- The one year re-offending rate for the Kainos group was 18.5% and the re-offending rate for the non-Kainos matched comparison group was 23.5%. This compares with a National average of 26% for proven reoffending for adult prisoners released from 4-10 year sentences for the year to March 2010 (Ministry of Justice, 2010).

However, there was an exclusion rate of 61%, leaving only 340 (39%) offenders from 866 that could be matched. This occurred due to differences in matching MOJ and Kainos databases of offenders. The sample was therefore considered too small by MOJ for changes in the level of seriousness of

proven re-offending to be meaningfully calculated. The comparison group was matched with factors such as type of crime committed, the length of sentence, the likelihood of escape and the danger to the public if they did escape. There was no mention made of accounting for variables in the evaluation such as previous programmes and interventions that prisoner's may have participated in prior to joining the CtC Programme.

Previous research evaluating the CtC programme resulted in reconviction rates around 35% and a return to prison rate of 12.8% after 2 years (Ellis & Shalev, 2008). This was lower than the reported reconviction rates from a Home Office report (Friendship, Blud, Erikson & Travers, 2002) who found that 43% of medium to high risk offenders who participated in cognitive behavioural treatment programme are re-convicted after two years. Ellis & Shalev (2008) also found that between 1999 and 2003 offending was reduced by 15% for prisoners who took part in the CtC programme; this is similar to a Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) programme evaluated by Tong & Farrington (2008) who found that offending was reduced by 14% in prisoners who participated in the programme and the Ministry of Justice (2010) showed Enhanced Thinking Skills (ETS) for offenders between 2006-2008 reduced 1 year re-offending by 6 percentage points.

Furthermore, Harper & Chitty (2005) investigated the effectiveness of offending behaviour programmes through their review of 'What Works', over three years. They found that accredited ETS and R&R programmes in prisons resulted in an 11% reduction in offending in the first year; however there was no difference found between treatment and control groups for the second and third year and was suggested that this could be due to attrition rates. The recidivism statistics from the CtC programme evaluation from 2008 show a recidivism rate of 7.2% from 254 prisoners who took part.

The research conducted by the Harper & Chitty (2005) concluded that R&R and ETS programmes showed mixed outcomes for offending behaviour programmes in England and Wales and suggested that these results may be due to attrition rates of the programmes. Data from completers and non-completers at CtC would be an essential contribution to the field as the general understanding is that prisoners who do not complete R&R or ETS programmes tend to be reconvicted at a higher rate than completers or a control group (Ministry of Justice May, 2010). The most recent Kainos report (Ellis 2012) also states difficulties with attrition due to strict exclusion criteria when matching offenders for a control group.

CBT has been used to reduce re-offending through the ETS and R&R programmes and these have been shown to be effective in reducing risk of reoffending (Andrews and Bonta 1998; McGuire 2002). TC's have also been shown to be important in reducing re-offending through social learning theory and the modelling of pro social behaviour by peers (De Leon 2000; Rex at al 2000). This is certainly something that I experienced on the wing. I had the impression that bringing problems and objections to a weekly meeting and mentors encouraging new people to find solutions to problems using the recommended channels such as spur meetings, rather than resort to non-proscribed methods, were a means of teaching people the rules and norms of living in a micro community and in this way developing the skills to live in the macro community once they have left prison. The effectiveness of TCs has had a mixed response for example Newton & Erikson (2007) found a reconviction rate of 39% for prisoners who completed TC treatment and they were significantly less likely to be reconvicted than those who left prematurely. However, Rutter & Tryer (2003) whilst agreeing that TCs offer promising results in reducing risk and re-offending rates, there are methodological weaknesses that limit the extent to which effectiveness claims can be made.

Further to this, impulsivity and attitude to crime are measured using Barrett Impulsivity Scale (BIS-II, Patton, Stanford & Barratt 1995) and Crime PICS (Frude, Honess & Maguire 2009) respectively.

Crime PICS is a validated measure for examining, and detecting changes in, offenders' attitudes to offending. It consists of 20 questionnaire items and a 15item 'Problems' inventory which give a numerical profile of an offenders' attitudes on 5 scales; general attitude to offending (G), anticipation of reoffending (A), victim hurt denial (V), evaluation of crime as worthwhile (E) and perception of current life problems (P). High scores indicate a predisposition towards crime and in the case of the problems scale; a high score indicates lots of perceived problems in many different areas of the offender's life. The BIS-II is a questionnaire designed to assess the personality/behavioural construct of impulsiveness. It measures on a four point scale, how individuals would think and react in different situations using factors such as attention, cognitive instability and self-control. The higher the offenders' scores on the measure, the higher the reported impulsivity. These measures are used by the CtC programme as they measure the dynamic criminogenic risk factors targeted by the programme such as poor self-management and decision making. By measuring these factors pre and post programme, CtC can establish if the programme is having an effect on the factors relating to offending behaviour that it set out to target.

Data from the Kainos community to February 2011 shows an average reduction in scores in the BIS-II of 24.4 point from pre to post programme completion. Unfortunately there is no detail given about whether this is a significant reduction in Impulsivity nor the percentage of clients who showed a significant improvement. This makes it difficult to compare to other programmes. In the case of attitudes to crime, the CtC programme recorded reduced scores on all subscales of Crime PICS however; again there was no information on whether this score was significant and what percentage of people's attitudes to crime changed. The most recent analysis of Crime PICS II data from CtC (December 2012) indicates that for a sample of 241 offenders, the average difference between pre and post scores was a reduction of 7.4 points. The greatest improvements were found in the subscales of Victim Hurt Denial (V) and Perception of Current Life Problems (P) with changes of 1.8 and 1.73 respectively. Further analysis needs to be conducted to establish if these changes are statistically significant. Anecdotally, from speaking to the prisoners I gained the impression that many had experienced a change in attitude with some of them describing what they used to be like and how they are now, some of them even stated that they have "grown".

Challenges

The Kainos Community has met with some challenges in the past. The Kainos Community are a charity working within the prison service and at times can be treated with suspicion by other professionals which means they sometimes meet with resistance from staff not associated with the CtC programme. As with any charity, there are often issues of funding, however, I have seen that the Kainos Community continues to function and achieve good outcomes and is extending its remit to other prisons throughout the country. This illustrates the ability of the Kainos staff to overcome challenges and their belief in the work that they do.

Reflections on the programme

My first impressions of the wing that the Kainos Community works within were very positive. The security staff and prison officers were friendly and offered me warm welcomes. I perceived a good relationship between prison officers and Kainos staff with an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding and team work. The staff on the wing appears to be ardent supporters of the programme saying that the CtC programme makes working life easier for them and that they can see the change in prisoners when they are on the programme. There is also an atmosphere of trust and respect between the Kainos staff and the prisoners for example the Kainos staff have an open office policy whereby prisoners can stop in to speak to one of the Kainos team at any time. I was aware of a real sense of community spirit and a relaxed atmosphere.

When reflecting upon my experience with the Kainos Community I felt very optimistic and had a real sense of excitement that it is possible for such programmes to work and have a positive effect not just on the prisoner but the prison staff working alongside the programme. I found it really interesting that so many of the prison officers and the prisoners wanted to tell me their experiences of the programme and how it had helped them. Admittedly this communal excitement and appreciation is quite infectious and it took me some time to focus myself to looking at the programme analytically instead of behind rose tinted glasses. There can be no doubt that the sense of wellbeing within the Kainos community (including prison staff), considering the environment it functions within, is impressive to say the least and it is encouraging to see an offending behaviour programme with so much support from the participants. Many of the prisoners I spoke to stated that they want to change, are relatively happy (as happy as they can be considering their circumstances) and want to give back and improve or “better themselves”. Additionally, the examination of some of the literature on offending behaviour programmes shows that CtC appears to be successful in reducing offending behaviour in comparison to similar programmes.

Conclusions

I believe it a requisite to make some suggestions for improving the evidence base for the CtC programme. I believe the programme would benefit from some further research into aspects of the prisoners such as risk. Has a prisoner’s risk reduced from the start of the programme to the end of the programme? I also understand from speaking to the prisoners that since joining the programme they feel valued and empowered, are able to reflect and empathise better than before and are learning how to look at short term and long term consequences of their actions. This could be explored by correlating reductions in risk, impulsivity, recidivism and changes in attitude to levels of prisoner’s self-reported feelings of empowerment and value. Of course a benefit to the data would be improved control of the data and bringing data collection methods into line with that of the MOJ so that a greater number of cases can be used in the next evaluation.

I found my experience with the Kainos Community extremely fulfilling. It has given me much to think about in terms of ‘What Works’ with offenders and I felt that in the short day that I was there I learnt a great deal about how the prison staff and the prisoners experience these programmes and the effect it can have on them. I would recommend that others who are committed to reducing re-offending have a more detailed look at this programme and others like it and hopefully with some support, more evidence can be gathered to sustain such programmes and continue to reduce re-offending whilst providing a safe and restorative environment for the prisoners and the prison staff.

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