The Needs of Mentally Disordered Offenders In Oxford City (1994)

Report commissioned by







Elmore Community Support Team Research Project:

The Needs of Mentally Disordered Offenders in Oxford City

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

to the Mental Health Foundation

June 1994

The Elmore Committee, 23 Park End St., Oxford OX1 1HU

I. BACKGROUND

A. Nutrional situation

Acknowledgements

Background

I would like to record my thanks to the following people for their contributions to this project:

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relinator enterloyed by Squal Services (Frost, 1991).

- All of the Elmore Team for sharing their experiences; Jon McLeavy, Co-ordinator of the Elmore Team, for supervision and advice; Mavis Lowe and Hilary Jordan for secretarial help;
- The Project Steering Group, especially Pat Goodwin and Peter Agulnik, for advice;
 - David Millard, Chairman of the Elmore Team's Management Committee, for ideas on research:
 - Staff at St Aldate's Police Station, especially the custody officers;

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Nationally, interest has also increased in the purculpostional in a factorism in the little of Spokiestal Health. Act to arrest people who are not empected of an officece but are in need of a piece of

The many other agency staff and clients who have given their time, advice, information and support.

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I. BACKGROUND

A. National situation

Mentally disordered offenders (MDOs) are currently the subject of national policy shifts. The Department of Health/Home Office review of services for MDOs published in 1991-2 (the "Reed Report") highlighted the desirability of their being diverted from the criminal justice system to suitable care services.

The links between offending, mental health problems and homelessness are well known (see Jones, 1992). Concern has been expressed increasingly (especially since the closure of many long-stay psychiatric hospitals) that some individuals are being caught up in a "revolving door syndrome" in which they have repeated episodes of both up in a "revolving door syndrome" in which they have repeated episodes of both psychiatric care and involvement with the criminal justice system, often with housing difficulties as well.

A number of psychiatric court liaison schemes have been set up since the mid-1980s, aiming to divert mentally disordered defendants (see Blumenthal and Wessely, 1992). The effectiveness of some schemes had been studied, with encouraging results (Joseph, 1992; James and Hamilton, 1991). The need has recently been recognised for diversion at the police station. A police station diversion scheme in Southampton started a few months before the present project, based on research indicating the possible roles of an MDO co-ordinator employed by Social Services (Frost, 1991)

Nationally, interest has also increased in the use of section 136 of the Mental Health Act to arrest people who are not suspected of an offence but are in need of a place of safety because of mental disorder. Some research has been undertaken indicating flaws in practice relating to section 136 (Bean, Bynoe, Faulkner, Rassaby and Rogers, 1992).

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CHE DESCRIPTION

TOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION If now unjury out to some familiary will

B. Local situation in Oxford and and mand slaved medital achieve in

The Elmore Community Support Team is financed by the local Mental Health Unit, Probation, Social Services and the City Council Housing Department. It works in the city of Oxford with clients deemed "difficult to place", a significant number of whom have both mental health problems and a history of offending. The Team is managed through the Elmore Committee, a registered charity.

II. ORIGINAL AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The Team was set up in 1988 following research in Oxford into the needs of difficult to place people (Vagg, 1987).

There is already diversion work at Oxford Magistrates' Court: Probation cell duty officers interview all defendants arriving through the court cells, and where they suspect mental disorder usually contact Elmore Team support workers with a view to arranging accommodation, care and/or support services.

A pilot scheme in 1991 provided a regular psychiatric service to Oxford Magistrates'
Court and gave an indication of the number of mentally disordered people appearing
there (Cobb, 1992). The prime focus of the present research project is on a broader
group, those with mental disorders who are detained at the main city police station, St
Aldate's.

Local research showed a high degree of morbidity of psychiatric illness among the homeless (Marshall, 1989, 1992).

(This includes comments on community care policy, pully, payout spora, legal

described above, and for other sepects of long-term care.

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be taken by agents other than local organisations

A related sim was to discover whether the Elmore Team's expertise, methods of

The project was to explore possibilities for microspes wildfield to set this up where enjaceprists. It was enticipated that this would be ut use but for the service

if new resources become available?

II. ORIGINAL AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The original aims of the project were 1) to research gaps in service and 2) to pilot a service taking referrals from the police station.

1. Research aims

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a. To determine what referral procedures and long-term health and social services are appropriate for people with mental disorders who are arrested and held at a local police station.

The subject group includes people with personality disorders or learning disabilities, as well as those with major psychiatric illnesses. Those whose primary problem is thought to be substance misuse are not included.

b. To explore the potential role of the Elmore Community Support Team in working with this group.

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2. Action component

a. Service delivery

The original proposal for the project envisaged the researcher as a person to whom referrals could be made, mostly from the police. People referred could then be assessed, diverted and re-referred as necessary to the other Elmore Team workers or to other agencies. It was hoped that this would have the additional benefit of providing a filter for potential subjects of the research.

A related aim was to discover whether the Elmore Team's expertise, methods of working and contacts could be adapted to good use with mentally disordered offenders in general.

b. Liaison

The project was to explore possibilities for inter-agency liaison and to set this up where appropriate. It was anticipated that this would be of use both for the service described above and for other aspects of long-term care.

III. THE SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

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The research is examining both immediate options for local organisations and wider issues. It aims to cover the following areas:

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- A. DIVERSION: What changes should be made to diversion arrangements?
- B. THE POLICE STATION AS ENTRY POINT TO SERVICES: What changes should be made to arrangements for people with mental health problems who are arrested but not liable to be charged?
 - C. LONG-TERM SERVICE PROVISION: What should be the local strategy for providing services concerning MDOs, given current resources?
- D. IDEALS: What should be done concerning A, B and C
 if new resources become available?
 - E. BROADER POLICY QUESTIONS: What action should be taken by agents other than local organisations?

(This includes comments on community care policy, public expectations, legal provisions).

and b) accret perceptions of the person administration (if

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This included visiting the police station in order to interview police staff on procedures, problems and concerns in particular cases. This would give information about individuals who failed to get access to services or to assessment processes; and about the criteria used by the police for making decisions. The interviews

givestigations, where appropriate, concerting a) the culcums in individual cases,

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology employed as the study progressed, and some important questions to be answered, were bound to be influenced by interim findings.

It had been originally anticipated that the process of taking referrals from the police would provide the main population of subjects for the research. However, the service delivery part of the post was dropped (see Progress below). Most of the original research aims could still be pursued, and other ways were found to 1) identify detainees at the police station as mentally disordered, 2) assess their needs and 3) carry out follow-up investigations.

The following are the main areas of the investigation:

1. Gathering views on unmet need

The early stages of the project involved interviewing practitioners and managers in relevant agencies, and also users of services, for their views on areas of need. This process will be repeated later in the project. Where the research points to unmet needs, these will be discussed with practitioners and managers in order to find constructive ways forward, prior to publication of the final report.

Second to be presented the

2. Collecting data from custody records

From March 1993 custody officers were asked to note cases where they thought a detainee might be mentally disordered. The researcher visited the police station to collect factual data on these cases. Access was sought to written custody records as well as to computer data on arrests.

be taken by agents other than local organications?

3. Short-term follow-up investigation

Areas of need - in both referral arrangements and long-term services - have been highlighted by the basic data on those arrested. The researcher was to make further investigations, where appropriate, concerning a) the outcome in individual cases, and b) agency perceptions of the person's needs.

This included visiting the police station in order to interview police staff on procedures, problems and concerns in particular cases. This would give information about individuals who failed to get access to services or to assessment processes; and about the criteria used by the police for making decisions. The interviews

were semi-structured in order to give scope for unexpected areas of concern to at antiquant emerge.

OF Addition Edited and Indicators in Additional Company

Questionnaire survey of assessors

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V. PROC.

A questionnaire survey was planned of police surgeons, psychiatrists and approved social workers carrying out mental health assessments at St Aldate's police station. A questionnaire would be sent out every time an assessment was made for mental disorder. This part of the research was intended to provide information from several perspectives and to play an important part in quantifying unmet needs helping to prioritise areas of concern and identify individuals to follow up in detail.

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5. Long-term case studies

Gotherlag Views

These were to include some subjects who were clients of the Elmore Team and some who were not. The aim here was to examine subjects' careers over time, to gain an understanding of:

factors influencing offending and antisocial behaviour

An everyless of mentally dissortered offendors from Oxford who are in prison and

- ii. factors influencing mental health
- iii. gaps in service
- iv. the ways in which the quality of inter-agency liaison affected the lives of the individuals is select 2 duly a hervise have into to be connected by

information pathered included paramal details, massess for errors, deposal, and

the costs involved

Selection criteria: "Is of professionals who visited the detrines. A large number

i) Where there seem to be serious problems for the client, agencies or the public

records were read in order to obtain detailed information

ii) Cases illustrating needs revealed by other parts of the research

an informal way. Although it was time-continuing (time in part to the shift system and in part to the pand for the researcher to wait for quiet tires in the custody office) the approach worked well and good relationships were untablished with the officers. The same applied to inserviews with officers involved at other stages of

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Procedure:

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From existing case notes and interviews with key workers: Attempting to identify trigger points for major changes.

Obtaining agencies' assessment both of the client's needs and of risks to the client and others.

Interviewing the individual if agency staff think this appropriate, in order to gain the client's perspective on their needs, and on factors influencing their mental health, social functioning and offending.

Selection criterial

Beach in the feet of the feet 6. An overview of mentally disordered offenders from Oxford who are in prison and secure hospitals

This was to include the tracing back of decisions leading to custodial disposals.

7. Observation of procedures in the police station

Collecting data from

From March 1886 Autorise minto collect factors data a firm reversis as well as a management

- 8. Observation from position as member of the Elmore Team
- 9. Comparison with needs and arrangements in other towns

i) Where there seem to be seeing a multima foother about premising or the

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ii) Casas illustrating across use at all hy entire your left the interest

10. Comparison with aspects of provision for other groups in Oxford iv. the ways in weigh the quality of fairs egency hadron affected the lives of the

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rais need to refuse this. However, there is still

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V. PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT

A. Research component

Progress

Collaboration from other agencies for research purposes has been generally very good. Setbacks have included persistent malfunction of the police custody computer and the late realisation that the local Psychiatric Research Ethics Committee would need time to refe hold by consider the project's access to medical records. discovering

has every at extractacheminal hards on tolers telessiveness of the processing at the Probation

1. Gathering views

Staff at all levels of local agencies have been happy to discuss their perceptions of priority needs. Links were also established early on with organisations in other geographical areas involved in diversion and research on MDOs. These links are especially important given the pace of change as regards diversion work. See Appendix for a list of agencies consulted.

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2. Collecting data from custody records

The system for custody staff to note cases where they suspected mental disorder has worked well, despite problems over several months caused by breakdown of the custody computer system. The computer was eventually very useful in providing a wide range of data which would otherwise have had to be collected by a lengthy manual process.

na gashiwan lu Information gathered included personal details, reasons for arrest, disposal, and where possible details of professionals who visited the detainee. A large number of written custody records were read in order to obtain detailed information artiful odd at 11 concerning the progress of cases. Action to thousand out to expect the

coincided with a delay in elegency techniques up also was use to be Populaulije

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3. Short-term follow-up investigation appearable the posterior of the researcher as an

The process of interviewing custody staff on individual cases was conducted in an informal way. Although it was time-consuming (due in part to the shift system and in part to the need for the researcher to wait for quiet times in the custody office) the approach worked well and good relationships were established with the officers. The same applied to interviews with officers involved at other stages of an arrest. correct to men a clear money of how the system was already

> The location of the researcher with the Elmore Team has enabled follow-up of many relevant cases, both current clients and new referrals to the Team.

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The researcher has been able to take advantage of the proximity of the Probation Day Centre Team (who are based in the same building) for gathering information on relevant court cases. Some of these have been cases where the defendant was seen by cell duty staff while held in the magistrates' court cells, and some have been clients on whom Probation pre-sentence reports were written. An overview of cases in which reports have been written and the author considered mental health problems relevant has been provided by the Probation Research and Information Department.

Verification of mental disorder has been possible through medical records held by what is now the Mental Health Trust. These have also been useful for discovering processes of assessment and referral in particular cases.

Social Services have also provided information on current and past clients.

The Crown Prosecution Service is providing information on discontinued cases.

Other sources of information have included the Night Shelter, the Luther Street Centre (GP surgery for homeless people) and other organisations for the purpose of ascertaining the detainee's involvement with agencies. 2. Collecting data from curied records

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A survey of police surgeons, using questionnaires to obtain their views on individual cases which they had dealt with at the police station, produced an excellent return rate. The process was facilitated by the researcher's regular attendance at practice meetings, which had the added advantage of providing an opportunity for discussion of the responses.

A similar survey of psychiatrists and approved social workers had been planned for the same time period. However it was not possible to carry this out as the timing coincided with a delay in clearing technical details with the local Psychiatric Research Ethics Committee. The views of psychiatrists and approved social workers will be incorporated into the findings in a more general way.

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The process of interviousing custody shall no extend over the conducted in 5. Long-term case studies

The Elmore Team has provided the most comprehensive and easily-accessible information for these: the researcher has received regular updates on Elmore Team In espeta radio a MDO clients, the many experience of bringing strend on a second

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The location of the researcher with the Elmery Tests has enabled follow-up of

many palerent cases, both current discuss and new retaineds to the Tenny.

6. An overview of mentally disordered offenders from Oxford who are in prison and secure hospitals

The researcher has visited the Regional Secure Unit at Fairmile Hospital and also Bullingdon Prison to gather information on individuals. For practical reasons the research is currently concentrating on prisoners diagnosed as mentally ill rather than personality disordered.

7. Observation of procedures in the police station

This has provided a valuable insight into the nature of the task of assessing people in the police station, and some of the practical problems faced by assessors.

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8. Observation from the researcher's position as a member of the Elmore Team

The researcher has taken part in the day-to-day activities of the Team - helping deal with clients where necessary and being involved in organisational and inter-agency matters - and so has gained experience relevant to the interpretation of the research results.

9. Comparison with needs and arrangements in other towns

It has become clear that as regards diversion each geographical area has its own particular needs and local arrangements need to reflect this. However, there is still scope for comparison of approaches taken. To this end, links have been built up with other projects through conferences and other channels.

10. Comparison with aspects of provision for other groups in Oxford

The researcher has also been in contact with organisations elsewhere involved in removed for one of the control baryonical and the control of the C

This will be carried out later in the project: it will be vital information for managers of local services. sensions browen the assessors. Land parties at

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1. Service delivery

> At an early stage in the project it became clear that for the researcher to take referrals would be problematic. The reasons for this were:

a) providing a service could jeopardise the position of the researcher as an independent agent (to whom all parties would hopefully be honest in their assessment of current practice);

throughout the regions.

- b) a workable service could not be provided which was only staffed by one person and so only available at some times of the day, particularly in view of the large number of relevant cases arising during the evening and night;
- c) it was necessary to gain a clear picture of how the system was already operating, particularly in respect of agencies' statutory duties.

This aspect of the work was therefore dropped. Elmore resources have not been sufficient to allow an expansion of the service using the existing support workers. It is difficult to see how this could be viable without 24-hour cover.

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in the past white in any come of the process, problems that he become

Observation from the re-curcler's resulting as a recurrence of the Elfrore Teams

The Co-ordinator of the Elmore Team has visited the police surgeons to clarify what the team can offer at present but this has not resulted in referrals from the police surgeons. the fifth and he arment out the observablement abolivered the data

2. Training and liaison

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grown all san reg, there is still

been built up

for managers

a. Custody staff training

This was identified as a need by the researcher. It is being taken forward by the researcher and the co-ordinator of the Elmore Team, together with a training sergeant from the police and the head of the local Mental Health Resource Centre.

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The training will include contributions from custody staff, a police surgeon, an approved social worker and a psychiatrist. The aim is to help the various groups to understand each others' responsibilities both in respect of long-term care for mentally disordered people and in respect of their assessment at the police station. An initial half-day session is planned for the autumn. This is expected to identify the needs for further training and also to explore possibilities for regular liaison sessions between the assessors.

The researcher has also been in contact with organisations elsewhere involved in training for custody staff, in particular with a group connected to the Thames Valley Partnership which is outlining a proposal for police training on mental health throughout the region. L. Service Stell ory

b. Input into local agencies' planning

person and so only available at some times of the daysparkerlands in view of the large number of polestant cases senting during the defining and rapidity

c) it was necessary to gain a close platine of heaville system was already

operating, particularly in respect of agranical statement during...

The researcher has been able to contribute to meetings of the local Strategic Forum on Mentally Disordered Offenders, and Social Services meetings concerning the need for more ASWs. a workship service could not be provided in a safe stalled by one

At an outh stage in the procest it become clear that for the researcher to take

VIII. REFERENCES

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IX AFPENDICES

A STEELSTAY COMMENTEES

Scarco Registeran

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III. REPERENCES

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IX. APPENDICES

A. STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee for the project consists of:

Jon McLeavy, Elmore Team Co-ordinator , and then test beginning (Peter Agulnik, Consultant Psychiatrist Tim Skinner, Team Manager, Social Services Stuart Barsby, Inspector, Oxford Police O'd ad Clir Magdate and Court Matt Berkley, researcher

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B. LIST OF AGENCIES CONSULTED For Tie) Mont & d

a. Mental Health Trust

Chief Executive Englishment (Section 1) assumed the regular pi som Clinical Directors Consultant, McKnight Unit Community Nurse Clinical Psychologist Senior Registrars

b. Social Services

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c. Elmore Community Support Team and about Langue to supplied to British Me fical Journal, 304, 72-80

Support Workers Clients Varg. J. (1947) Support for Edition to Place People in Courts.

d. Police

Chief Superintendent, Oxford Custody Sergeants Gaolers

- e. Police surgeons
- f. Crown Prosecution Service
- g. Courts
 Deputy Clerk to the Justices, Oxford City Magistrates' Court
- h. Prison

 Medical Officer
- i. Regional Secure Unit

Consultant Psychiatrist Community Psychiatric Nurse Social Worker

j. Probation Service

Day Centre Team
Assistant Chief Probation Officer with responsibility for MDOs

- k Luther Street GP Surgery for homeless people
- L Oxford Survivors

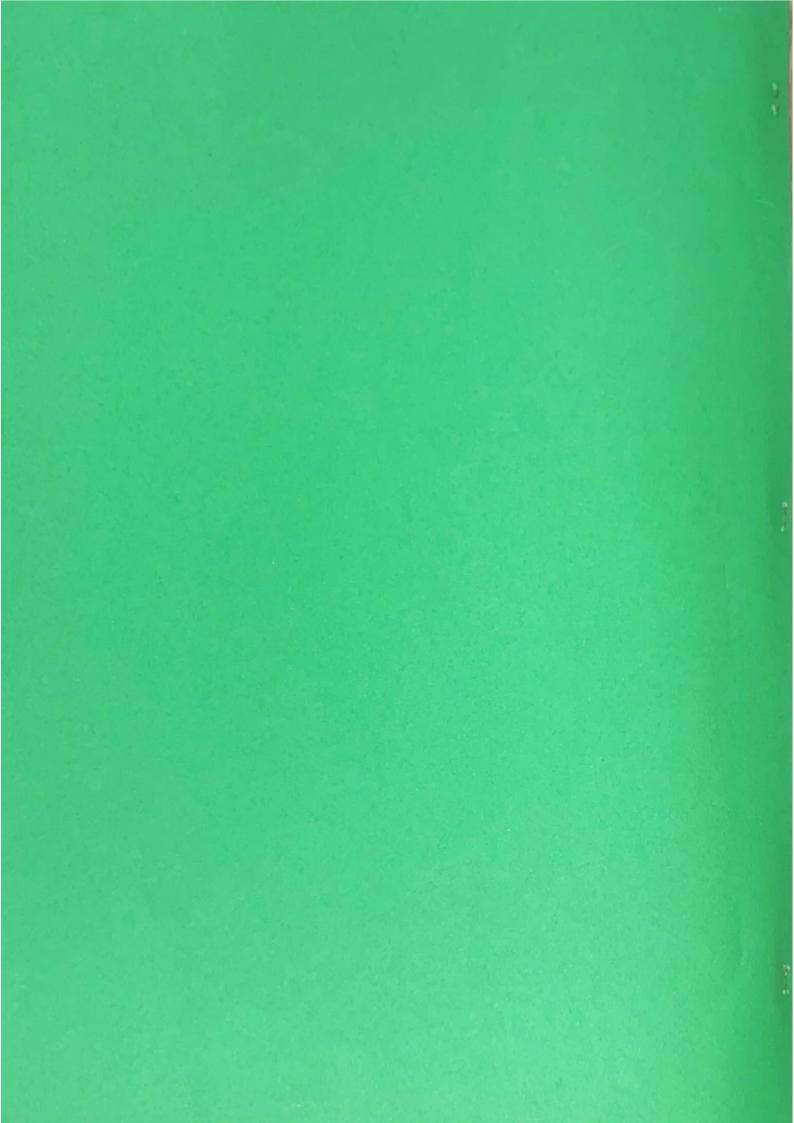
(group for users and ex-users of mental health services)

m. Housing

Oxford Night Shelter Manager

n. Home Office

C3 Division





elmorecommunityservices.org.uk

Elmore Community Services are a registered Charity (1090616)