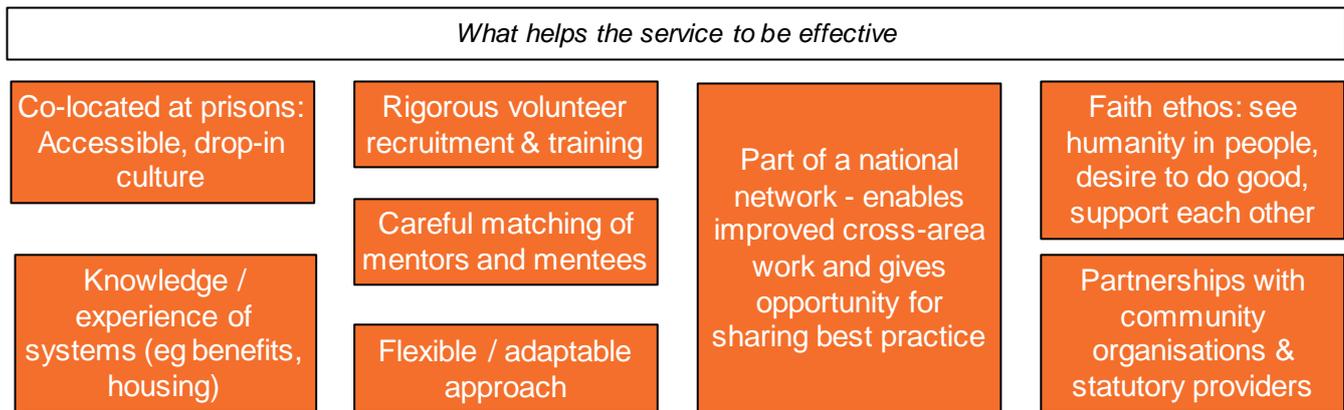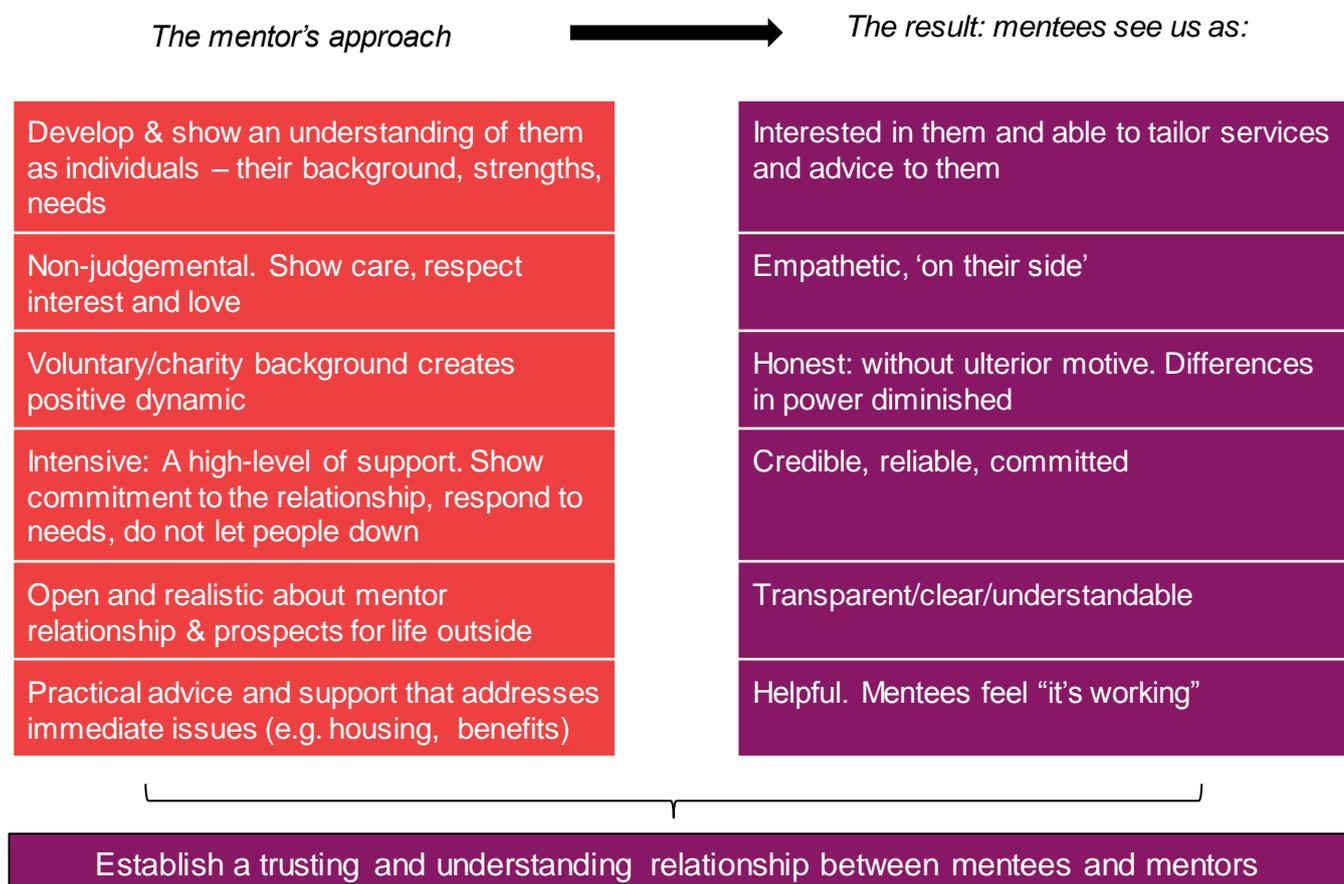# Community Chaplaincy Theory of Change

Introduction

Community Chaplaincies works with over 2,000 offenders per year providing 'through the gate' mentoring and advocacy. Clients can refer themselves or be referred by prison staff. Work starts prior to release and carries on once an individual returns to the wider community. Approximately 60% of current clients are serving short sentences of less than 12 months, with the remaining 40% serving longer sentences. Mentees typically have a history of offending and complex needs. Moreover previous experience of institutions and support services has not been positive – they are accustomed to being stigmatised, let down and excluded, which creates initial barriers to engagement. Clients are of all faiths and none - 40% reporting no faith affiliation.

The initial contact with mentees is on a voluntary basis, so we build upon a nascent desire to change. Mentors meet with mentees at least weekly (during early stages) and focus on a range of different factors. The process is dynamic, so while the theory of change below outlines a broad sequence, the reality is that the journey will differ between individuals; some elements will happen concurrently, others at different times. There will be steps forward and backwards throughout.

What helps the service to be effective

Co-located at prisons: Accessible, drop-in culture	Rigorous volunteer recruitment & training	Part of a national network - enables improved cross-area work and gives opportunity for sharing best practice	Faith ethos: see humanity in people, desire to do good, support each other
Knowledge / experience of systems (eg benefits, housing)	Careful matching of mentors and mentees / Flexible / adaptable approach		Partnerships with community organisations & statutory providers

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*The first part of the change process is for a mentor to establish a **trusting relationship with the mentee.** This starts before release and continues outside, through a combination of the following:*

The mentor's approach ➡ *The result: mentees see us as:*

The mentor's approach	The result: mentees see us as:
Develop & show an understanding of them as individuals – their background, strengths, needs	Interested in them and able to tailor services and advice to them
Non-judgemental. Show care, respect interest and love	Empathetic, 'on their side'
Voluntary/charity background creates positive dynamic	Honest: without ulterior motive. Differences in power diminished
Intensive: A high-level of support. Show commitment to the relationship, respond to needs, do not let people down	Credible, reliable, committed
Open and realistic about mentor relationship & prospects for life outside	Transparent/clear/understandable
Practical advice and support that addresses immediate issues (e.g. housing, benefits)	Helpful. Mentees feel "it's working"

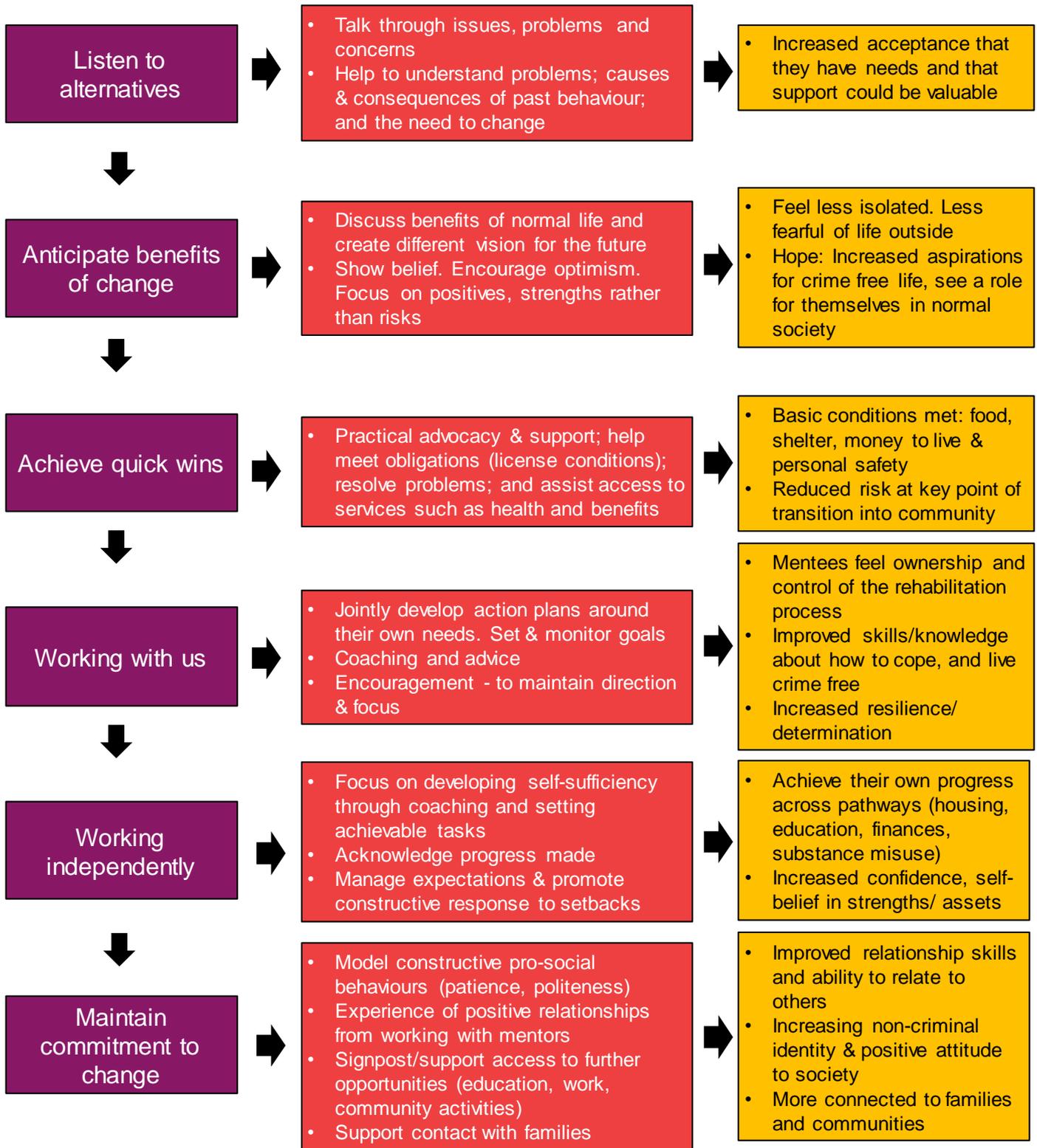Establish a trusting and understanding relationship between mentees and mentors

The trusting relationship provides a platform for a range of activities and outcomes. These are split out and sequenced below, but are fundamentally interrelated - such that progress in one area contributes to another. The long term goals are shown at the bottom of the chart

The process of change	*Activities*	*Outcomes*
Listen to alternatives	• Talk through issues, problems and concerns • Help to understand problems; causes & consequences of past behaviour; and the need to change	• Increased acceptance that they have needs and that support could be valuable
Anticipate benefits of change	• Discuss benefits of normal life and create different vision for the future • Show belief. Encourage optimism. Focus on positives, strengths rather than risks	• Feel less isolated. Less fearful of life outside • Hope: Increased aspirations for crime free life, see a role for themselves in normal society
Achieve quick wins	• Practical advocacy & support; help meet obligations (license conditions); resolve problems; and assist access to services such as health and benefits	• Basic conditions met: food, shelter, money to live & personal safety • Reduced risk at key point of transition into community
Working with us	• Jointly develop action plans around their own needs. Set & monitor goals • Coaching and advice • Encouragement - to maintain direction & focus	• Mentees feel ownership and control of the rehabilitation process • Improved skills/knowledge about how to cope, and live crime free • Increased resilience/ determination
Working independently	• Focus on developing self-sufficiency through coaching and setting achievable tasks • Acknowledge progress made • Manage expectations & promote constructive response to setbacks	• Achieve their own progress across pathways (housing, education, finances, substance misuse) • Increased confidence, self-belief in strengths/ assets
Maintain commitment to change	• Model constructive pro-social behaviours (patience, politeness) • Experience of positive relationships from working with mentors • Signpost/support access to further opportunities (education, work, community activities) • Support contact with families	• Improved relationship skills and ability to relate to others • Increasing non-criminal identity & positive attitude to society • More connected to families and communities

Take responsibility for own future. A sincere, personal commitment to continue journey away from crime

Contributes to

More fulfilled lives → Reduced offending behaviour → Safer communities

Evidence in support of assumptions in the theory of change

The chart above was developed in consultation with CCA staff and volunteers. A robust theory of change is also supported by references to existing evidence, in particular to demonstrate *why the intervention could be regarded as potentially effective*? In this section we highlight some of this evidence.

Overall the recent Ministry of Justice review of evidence reported that evaluations of mentoring programmes - similar to those delivered by the CCA – demonstrated a positive impact on reoffending, but not all did. The effectiveness of mentoring was therefore stated as mixed/promising (viii). Meanwhile a review of evidence by the Scottish Government has stated that "Transitional support programmes were generally effective in reducing recidivism" (xi). In particular they noted that offenders are not necessarily accustomed to actively seeking help from outside agencies to solve their problems and therefore advised a "proactive approach to solving offenders' practical needs while, at the same time, trying to enhance their problem-solving skills and empower them to search out suitable help when needed" (p13).

Furthermore the gradual and cumulative theory of change is consistent with a central element of desistance theory which is that the move away from crime is more of a process than an event (or series of events). It also recognises that genuine desistance occurs 'not through just one activity but through a combination of activities, services and social circumstances' (ii).

The Chaplaincy approach can also be associated with the "casework model" to working with offenders. This is described by Hough (2010) as sitting between "supervisory" and "therapeutic" approaches, where the main emphasis of the work is on the 'craft' of managing a process of effective moral persuasion through establishing trust and the use of common-sense tactics for working effectively with offenders, as well as supplementing their own skills by referral to specialist workers.

The following table highlights evidence in support of some of the specific elements of the theory of change:

Factor/Assumption	Evidence
Quality of volunteer recruitment and training	x) The personal qualities of the agent of change are critically important
	ix) The need for staff who possess general interpersonal skills, and are appropriately trained and supervised in programme delivery
	x) Key skills in social interaction refer to those techniques for asserting control and authority – which can range from detailed attention to language, body-language and personal presentation to strategies which rely on analysis of the power dynamics in a relationship
	xiii) Practice skills in general and relationship skills in particular are at least as critical in reducing re-offending as programme content
Having knowledge of other organisations, partnerships	xiii) The success of case management at the individual level depends on the existence of the local strategic partnerships and pathways that allow the case manager to access and coordinate the required services and resources, and to effectively enact the legitimate authority conferred by the court and developed in and through the working relationship.
Flexible/adaptable approach	iii) The amount of contact needs to be proportionate to the offenders' level of needs
	xi) Desistance is a highly individualised process and one-size-fits-all interventions do not work
	viii) Need to have accurate assessment of individual offenders' needs and provide tailored responses
	i) It is well established that different offenders have different learning styles – both at the individual and group level – and that work should be tailored to these differences.
	xiii) Recent reviews of the 'what works' principles have started to note the importance of individual workers exercising professional discretion in tailoring their interventions, addressing diversity issues and using interpersonal or relational skills
Importance of CCA national network	x) Importance of the morale of staff, and the quality of leadership. The additional resources upon which staff can draw from elsewhere to support resettlement
The value of faith based interventions	xvi) According to Robert Shaw (2010) the added value of community chaplaincy consists in the following elements: faith-based and not funded by the state which bestows a degree of independence from government; it utilises volunteers and involves work with offenders' families located within communities; and it offers hope and stability through relationships. When exploring the work of community chaplaincy through the lens of added value, these data reveal a discrete terminology of hope, love, and compassion; person centred; the work of volunteers who give their time without payment primarily because they care about the individuals they work with.
Process for developing trusting relationship	ii) Bringing greater transparency to services can help service users to understand the factors that influence all aspects of their lives. This makes it more likely that service users will see services as legitimate and will continue to engage with them

Factor/Assumption	Evidence
	x) Support needs to adhere to certain 'practice virtues' that support the legitimacy of the enterprise in the eyes of the offender.
Importance of the trusting relationship	xii) Contact with coaches helped the majority of interviewed offenders to access services and increased their motivation to desist from offending
	viii) Research with desisters has identified that having someone believe in them is important: desistance can be supported by interactions with others who communicate a belief that they can and will change, that they are good people, and that they have something to offer society or other people.
	x) "For change to occur the offender should confer legitimacy on the agent of change and on the process for achieving change; that legitimacy flows from fair and respectful treatment"
	ii) Importance of focussing on service user engagement can allow for positive relationships, characterised by mutual respect, loyalty and commitment, to develop between the service user and worker
	ix) Importance of developing a warm, empathic and non-judgemental relationship
Developing holistic understanding of people	viii) Addressing issues in a holistic manner is an important part of rehabilitation. 'Multi-modal interventions', which address a range of problems, are viewed as effective.
	i) Offenders typically have multiple needs, and effective practice is often a matter of arranging the right sequence of support
Importance of offenders accepting they have needs	ix) Value of "cognitive restructuring" (helping people consider alternatives to their attitudes and beliefs)
	xiii) Desistance is an active process in which agency (the ability to make choices and govern one's own life) is first discovered and then exercised
Importance of offenders feeling less isolated, have someone to believe in them	viii) Research with desisters has identified that having someone believe in them is and that desistance can be supported by interactions with others who communicate a belief that they can and will change, that they are good people, and that they have something to offer society or other people
Hope and aspirations for the future	xiii) Desistance is a process which is commonly characterised by ambivalence and vacillation. It is not an event. This suggests the need for motivational work to prompt, support and sustain change efforts.
Practical support and meeting basic needs	viii) & xi) Support needs to focus on the provision of practical support as well as the development of motivation and capacity. In particular there is a need to stabilise lives in relation to substance/alcohol misuse and accommodation.
Jointly developing plans for change	xi) "Desistance attempts fail when offenders are insufficiently committed to change or feel ill-equipped to solve the problems they encounter" (p41)
	xiv) "Mentoring is more likely to work when its goals are defined in agreement with the service user"
	x) Desistance theorists emphasise that the process of change should be offender led, with those helping offenders providing offenders with empathetic support to sustain their motivation to stop offending.
Developing self-belief – achieving own progress	xi) Higher levels of self-efficacy support desistance process
	iv) Need to cultivate self-identity and self-belief. Clear sense of meaning in their lives and feel they are in control of their future
Role modelling appropriate behaviours	viii) Consistently and clearly 'modelling' behaviours and attitudes that are anti-criminal
Improved relationship skills	xi) A systematic review undertaken in 1998 of over 200 experimental or quasi-experimental studies of interventions with young people who offend (mainly males aged between 10 and 21 years) found that three intervention types showed the strongest and most consistent evidence of reducing re-offending. These were **interpersonal skills training**, individual structured counselling and behavioural programmes.
Increasing non-criminal identities	xi) Qualitative studies suggests desistance depends upon developing pro-social thinking styles and pro-social bonds
More connected to families and communities	viii) Strong and supportive family and intimate relationships are widely considered important factors in desistance from crime. People who feel connected to others in a (non-criminal) community are more likely to stay away from crime. Social networks that help desistance include extended family, mutual aid groups, clubs and cultural or religious groups
	xiii) Desistance requires social capital (opportunities) as well as human capital (capacities). This suggests an advocacy role for practitioners seeking to support change and underlines the need to target systems beyond the individual offender

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