

# GANGS IN PRISON

catch  
22

VIOLENCE REDUCTION  
AND REHABILITATION



2019

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## INTRODUCTION

This brochure offers an insight into the Gangs and Violence Reduction Custodial Services we currently deliver in prisons across the UK.

Catch22 works with 65,000 young people and adults each year, from cradle to career. Across 23 prisons, we work in custody screening and offender management, through to mediation and long-term resettlement. We deliver services for victims, veterans in custody, and in gang intervention.

Our work across the social welfare cycle means our services are informed by a deep understanding of the issues that lead people to crime, gang involvement and ultimately, a prison sentence. Our teams draw on the expertise of our substance misuse projects, our alternative provision schools, and our child exploitation services, as well as the years of early intervention work we have conducted within the justice system.

The latest statistics show violence has reached record levels in prisons across the UK. The supposed security of gang association is persuasive while imprisoned and gang-associated prisoners are disproportionately involved in violent incidents.

**Effective risk management** is essential to effective rehabilitation. Without it, prison teams are required to focus on being reactive, only tackling issues as and when they occur, rather than being able to build a strategy that prevents violence in the long term.

**Rehabilitation and resettlement:** Our experience has taught us that to truly reduce this violence, we must provide an alternative to gang life and empower each person to follow a new path. Our custody-based practitioners offer a unique opportunity to enable this so that on release, each individual has the best opportunity to successfully settle, and even thrive, back into society.

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Our award-winning and innovative Gangs and Violence Reduction Custodial Service has been recognised as highly effective:

- BUTLER TRUST AWARD** received in 2015 for the services provided by HMP Thameside Gang Service. The Head of Custody referred to the “Commitment, passion and belief” delivered by our team to create a safer environment at HMP Thameside. Violent incidents reduced from 86 to 26 per month, resulting in 60 fewer victims and “60 fewer families worried about the safety of their loved ones in custody”.
- HM CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PRISONS**, Peter Clarke, said: “HMP Thameside’s partnership with Catch22 to reduce gang violence was innovative and effective” following an inspection by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons, published in 2017.
- BUTLER TRUST CERTIFICATE** received in October 2018 for the services provided by HMYOI Feltham Gang Service: “There is documented evidence of positive behavioural changes in well over half of course participants which has had a positive impact on reducing violence at Feltham.”



# IMPACT OF OUR APPROACH

In 2018 the Catch22 Gangs Custodial Service:

**3149** 

Early identifications completed

**296** 

Participants completed 44 gang-intervention programmes

**39** 

Mediations arranged and positive outcomes achieved in every single one

33% REDUCTION IN GANG-RELATED VIOLENCE SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF CATCH22'S GANGS CUSTODIAL SERVICE HMP THAMESIDE

21% REDUCTION IN GANG-RELATED VIOLENCE AT HMP PENTONVILLE

# THE BIGGER PICTURE

## CATCH22 INSIGHTS FOR WORKING WITH GANG-AFFILIATED PRISONERS

### 1. THE REGION THE PRISON SERVES IS UNIQUE

The issues within the community need to be understood by practitioners.

### 2. GANG NOMINALS MAY NOT RECOGNISE THAT THEY ARE PART OF A GANG

Particularly with young gang-affiliated prisoners, they may have been groomed by older members and not yet understand the nature of the group they are involved in.

### 3. NOT ALL GANG NOMINALS ARE AWARE OF WHO THEIR RIVALS ARE

Screening and induction meetings should be conducted as soon as possible to prevent potential rivals meeting. An individual may not have met the members of other gangs but their identity may be known to rival gang members, placing their safety at risk.

### 4. CONFLICTS ARE FOREVER CHANGING

Rivals may now be allies in prison and allegiances can change overnight.

### 5. KEEPING AN EYE ON WHO PRISONERS ARE TALKING TO

Practitioners should observe where prisoners ask to be located, and how they interact with each other, which can suggest the hierarchy within gangs and where potential risks are.

### 6. EACH PERSON HAS OTHER ISSUES BEYOND THEIR GANG-AFFILIATION

Aside from their association with gangs, these individuals may need additional help dealing with grief, trauma or the violence they have likely witnessed.

### 7. BUILDING TRUST IS HOW WE LEARN

Only through trusting relationships can we draw out information and join the dots. It is imperative to set boundaries on what is shared and to be conscious of how we disclose it when necessary.

### 8. KNOW ABOUT ANY ALIASES OR NICKNAMES A PERSON MIGHT HAVE

This information will make it easier to follow conversations had between prisoners and the conversations prisoners have with you.

### 9. ONLINE CONFLICTS CAN SPILL OVER INTO REAL LIFE AND SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BE A CATALYST FOR SERIOUS VIOLENCE

Although those within the prison should not have access, new arrivals or those talking to friends outside the prison may become aware of information regarding individuals or rival groups.

### 10. AVOID ASSUMPTIONS

Although there are many trends and patterns we see across our work with gang nominals, it is vital that we approach all of our work remembering that every case, and every person, is unique.

# OUR APPROACH

The Catch22 Gangs and Violence Reduction Custodial Service supports prison management by reducing the risk posed by gang-involved prisoners, and ultimately, reducing the number of violent incidents.

Our approach focuses on offering alternatives to the supposed security and status offered by gangs, a strategy which research suggests is more effective than the suppression-only approach used in many prisons.

Our service is delivered by gang practitioners with expertise and knowledge of gangs, their context in the community, and inside the prison. Gang practitioners identify the specific nature and impact of gang involvement within the establishment and design targeted interventions informed by local context and experience. They work within the prison, developing intelligence with other prison teams and arranging resettlement with services in the community.

Working within, yet independent of, the prison regime gives Catch22 a unique and advantageous position. It means we're able to build trusted relationships with prisoners, without being the ones who directly enforce punishment and security measures.

Our service has five distinct elements, each vitally important to maintaining safety within the prison and supporting people to change their behaviour.

## 1. EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND COORDINATED INTELLIGENCE

Gang practitioners work with new arrivals to the prison to identify risks and potential points of tension, before putting a plan in place to prevent gang-related incidents.

## 2. INTERVENTION AND R.O.A.D PROGRAMME

The R.O.A.D (Rehabilitation Offering Another Direction) programme is delivered as part of all our services. We use a restorative approach to provide space for individuals to reflect on their experiences and to set prosocial goals for their lives.

## 3. CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND MEDIATION

In the event of a violent incident, our Catch22 Custodial Service facilitates mediation sessions between all parties to resolve the issue and find a way forward.

## 4. ONGOING 1:1 SESSIONS

Individual sessions allow the gang practitioners to keep an eye on progress for the prisoners we are working with.

## 5. RESETTLEMENT

Working closely with resettlement teams, we can ensure that gang-related issues are taken into account before release and that prisoners have all the support they need to sustain the progress achieved.

**Catch22 can be commissioned to deliver all aspects of the service as a whole, but we also offer elements individually. For example, at HMP Brinsford we delivered the R.O.A.D programme independently of any other service.**

“I AM CONVINCED THAT THE WORK THEY HAVE DONE HAS **PREVENTED SERIOUS HARM TO MANY PRISONERS.** IT IS THEIR DRIVE AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEM THAT HAS MADE **THAMESIDE THE SAFE PLACE** THAT PRISONERS NOW CONSIDER IT IS”

John Biggin, former Director of HMP Thameside

## EARLY IDENTIFICATION

Gang practitioners meet with new arrivals at the prison to establish potential conflicts, introduce themselves and start to build a relationship with that person. This occurs during the induction process, within 48 hours. Practitioners gain sufficient information to recommend appropriate residential locations for a prisoner and necessary movement restriction, before an individual is moved onto a permanent wing.

Our teams work closely with Police, National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Companies, Court and other agencies to plan in advance when any high profile nominal enters the prison.

## COORDINATED INTELLIGENCE

Our teams work with the prison establishment by collaborating with key departments and agencies who are involved in the care and management of prisoners.

We work with senior management teams, violence reduction teams and all individuals involved in maintaining a safe and secure period in custody. Where required, we will deliver monthly training sessions to share our learnings and develop our programme, specific to the environment we are in.

## INTERVENTION AND R.O.A.D

We tailor interventions to each prisoner's specific needs. Gang practitioners build trust with each prisoner in order to address and challenge the underlying issues causing their antisocial behaviour.

### THE R.O.A.D PROGRAMME - REHABILITATION OFFERING ANOTHER DIRECTION

Rehabilitation Offering Another Direction (R.O.A.D) was designed and created by gang practitioners at HMP Thameside, and is now used across all our custodial gangs services.

R.O.A.D encourages participants to evaluate their past choices and address the consequences of their behaviour. The programme seeks to encourage participants to consider alternative pro-social life options and opportunities moving forward.

The R.O.A.D programme content is supported by findings from Catch22 research conducted by our Bristol team, as well as an assessment of the prison and prisoner focus groups. We gather feedback from every cohort on how the programme could be improved, and R.O.A.D evolves to reflect current issues and the latest research.

### WHAT R.O.A.D ACHIEVES

- An alternative pro-social life direction
- Identifying positive relationships within existing social circles
- Improves communication skills in conflict situations
- Teaches participants to gain perspective in stressful situations
- Improves empathy skills
- Develops an understanding of the wider consequences of violence
- Increases awareness and understanding of the impact of stereotyping and how these are linked to decision making

### HOW IT WORKS

- Facilitated over four days
- Delivered to approximately 10 to 12 prisoners per programme
- Participants can self-refer or their involvement can be in their sentence planning objectives or Good Order reviews
- Any individual may take part in our programme but those with previous gang affiliation and those who have R.O.A.D included in their sentence plan are prioritised
- Attitudinal change is monitored throughout the programme and individual feedback is given as required
- Participants' behaviour is monitored before and after programme attendance

Exercises are designed to challenge negative attitudes, improve ‘active listening’ skills, and to give participants the opportunity to challenge their own thinking, even in stressful situations. This also allows participants to challenge peers’ behaviour towards victims, prison staff and each other.

At HMYOI Feltham, the level of attitudinal change monitored throughout the delivery of R.O.A.D shows that since its implementation, there has been a 64% reduction in those that report being motivated to carry weapons in the community upon release. Being mindful of the huge risks associated with people, particularly young people, carrying weapons, this measure is a considerable result.

Over the page is an example of our programme delivered at HMYOI Feltham.

### CASE STUDY

Mike\* did not disclose any gang affiliation following his admission to HMP Thameside.

Shortly after he was moved on from the First Night Centre he was targeted by rival gang members on his wing. This was due to ongoing gang conflict in the community.

Ray attempted to enter Mike’s cell and Ray threw boiling water on him.

Two other prisons, associates of Ray, stood outside the cell and shouted threats towards Mike. One of the other prisoners received a cut on the face from Mike.

Following the incident, Mike explained to the practitioners that he had felt threatened by the group and so reacted as described. Further disclosures were made which improved our intelligence on Mike’s history.

Gang practitioners conducted meditation between all parties and they all talked through the actions and thinking which led to their behaviour. The prisoners agreed the incident had occurred as a result of a misunderstanding and a breakdown in communication. No further incidents have occurred between them.

**“R.O.A.D MAKES YOU REFLECT UPON YOUR ACTIONS AND QUESTION YOURSELF ABOUT WHO YOU REALLY ARE AS A PERSON AND WHAT YOUR PARENTS WOULD WANT YOU TO BE.”** Prisoner

SESSION	KEY MESSAGES
<p><b>INTRODUCTION AND KEY CONCEPTS OF R.O.A.D</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group rules</li> <li>• Learning agreement</li> <li>• Team work</li> <li>• Perception and attitudes</li> <li>• Judgement and morals</li> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Behaviour</li> <li>• Roles</li> <li>• Communication/ active listening</li> <li>• In-cell workbook</li> </ul>
<p><b>REFLECTING AND RE-EVALUATING OUR MOTIVATIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ripple effect of our actions</li> <li>• Identifying triggers for violence</li> <li>• Choices and options: reassessing a situation</li> <li>• Understanding friendships</li> <li>• Reasoning and understanding</li> <li>• Joint enterprise and consequences</li> <li>• Family roles and role models</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• What is important to us as people?</li> <li>• Reflection on our own situations</li> </ul>
<p><b>THE IMPACT OF OUR ACTIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Victim awareness</li> <li>• Perceptions and impact of behaviour</li> <li>• Discuss headlines on gang and/or youth violence</li> <li>• How are today’s youth perceived in the media?</li> <li>• How do people get involved in gang culture?</li> </ul>
<p><b>MOVING ON AND STAYING AWAY FROM CRIME</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability and owning our regrets and past</li> <li>• Consequential thinking: evaluating the cost and benefit of your choices</li> <li>• Is violence ever justified?</li> <li>• Support in the community</li> <li>• Gang exit: support and resources to draw on</li> </ul>

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS AND TEAMS WITHIN THE PRISON TO REDUCE RISK

Catch22 uses conflict resolution techniques, leading towards long-term mediation. Practitioners research volatile situations and discuss the incident with all parties involved.

This risk assessment is shared with the prison staff in meetings and through weekly and monthly reports.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Our Gangs and Violence Reduction Custodial Services assist with the safety and stability of establishments, reviewing conflicts and conducting regular local research. We have information sharing agreements in place with prison Offender Management Units and resettlement teams to work together on an ongoing basis, sharing our knowledge on issues and potential incidents.

## MEDIATION

### BRINGING TOGETHER PRISONERS TO CREATE LASTING CHANGE IN ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR

Gang practitioners seek to identify which prisoners would benefit from mediation as part of their daily duties. Intelligence gathered by gang practitioners enables them to target prisoners prior to conflicts escalating into violence. Requests to engage may also come from prisoners directly or from staff across the prison following an incident.

Mediation helps resolve disputes or ongoing tensions - whether they've arisen within the prison or have followed prisoners in from the community. It involves bringing prisoners together to discuss the incident directly, with a view to bringing about lasting change and reducing the risk these prisoners pose to each other.

# ONGOING 1:1 SESSIONS

Catch22 Gangs Custodial Services conduct ongoing one to one sessions with gang-associated prisoners to monitor their progress and how they are responding to our work with them. These sessions give us another chance to challenge pre-existing negative or pro criminal attitudes, and also provide a space for the prisoner to open up and get support.

As prisoners approach the end of their sentence, the team link in with the prisoner's Offender Supervisor, Community Offender Manager/ Responsible Officer, as well as the resettlement teams and external organisations to encourage and promote gang exit upon release from custody.

## CASE STUDY

Rob\*, a formally gang-affiliated prisoner in Thameside was employed by the team as a Peer Support Worker (PSW). His former excellent work as a volunteer following release led to this paid role.

Rob's knowledge and deep understanding of the community gang issues made him instrumental in helping Catch22 practitioners identify gang-involved prisoners when they first come into custody.

Gang practitioners worked with Rob to map out potential conflicts and ongoing concerns. He was often involved in mediating conflicts between rival groups.

Rob supported gang practitioners in delivery interventions, particularly in highlighting alternatives to violence, consequential thinking, and the negative impact of gangs both in the community and while in custody. His experience of prison life afforded him the respect from other prisoners, allowing them to relate to his story and take encouragement that alternative pro-social ways of living are achievable.

# RESETTLEMENT

Catch22's collaboration with community-based organisations facilitates a fully supported transition from custody into community. Our focus is to promote prisoners leaving their gang-affiliated life and wherever possible, we will facilitate participants' pro-social intentions upon release.

Our work includes ongoing reviews monitoring the progress and behaviour of participants in the lead up to their release. Our practitioners ensure gang-related issues are taken into account at the resettlement plan stage so that the prisoner has all the support they need to sustain the progress they have made. Where there are concerns for the individuals peer group and community upon release, we will make recommendations to prison and probation staff, such as suggested exclusion zones.

When release is nearing, the team link in with local Youth Offending Services, Community Rehabilitation Companies and the National Probation Service to ensure the successful reintegration of a prisoner back into the community.

## CASE STUDY

Following the arrival of a prominent gang nominal at HMP Thameside, Catch22's practitioners interviewed the prisoner to establish who his current and historical conflicts have been with, and in which boroughs and areas, and how these were likely to cause issues for him.

Details of these conflicts were raised through the prison's security and movement systems, restricting rival prisoners from attending the same activity at the same time. However, during mass movement the prisoner was assaulted and hospitalised with a broken jaw.

While investigating this incident we discovered that rival gang members, one of whom had previously stabbed the prisoner in question, were currently in the prison. Our gang practitioners arranged a joint meeting with Security, Assistant Directors, Safer Custody, Violence Reduction and Care and Separation teams to implement a strategy to manage this risk whilst a transfer could be organised.

Catch22 recommended that movements be staggered for this prisoner, and that he should be offered escorted movements. This was put in place by the prison teams and no further incidents have occurred since.

## OUR TEAM - WHAT MAKES A GOOD GANGS PRACTITIONER?

- **RELATABLE** Existing Gang Practitioners believe this is the number one quality required to be successful in their role. It is essential to interact and build trust with prisoners in order to support them.
- **KNOWLEDGEABLE** It is imperative to be well-informed and curious about gang culture and specific communities. Understanding the landscape is vital to working with these groups.
- **PATIENT** Working with gang nominals is not a linear process and sometimes, progress is slow. Gang practitioners give it their all, even when the impact doesn't appear immediately obvious.
- **RESILIENT** Working in a frontline prison service has its challenges. Gang practitioners are able to see the bigger picture and bounce back from any setbacks experienced by the people we support.
- **HONEST** We manage expectations and avoid making promises we cannot keep. Our role within the prison is specific and limited and we have to be able to tell prisoners what is and isn't possible within our remit
- **EXPERIENCED** Most of the people gang practitioners work with have been through struggles and hardship in their lives. We should understand this and the impact such life experiences can have.
- **PASSIONATE** Being a gang practitioner is a tough job, but the belief that we can make a difference is what keeps us going on the toughest days at work.
- **BALANCED** We are as comfortable talking to a Prison Governor as we are talking to a prisoner and we are able to build trusted relationships with each. Working for Catch22 offers a degree of independence, but there is also a duty to share information and keep staff and prisoners safe.

**“WE HAVE SEEN THE VALUE OF WORKING WITH GANG MEMBERS BY USING PEOPLE WHO CAN GET CLOSE AND UNDERSTAND BETTER. WE ARE CONVINCED THIS FOCUS HAS BEEN VITAL IN THE BIG DROP IN GANG VIOLENCE WE HAVE SEEN.”**

John Biggin, former Director of HMP Thameside

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\*All case study names in this report have been changed



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