



Purpose: Policing & Mental Health: Commissioned Services in Police Custody

To: Adult Services, Health, Public Protection Policy & Scrutiny Committee

From: Adam Taylor, Commissioning Manager

Date: 16th September 2015

Action required: For Information

Summary

1. Responsibility for Mental Health provision in Police Custody and the wider criminal justice system rests with NHS England through their Liaison & Diversion services
2. Westminster City Council has traditionally been responsible purely for equivalent substance misuse services in court and custody;
3. However, recent changes to both have blurred the boundaries between services and this is being addressed through re-commissioning in the coming months

Background

Traditionally, Local Authorities have had very little involvement in the mental health side of policing outside of appropriate adult provision, and direct work with clients accessing social care services.

However, in 2012 Westminster, in partnership with our Tri-borough partners in Hammersmith & Fulham, and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea we re-commissioned what was previously the Drug Intervention Programme in police custody.

In doing so we refocused the new service so that it was part of a wider reducing reoffending service offer and thus the new custody referral element began to assess for more than just substance misuse needs, but also mental health amongst others. This assessment would then follow the offender into community support either directly from police custody, or after criminal justice proceedings had completed.

The combination of a more general assessment and support offer in police custody, together with through the gate services in Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs Prisons, and key worker support in the community, has so far proved successful in reducing reoffending of the 240 or so offenders who have been referred to the service, with provisional figures showing a 40% reduction in rearrests and convictions.

Alongside this general support offer were services commissioned by NHS England under their Liaison & Diversion banner that focussed more specifically on mental health needs. Custody referral teams, and substance misuse teams that continued to operate in magistrates courts, worked closely with these services to provide a seamless offer of support.

The role of all of this provision was to identify offenders in police custody who may be diverted away from the criminal justice system, or at the very least have more specific sentence requirements to address their underlying criminogenic needs and therefore more effectively prevent future offending

However, in 2014 changes to the probation landscape through the offender rehabilitation act, and to the way NHS England commissioned Liaison & Diversion meant that changes needed to be made.

In the context of mental health the most significant of these was the creation of a pilot in West London for Liaison & Diversion that positioned this as a general health and care support intervention for offenders in police custody and the criminal justice system, rather than specifically a mental health Liaison & Diversion service.

This created potential duplication with our custody referral provision. Whilst in an ideal world we would have liked to co-commission with NHS England to create a single service spanning criminal justice, the reality of our different governance arrangements and the requirement for NHS England to seek HM Treasury approval for continuation made this impossible to achieve.

Consequently, officers from Westminster Community Safety and Tri-borough Public Health have been working over the last 6-months to improve alignment between the respective provision with the result that council commissioned services in police custody and courts will now be commissioned as part of the wider substance misuse contracts and provide specialist provision working alongside NHS Liaison & Diversion.

Next Steps

Tri-Borough Public Health is in the process of recommissioning substance misuse and offender health services, with new service due to start in April 2016.

NHS England is currently waiting for HM Treasury approval to roll-out the Liaison and Diversion model being piloted in West London and elsewhere.