

Technical Appendices CFO Community Living Unit HMP High Down

Peer mentor & peer involvement roles in prison study series 2024

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Section 1: Introduction and background to the study

This technical report contains the background to, the methods used, and sample details associated with one of the four 'Peer mentor & peer involvement roles in prison' study findings report series, specifically:

- Albertson, K. (2024b) CFO Community Living Units Ambassador initiative at HMP High Down.

Aims of HMPPS's Creating Future Opportunities programme

Creating Future Opportunities (CFO) is part of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). It is part funded by the European Social Fund. CFO have piloted a Community Activity Hub model for people who have been released from prison and/or are engaging with Probation to facilitate building a healthier, more stable and fulfilling life. A developmental aim of the overall CFO programme was to pilot the creation of similarly dedicated spaces on prison wings, with a welcoming atmosphere and a rehabilitative community culture. CFO's wing model is designed to both complement and advance core HMPPS provision, better preparing people in custody to make positive contributions to their wing community. With specialist professional staff, and meaningful activities with to engage, alongside peer involvement role opportunities, the CFO Wing model aims to provide a sense of collectiveness which will encourage those in custody to focus efforts towards realising crime free pro-social futures.

CFO wing model objectives

The key objectives of the CFO Wing model are to:

- **Facilitate a 'community' environment** where participants are given the tools to help reflect on their own personal situation and contribute both to the wing and wider prison community.
- **Foster supportive relations** between residents with external agency staff, HMPPS CFO Specialist prison officers, and each other to enhance transitional opportunities to contribute to reducing reoffending trajectories.
- **Enable opportunities for residents to give back** to their wing community via peer involvement role pathways, enhancing engagement with the CFO wing model and contributing to forging positive relational connections across the wing by providing support to wider non-engaging wing residents.
- **Create a safe, comfortable, and supportive living environment**, enhancing a sense of belonging, hope, and positive impact on the social climate of the wing.

Monitoring and informing information gaps

Existing HMPPS CFO monitoring which focusses on largely quantitative short, medium, and longer-term data capture provides evidence of the overall effectiveness of the CFO wing model programme. CFO identified a requirement for a more data informed understanding of the potential of the peer mentor role. In particular they wish to inform future commissioning good practice guidance. An expression of interest was issued for an independent qualitative evaluation designed to improve understanding of the operational delivery of the range of peer involvement role delivery models utilised across CFO's four wing pilot sites at HMPs Risley, High Down, Drake Hall, and Holme House.

Situating our approach

A research team led by Sheffield Hallam University secured the commissioned qualitative study. The issued study-brief emphasised both mapping and action research-linked developmental activities to be conducted with stakeholders at each of the four CFO wing pilot sites. The ultimate aim of the study was to provide data informed and theoretically underpinned recommendations to inform:

- further embedding of the peer involvement element of delivery at each pilot site;
- future CFO wing model commissioning good practice guidance, with specific reference to the peer involvement role element of delivery.

Peer involvement initiatives have been identified as valuable resources supporting individual change trajectories, and resettlement planning in the criminal justice sector (HMPPS, 2016; 2019; Fletcher and Batty 2012; Hucklesby and Wincup, 2014; South et al., 2017; Buck, 2020). Peer support roles in the criminal justice system have, however, proved difficult to evaluate as non-standardised interventions which are “human relationship operating within a formal setting” (Lenkens, et al., 2023, p 3). Previous studies have predominantly focussed on establishing the impact of performing peer support roles on recidivism outcomes (cf. Nixon, 2022), and generally focussing on the micro-dynamics of (ex) offenders acting in peer mentor roles to those just released from custody (cf. Buck, 2020). Reflecting this reality, our study was designed to be a pragmatic, more integrated and participative piece of work to be conducted with all the stakeholders making up the custodial community. Under-pinned by this critical realist approach to the four CFO wing model pilot sites, our study was essentially designed to illuminate “what works, how, in which conditions and for whom” (Lenkens, et al., 2023, p 4). This findings report is one of the five ‘Peer mentor & peer involvement roles in prison’ reporting outputs generated as a result of this study (Albertson, 2024a-e).

Our integrated research questions

Informed by the most recent academic studies in the field, this study was designed to address specific questions to illuminate more integrated connections across the custodial setting, specifically:

Table: Integrated research questions

Strategic and operational	Does the phased model of delivery contribute to achieving overarching CFO Wing model aims and specifically, how do Peer involvement roles fit into these phases?
	How does the delivery of the Peer involvement element relate or contribute to the wider CFO Wing model programme?
Impact and environment	Do the pilot sites provide a suitable environment to deliver relational strength-based Peer involvement role pathways in prison?
	How do Peer involvement role holders operate on a day-to-day basis?
	What, if any is the impact of these roles on stakeholders?
Interpersonal and relational	What is the Peer involvement training, supervision, and progression journey?
	What is the experience of those supported?
	Are there any key attributes that indicate any particular suitability for Peer involvement roles in prison?

Structural, policy and regime level	What strategies, policies, organisational infrastructures, prison regimes, training, and/or environmental factors can be identified as working most effectively with (or impeding) the effective delivery of peer involvement initiatives in prison?
	What are the critical success factors and areas of good practice lessons can be learned from those having experience of delivering peer involvement pilots in prison?

Section 2: Methods

Underpinned by the principle of co-production (McCulloch, 2021) our approach to the study design aimed at involving a wider range of stakeholders from across the custodial community setting. This was underlined by our integrated approach to three distinct levels at which the CFO's wing model objectives seek to effect positive transformation, at:

1. Individual wing residents' relational and interaction level.
2. Collective wing community social climate and horizontal social capital building opportunity level.
3. Vertical social capital building opportunity levels to positively transform prison culture, the social climate, practice and policy.

1:1 and collective focus group interviews

Semi-structured 1:1 interview schedules were designed to prompt respondents to share views regarding the suitability of the prison environment for the variety of peer involvement roles available, and informed recommendations for the delivery of future peer involvement initiatives. Focus groups as a research method are a group interview used in applied research designs (Morgan, 1997; Krueger and Casey, 2000). Three distinct focus group schedules were designed to generate co-produced data findings:

1. **A Participative Evaluation** focus group (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) schedule was designed to identify what wing community residents felt they needed to live a more fulfilling life in prison. This included capturing facilitators and barriers to ascertain to what extent participants felt the selected peer involvement element of the CFO Wing model assisted in realising their aspirations.
2. **A "Wing Community & Relational climate mapping"** focus group schedule was designed (Wasserman et al., 1994), to map the relationships available on a prison wing. Going on to facilitate a collectively generated adaptation of Kelly's (1995; 1991 'Role Construct Repertory test', to generate a sense of the value of these relationships to the wing community.
3. **A "Peer Support role mapping & Infrastructure"** focus group schedule was devised for the host prisons' Prisoner Council. This was designed to map, characterise, and distinguish between peer involvement roles available across the prison. The aim was to establish the extent of establishment infrastructure available to facilitate and embed further peer involvement role developments at each site.

Collective workshops

Two interactive workshop schedules were designed informed by our action-research and theory-informed approach to study design (Jackson and Mazzel, 2018). Workshops are distinguished from focus group methods in that they are a collective space to co-produce questions and ideas, develop solutions and potentially support collective groups decision making in a group setting (Faulk et al., 2006). Reflecting the distinctly collective, participatory, and developmental aims and underscoring our co-production approach to our study aims (Kemmis et al., 2014):

1. **An Appreciative Inquiry** workshop (Coghlan et al., 2003) schedule was developed to conduct with the CFO staff team to establish the specific peer involvement delivery model and expand good practice lessons learnt by the delivery teams.
2. **Findings Validation & Recommendations Feasibility** workshop (McKeganey and Bloor, 1981) schedule was designed for delivery to both delivery staff and wing resident groups. This activity was designed to sense-check emerging findings and formative recommendations. After these workshops we made appropriate adjustments based on these interactions.

Ethnographic observation

Ethnographic observation of the CFO wing model's core activities programme and engagement with evaluation workshops was designed to capture participant behaviours in real time (Drake et al., 2015). A flexible ethnographic observation template was designed for this study, containing simple descriptive observation prompts, for example: "Journey to delivery location from wing"; "Numbers in attendance"; "Spatial notes: Noise; Smells; Light; Equipment; Room set-up", etc. At an interactional observational level, this method allowed us to capture social context and the meanings generated at the collective level.

Mapping social capital building potential

A qualitative "Social capital building 'potential' data capture tool" was used (see, Albertson and Albertson, 2022; Albertson et al., 2022; Albertson, 2021). We applied this templated tool to establish the CFO initiatives current contribution and identify potential future developmental pathways.

Ethical approval, data management and visit protocol

Ethical clearance for this study was provided by the HMPPS National Research Committee (NRC Ref. 2023-012+2023-238) and Sheffield Hallam University Ethics Committee (No. ER49795291). Data Management plans, Data Sharing agreements and "On-site visit Protocol" documentation were agreed with CFO and shared with wing model pilot site teams. All respondents in this study were provided with a Project Information Sheet to retain and a Consent Form to sign for each of the separate data collection activities. Post-transcription, only the respondents original 'position indicator' (e.g., Peer mentor/Staff role title) remained attached to the raw primary data, and all data were pseudonymised¹.

¹ Pseudonymisation is a data management and de-identification procedure by which personally identifiable information fields within a data record are replaced by artificial identifiers, or pseudonyms.

Section 3: Data Collection and sample profile

Two three-day-long data collection visits to HMP High Down were conducted between September and December 2023 by two research staff team members.

Resident engagement with study: HMP High Down (n=115).

Currently serving residents at HMP High Down were recruited into this study by CFO staff team members before fieldwork site visits. Prisoner Council participants were asked to volunteer to attend a “Peer Support & Infrastructure Mapping” workshop via the HMPPS Governor with responsibility for the Prisoner Council. Informed consent protocols were conducted by the research team on site. Participants volunteered to engage in three core fieldwork activities (1:1 interview and/or Focus group + Ethnographic observation, + Workshop). The nature of resident participation in our study are indicated below. Multiple fieldwork activity engagement are not distinguished in the table below.

Table: Resident engagement at HMP High Down

Prisoner Council focus group	Ethnographic Observation	Collective activities (workshop and/or focus group)	1:1 Interviews	Total
12	48	38	17	115

1:1 interviews (n=33)

A total of 33 1:1 interviews were undertaken with stakeholders at HMP High Down.

Table: 1:1 interview sample

Residents	Staff	Total
17	16	33

Resident interviews (n=17)

A total of 17 CLU residents were interviewed in a 1:1 setting. Nine were coded as Ambassador IAG level 2 trained. Of these 6 had or were completing the qualification, and 3 had achieved the qualification at previous custodial institutions. It was further established that the majority of the interview sample (12/17) had a wealth of experience of acting in peer support roles in this and other previous institutions.

Table: CLU resident 1:1 interview sample profile

Site elected peer involvement role holders	Residents participating in CFO	Wider wing residents not participating	Peer support role experience (multiples).
9 Ambassadors	5	3	8 peer support role experiences identified.

Staff interviews (n=16)

A total of 16 1:1 interviews were undertaken with staff at HMP High Down.

Table: Staff 1:1 interview sample profile

CFO delivery staff team	HMPS Wing officers	Strategic HMPS, CFO+ Prime contractor staff	Total
6	3	7	16

Collective workshops & focus groups (n=8)

A total of 8 collective activities (focus groups and participatory workshops) with three different stakeholder groups were conducted at HMP High Down.

Table: Collective activity profile

Wing resident workshops & focus groups	Staff workshop	Prisoner Council workshop	Total
5	2	1	8

Mapping data generated (n= 14)

Visual mapping data was generated via the 2 Community & relational mapping activities and one Prisoner Council focus group conducted at HMP High Down.

Table: Prison-wide, wing Community, and Individual relational maps generated

Prison-wide peer involvement role & Infrastructure mapping	Wing community & relational priority ² mapping	Individual relational maps	Total
1	2 ³	11	14

Ethnographic observations (n= 9)

A total of 9 Ethnographic observations of sessions were conducted at HMP High Down.

Table: Ethnographic observations

CFO Lifer Course sessions	Wing community activities & events	Collective research team-led activities	Total
2	2	5	9

² Generated with an adaption of Kelly's grid & successive dichotomies approach to capturing numerical prioritisation data, based on identifying "Most to least" relations from: Knowledgeable; Trusted; Supportive; Honest; and Power to change things.

³ generated by 13 CLU residents.

Approach to data analysis

Interview transcripts and researcher notes were subjected to a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019⁴). We adopted a pragmatic deductive approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006⁵), and analysed the data according to the themes embedded in the core evaluation questions (see section 2.2). Each interview transcript was read and re-read, and relevant data systematically inserted into a CFO wing model pilot site-specific Excel Workbook. The Excel workbook was pre-populated with pseudonymised respondent sample details. Data extracts were inserted into separate sheets for analytical purposes. The same systematic approach was adopted towards the ethnographic observation data. The analysis of the 'Community and Relational mapping' data involved extracting successive dichotomies numerical data. This approach to data analysis enabled the research team to move into compare, contrast, and typology formation phases for reporting purposes. Peer involvement attribute analysis involved each cited attribute per interview transcript being inserted into a further Excel Workbook sheet and subsequently assigned to an inductively generated typology and a "simple content analysis" (Neuendorf, 2017⁶, p 5) conducted.

⁴ Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative research in sport, exercise, and health*, 11(4), 589-597.

⁵ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3, 77-101.

⁶ Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook*. Sage.

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