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Living 'good lives': using mentoring to supporting desistance and recovery

Abstract

In recent years, a proliferation of mentoring projects have been established in England and Wales, targeted at both offenders and drug users. This is, in part, a consequence of high-level encouragement to establish such schemes. Mentoring features throughout the Ministry of Justice's *Transforming Rehabilitation* strategy as a tool to support offenders to 'get their lives back on track', and the 2017 drug strategy highlights the importance of peer mentoring for those engaged in treatment services. Using Kingdon's multiple streams approach, the article accounts for the popularity of mentoring within criminal justice and drug policy despite a less than convincing evidence-base. His model is based upon an appreciation of three streams (problem, policies and politics) which coincide when a compelling problem is linked to a plausible solution that meets the test of political feasibility. It is argued that mentoring has come to be viewed as a cost-effective solution to reduce reoffending and improve drug treatment outcomes despite a lack of conclusive evidence. It has garnered support because of its fit with dominant political discourses around citizenship and civil society. Mentoring has received support from within and without government but its inherent appeal overshadows a lack of clarity of what mentoring is and insufficient theoretical understanding of why it might be effective. Consequently, it is proposed that the Good Lives Model, a strengths-based rehabilitation theory, might provide an appropriate theoretical base and inform discussions about the role of mentoring within desistance and recovery journeys.

Introduction

Mentoring has been described as 'one of those bright ideas that take a periodic grip on the imagination of the policy community' (Pawson 2004, p. i), reaching out across social and public policy domains to support professional development and tackle social exclusion (Boaz and Pawson 2005). Over the past two decades, we have seen it appeal to criminal justice and drug policymakers despite changes of government in 2010 (from New Labour to a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition) and in 2015 (to a Conservative administration). Most recently, mentoring featured in the Ministry of Justice's (2013, p. 3) *Transforming Rehabilitation* strategy as a tool to support offenders to 'get their lives back on track' and in the 2017 Drug Strategy (HM Government 2017) as an example of a service user-led initiative to support individuals engaged in drug treatment. There are now numerous mentoring schemes operating in both prisons and the community, targeted at offenders and drug users. These are, of course, overlapping populations, presenting challenges in terms of how to support desistance and recovery processes. Occasionally, schemes have been developed specifically for drug-using offenders (for example, Clancy et al. 2006a).

The literature on mentoring repeatedly acknowledges the conceptual confusion which surrounds the term and the lack of a universal definition. There are blurred boundaries between mentoring and other interventions which rely heavily on the development of interpersonal relationships. For example, mentoring might also be conflated with coaching schemes for offenders (Smyth 2014), or understood as replicating sponsorship which is an core component of 12-step mutual aid provision (Lloyd et al. 2017). Tolan (2008) usefully identifies the main features of mentoring relationships which include interaction between two individuals for an extended period of time; mentors possessing greater experience, knowledge or power than the mentee; the mentee being in a position to imitate or benefit from the knowledge, skill, ability or experience of the mentor; and the absence of role inequality that typifies other helping situations. Since multiple models of mentoring operate, the identified characteristics might not apply precisely to all mentoring relationships. Nonetheless, Tolan's (2008) description of the key features of mentoring broadly fits with developments within the fields of criminal justice and drugs. Mentoring schemes attempt to manufacture positive one-to-one relationships between those seeking to desist from crime and/or recover from substance use and those who are able to support them to do so. In both contexts, mentors are typically viewed as role models: those who are living 'good lives' of the type mentees might aspire to. Mentors are typically volunteers; although some criminal justice projects have used paid mentors, either in conjunction with volunteers (Clancy et al. 2006a) or instead of them (Hartlepool New Deal for Communities 2005). In the drugs field, the mentor is typically a peer, one who can share their lived experience of recovery (Tober et al. 2013). Whilst peer mentors are also used to support offenders (Fletcher and Batty, 2012), mentors often come from a wider range of backgrounds and often include those wishing to gain relevant work experience prior to applying for positions in the criminal justice field (Hucklesby and Wincup 2007).

Mentoring can be understood as a mechanism to enhance social capital. Social capital refers to the resources individuals develop through families, communities and other social networks. Mentoring provides an opportunity to establish 'bridging social capital' (McNeill and Weaver 2010) through developing a relationship with an individual who can introduce the mentee to a wider and more diverse network to enable further social capital to be accrued. The development of social capital is now understood to be essential to promoting desistance (Farrall 2004; McNeill et al. 2012). It is also recognised as a core component of recovery capital, the sum of resources that facilitate the recovery process (Best and Laudet, 2010). As individuals build up social capital, they can access support but also become enmeshed in networks with obligations; for example, to friends, family members or employers.

This article has two broad aims. The first is to account for the factors which have allowed mentoring to take a grip on the imagination of criminal justice and drug policymakers in England and Wales. We will explore common factors whilst observing different influences.

Our focus is England (for drug policy) and England and Wales (for criminal justice policy), although it is important to note that mentoring has a far greater geographical reach. Indeed, mentoring is a good example of policy transfer with policymakers in England and Wales looking to the US inspiration. Mentoring programme developed here in the early twentieth century, typically designed to prevent at-risk young people becoming involved in crime (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2008). Mentoring schemes for offenders and drug users can also be found elsewhere; for example, Canada and Australia (Taylor et al. 2013). The article presents the findings of policy analysis which used the multiple streams approach developed by Kingdon (1995) to explain the rise of mentoring as vehicle to support desistance and recovery. His model is particularly useful in that it helps to explain the popularity of mentoring despite the lack of a credible evidence base. It provides an understanding of the unique factors which have shaped policy in a particular jurisdiction, which may vary considerably from others even if they implement similar policies. The second aim is to reflect theoretically on the contribution mentoring could make to supporting recovery and desistance journeys.

Explaining the popularity of mentoring in criminal justice and drug policy domains

During the past two decades, mentoring has moved to centre stage within criminal justice policy with schemes operating across all stages of the criminal justice process, from bail through to release from prison (Hucklesby and Wincup 2014). There has been a more recent commitment to mentoring in drug policy, appearing first in 2010 drug strategy (HM Government 2010). There are now plentiful examples of mentoring projects operating 'on the ground' to support both offenders and drug users. Alongside this, mentoring has also become an integral part of prevention efforts targeted at 'disaffected' young people deemed to be 'at-risk' of developing criminal or drug careers (Newburn and Shiner 2005). Our task in this section is to explain the interest in mentoring among criminal justice and drug policymakers. We focus on mentoring schemes for adults with established criminal and/or drug careers rather than young people 'at risk' of engaging in crime and/or drug use. Before I outline the analytic framework adopted to explore the growth of interest in mentoring as a mechanism for promoting desistance and recovery, it is worth acknowledging the particular political and socio-economic context in which mentoring schemes have grown in popularity. There are two important points to note here which I will return later in the article. The first is to recognise that there have been three changes of government in the period in which mentoring has developed: New Labour (1997-2010), Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition (2010-2015) and Conservative (2015 to present day). Mentoring appears to enjoy cross-party support despite the shift from centre-left towards the right of the political spectrum. The second relates more specifically to the past decade and the far-reaching economic and political impact of global recession in the late 2000s and early 2010s.

Approach: Kingdon's multiple streams approach to policy analysis

The article makes use of Kingdon's (1995) influential approach to policy analysis which has been widely used in the drugs field (Brewster 2017, Lancaster et al. 2017, MacGregor 2017 are recent examples) but only occasionally to analyse criminal justice policy (see Birkett 2017 for a rare exception). Briefly, Kingdon (1995 p. 1) focuses on explaining 'what makes an idea's time come?'. He suggests that whilst policy processes are 'highly fluid' (Kingdon 1995, p. 222), it is possible to observe some structure within them: agendas need to be set, alternatives from which an authoritative choice can be selected need to be specified, and decisions then implemented.

One of the tasks of a policy analyst is to explain why only some subjects become prominent on the policy agenda and why only some policy alternatives are seriously considered. This involves exploring the 'labyrinth of policy formulation' (Kingdon 1995, p. 18), examining three streams: problem, policy and politics. The first refers to the process of generating problems requiring the attention of policymakers, the second to the initiation of policy proposals and ideas, and the latter to the political context within which policies are developed. For Kingdon (1995 p. 201), the three streams are largely separate and have lives of their own but at times can be joined; a process he refers to as 'coupling'. This requires advocates of a new policy initiative to take advantage of what Kingdon (1995 p. 202) refers to as a 'politically propitious moment', claiming that their proposal is a solution to a pressing problem. To reach the policy agenda, a policy window must open. Policy windows, as Kingdon (1995) notes, are often unpredictable and may not be open for long. They can be opened by events in either the problem stream (for example, a high-profile incident) or the political stream (for example, a new government assuming power). In both the criminal justice and drugs field, we have witnessed policy windows open, and mentoring form part of successive government agendas to promote desistance and recovery.

Kingdon's (1995) approach has been used across the globe to examine policy-making in a multiplicity of fields (Jones et al. 2016). Understandably, the applicability of a now dated model developed in one jurisdiction has been subject to debate (Weible and Schlager 2016). Nevertheless it is highly regarded for analysing case studies of policymaking (Cairney and Jones 2016), and particularly for understanding 'the contingent, ambiguous and necessarily political nature of the policy process' (Lancaster et al. 2017, p. 599). The latter is especially important given that both criminal justice and drugs are highly politicised fields. Kingdon's (1995) multiple streams heuristic tool is used here to draw attention to the range of factors which might account for the rise of mentoring, and in particular the extent to which they might be similar or different across two different policy domains: criminal justice and drugs. We start the process by looking at problems, policies and politics respectively

Problems

Looking first at criminal justice, at the turn of the twenty-first century we can observe that the newly-formed New Labour Government identified the high rate of reoffending among newly-released prisoners as a significant problem, although the apparent failure of imprisonment to promote desistance from crime was far from new. The strong likelihood that those released from custody would return within a short period of time is a long-standing issue but was explicitly presented as a symptom of social exclusion (see Social Exclusion Unit 2002). Broadly understood in terms of multiple disadvantage, social exclusion became a core government concept under New Labour (Hills and Stewart 2005). Prisoners were seen as an archetypal example of a socially excluded population, experiencing 'high levels of family, educational and health disadvantage, and poor prospects in the labour market' (Social Exclusion Unit 2002, p. 18). In keeping with the Risk-Need-Responsivity (R-N-R) model of rehabilitation (see Ward and Maruna 2007 for a critical account), these disadvantages were understood as criminogenic needs (or dynamic risk factors) requiring appropriate responses to reduce the risk of reoffending rather than welfare concerns (Hannah-Moffat 2005). From this perspective offenders are the 'bearer of risk for recidivism' (Willis and Ward 2013, p. 305). However, the 'blame' for high rates of reoffending, particularly among short-sentence prisoners (i.e. serving sentences of less than 12 months), was also attributed to inadequacies of post-release supervision (HM Inspectorate of Prisons 2001). For many the prison gate effectively functioned as a revolving door, intensifying the social exclusion they faced (Wincup 2013). In the absence of statutory supervision, a plethora of resettlement projects, often led by the voluntary and community sector (VCS), attempted to 'plug the gap' (Hucklesby and Worrall 2007). These explored different models of post-release supervision including mentoring (Hucklesby and Wincup 2007).

In the drugs field, support for mentoring can be linked to a significant shift in strategic thinking about the drugs 'problem' around a decade ago. Under New Labour there was a 'criminalization' of drug policy (Seddon et al. 2008, p. 818). Policies were based upon the apparent causal associations between heroin and/or crack cocaine and crime despite ample evidence which points to complex nature of drug-crime connections (Bennett and Holloway 2007, Seddon 2000). Drug-using offenders, particularly those dependent on heroin and crack cocaine, were channelled into treatment at every stage of the criminal justice process (Hucklesby and Wincup 2010). This resulted in significant investment in drug services to meet demand, typically offering substitute medication. Since 2010, policy responses to drug use have been shaped by a desire to promote recovery (Duke 2013, Monaghan 2012), which is now firmly established in policy and practice (Best and Ball, 2011). A recovery-oriented approach was formalised in the Coalition's 2010 drug strategy (HM Government 2010) but was significantly influenced by developments under the previous government. The recovery agenda emerged against a backdrop of sustained criticism from academics, politicians, civil servants, think tanks, advocacy groups and the media (McKeganey 2014, Wardle 2012) of

'parking' drug users on substitute medication in the expanded drug treatment sector (Hunt 2012). The 2017 drug strategy took a similar stance to its 2010 predecessor but emphasised the need to 'raise our ambition for recovery by enhancing treatment quality and improving outcomes' (HM Government 2017, p. 28). One of the main outcome measures is 'successful completion of drug treatment and not re-presenting within six months'. (NDTMS 2018). Currently the proportion of individuals who fulfil this criteria is low, particularly among opiate users. The latest treatment data reveal that only 37 per cent of non-opiate users and 7 per cent of opiate users completed treatment successfully (NDTMS 2018). Moreover, whilst the completion rate for non-opiate users has been more or less stable since 2011-12, it has dropped for opiate users (NDTMS 2018). Against this backdrop, peer mentoring appears to have been offered as a means to boost successful completion rates among those entering drug treatment.

For Kingdon (1995) the process of problem creation refers to new problems and representation of old problems. High rates of reoffending among released prisoners or poor treatment outcomes among drug users who enter treatment were not new rather reframed problems. In both criminal justice and drugs fields, the process of problem creation drew attention to the inadequacy of previous policy responses which came to be viewed as part of the problem rather than a solution. Consequently, alternatives such as mentoring were considered.

Policies

Kingdon (1995, p. 116) describes the policy stream as a 'policy primeval soup' in which ideas float around. It can comprise of new policy proposals but often policies are 'a combination of previously existing elements' (Kingdon 1995, p. 117). Mentoring can be considered as a repackaged rather than fresh policy proposal. Despite its contemporary appeal, it is far from new and has much earlier origins. In the criminal justice field, we should note the importance of the philanthropic tradition in establishing the probation service with its initial aim to 'advise, assist and befriend' offenders serving community sentences and those released from prison (Jarvis 1972). In the drugs field, there are obvious synergies between mentoring and the established tradition within recovery communities to foster mutual aid, harnessing the strengths of their members to develop community recovery capital (White 2009). For Kingdon (1995), policies are considered by policy communities which include experts within and without government, and vary in terms of their degrees of cohesiveness. Typically, a wide range of individuals and organisations are involved, spanning different sectors and different specialisms. Within the criminal justice and drugs fields, mentoring has been supported by the VCS in particular but also think tanks (Aitken 2014) and, increasingly, private sector organisations who have secured contracts to provide rehabilitation services within prisons and the community.

In 1999 the New Labour Government funded a series of resettlement pathfinders for short-term prisoners who present the greatest risk of re-offending yet at the time did not receive post-release supervision (Clancy et al. 2006b). The pathfinders arose out of New Labour's pledge to establish 'what works' to reduce reoffending and served as pilot projects to establish the most effective responses to addressing criminogenic needs which could then be 'rolled-out' through the prison estate. Mentoring featured in two of the seven pathfinder pilots. Both of these were run by voluntary sector organisations and used volunteer mentors alongside one-to-one work on practical resettlement needs (Lewis et al. 2003). These government-funded projects were joined by a proliferation of resettlement projects for prisoners operating at a local or regional level (Hucklesby and Wincup 2014). A number of these projects used mentoring as part of a package of supportive measures.

Mentoring was included in the Green Paper (Ministry of Justice 2010) which formed the first stage of the newly-elected Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government's attempt to introduce a 'rehabilitation revolution' (Wincup 2017). It noted that a VCS organisation had been commissioned to run a Social Impact Bond (a form of payment-by-results) pilot at HMP Peterborough, using paid mentors (whilst prisoners were in custody) and volunteer mentors (following a prisoner's release) (Disley et al. 2015). Further mentoring pilots were commissioned the following year which planned to support between 400 and 600 prisoners upon their release (Ministry of Justice 2011). On this occasion, mentoring was described as informal, defined as 'short-term' and 'light touch' (Wadia and Parkinson 2015, p.1), which raises concerns about the dilution of mentoring as a concept and practice. Two VCS organisations were selected by the National Offender Management Service from over 80 applications, speaking volumes about the extent of interest in mentoring as a rehabilitative strategy within the VCS.

Soon after the Justice Secretary, announced that 'every prisoner released in England and Wales should have a mentor to help get his or her life back on track' (quoted in BBC News 2012). Similarly, the Prisons Minister proclaimed the following year that former prisoners should be paid to mentor offenders deemed to be low- to medium-risk (Johnson 2013). The *Transforming Rehabilitation* strategy (Ministry of Justice 2013) placed mentoring centre-stage, stating that the consultation to which it was responding offered strong support for promoting VCS involvement in mentoring. It reported that commissioned providers would be asked to provide a resettlement service for all offenders in custody which might include mentoring alongside accommodation, family and financial support (Ministry of Justice 2013). Additionally, providers would be asked to offer activities (which might include mentoring) in the community 'which they judge to be the most effective to reform offenders' (Ministry of Justice 2013).

There has been a less explicit commitment to mentoring in drug policy. Mentoring first appeared in the 2010 drug strategy. Here it was suggested that 'offenders who had recovered

from drug and alcohol problems' (HM Government 2010, p. 12) could become mentors, following a recommendation in the Patel report (Department of Health 2010) which was commissioned to look at drug treatment and interventions in prison. The 2010 drug strategy referred to prisoners selected to support others as 'recovery champions' (HM Government 2010, p. 12) but the evaluation of the drug recovery wing pilots found that this term had not translated into practice in the prisons which had developed structured peer systems. Instead, they were described as 'peers', 'mentors' and 'expeditors' (Lloyd et al. 2017, p. 130), raising concerns about the vagueness and malleability of mentoring. The 2010 drug strategy also outlined a role for 'community recovery champions . . . who will be encouraged to mentor and support their peers and contribute to prevention in communities and schools' (HM Government 2010, p. 21). No attempt was made to define what form mentoring might take in this context. The current drug strategy similarly lacks detail and refers to a specific context in which mentoring might take place. In a brief section on peer-led recovery support, it suggests that peer mentoring can play a role in supporting those engaged in treatment services (HM Government, 2017). There is no recognition of the legal and ethical challenges of using peers in this context or the potential for blurred boundaries between mentors and professionals if the former adopt a therapeutic role (see Tober et al. 2013). In the drugs field, boundaries can be indistinct given that a significant number of drug professionals are recovering/recovered (see Best et al. 2013).

In many respects, peer mentoring as a means to support recovery from drug use is far from new. The recovery movement, which has grown rapidly over the past decade (Beckwith et al. 2016), has always placed a great deal of emphasis upon peer support as a mechanism to enhance social capital, one of four dimensions of recovery capital (Cloud and Granfield 2008). It involves using people who were once seen as part of the 'problem' to play a pivotal role in offering a solution (White 2011, p. 6). The intention is that individual wishing to recover support each other through change rather than being supported by someone who has not undertaken the change themselves (Livingston et al. 2011) and in so doing establish community recovery capital (White 2009). Those established in their recovery journeys act as role models, reinforcing positive cultural norms, and inspiring others through the power of example (Malloch 2011). They can draw upon their experiential knowledge to support others with additional positive benefits for their own recovery (Humphreys, 2004). Mentoring, as proposed in the 2017 drug strategy appears to be distinct from mutual aid provision in that it is implied that it prepares individuals for drug treatment, supports them through it and helps them sustain their recovery. Mentoring embraces positive relationships between recovering drug users and drug treatment providers whilst traditionally mutual aid provision has adopted a 'fiercely anti-treatment' stance (Yates and Malloch, 2010, p.27).

Within the 'policy primeval soup' (Kingdon 1995, p. 131), ideas frequently collide or are modified in some way. In order to make the 'short list' (Kingdon, 1995, p. 139), a number of criteria for survival need to be met. Some of these are internal to the policy community; for

example, technical feasibility and value acceptability. Mentoring's intuitive appeal helps it to fulfil these criteria. It appears deceptively simple, mimicking the relationships which naturally occur among those with high levels of social capital, with potentially positive outcomes for both the mentor and mentee. Other criteria require the policy community to anticipate future constraints which include financial considerations and the public response. This aspect requires the policy community to reflect upon the political climate in which they are advancing policy proposals. This is our focus in the next section.

Politics

A wide array of factors within the political stream can shape what issues are deemed to fit within the current political climate. Kingdon (1995) provides a list of examples which include the national mood, organised political forces (for example, pressure and interest groups) and the composition of government itself. In this section, we will consider influences – financial and ideological - which have helped mentoring to secure its position as an official strategy to support desistance and recovery. In this respect, its usual reliance on volunteers and its tendency to be a mechanism favoured by the VCS play a significant role in attracting the attention of policymakers. It is useful to remind the reader at this juncture about the political turbulence in England and Wales over the past decade, particularly the quick succession of Justice (with responsibility for penal policy) and Home Secretaries (with responsibility for drug policy). Since 2007, there have been eight Justice Secretaries and six Home Secretaries.

Growth of interest in mentoring also gathered pace during the global recession which resulted in the implementation of austerity measures. These included significant cuts in public spending under the Coalition government (Garside with Ford 2015), which are ongoing (Travis 2017) despite a change of government in 2015. In particular, considerable concern has been expressed about the scale of reductions to treatment budgets (Buchan 2017, Bulman 2017, Rhodes, 2018). Alongside austerity measures, there have been seismic shifts in the provision of services for offenders and drug users as new commissioning models have been introduced (Lockyer and Heys 2016, UKDPC 2012) which have resulted in the need for those contracted to provide such services to provide demonstrable evidence that their services have produced the agreed outcomes. In the criminal justice field, payments to community rehabilitation companies (typically run by the private sector in partnership with the VCS), who now supervise the majority of offenders in the community, are aligned to results (Bardens and Grimwood 2013). This approach has been piloted with drug services (Disley et al. 2014) and providers are already penalised if they fail to discharge sufficient numbers from treatment (Tober et al. 2013). Using volunteer mentors can be viewed as an opportune solution to problems such as high rates of reoffending and poor treatment outcomes when usual ones are unaffordable and there is a need to plug gaps in provision. Volunteers are, however, not a free resource in that there are significant, and often underestimated, costs associated with recruiting, training, managing and supervising them. For example, the evaluation of the

Informal Mentoring Pilots (commissioned by the National Offender Management Service to support prison leavers to desist from crime and becoming integrated into society) found that more resources than anticipated were required to administer the pilots due to the training and supervisory needs of the mentors, particularly if they were peer mentors (Wadia and Parkinson 2015). Moreover, using volunteers can fuel suspicion that they might be used as a replacement for paid professional staff. This is understandable given that mentoring has developed against the backdrop of a wider neoliberal agenda which has focused upon reducing public spending and shifting responsibility for addressing drug problems to drug-using individuals and their communities (Roy and Buchanan 2013).

Mentoring's political appeal extends beyond its potential as a seemingly inexpensive solution. It also fits with dominant political discourses on citizenship, in particular the Coalition's aspiration to develop a 'Big Society' which arguably built upon New Labour's earlier attempts to promote localism, civil renewal and active citizenship (Morgan 2012, Wincup 2013). Localism refers to the devolution of decision-making powers from central government control to individuals and communities (Lowndes and Pratchett 2012). Civic renewal describes the enhanced role of citizens in governance, particularly in relation to the management and scrutiny of public services (Jochum et al. 2005). Individuals are encouraged to recognise their responsibilities within society and become more active members of civil society (Jochum et al. 2005). As a political concept, the 'Big Society' gained momentum in the 2010 General Election campaign. It was proposed as a strategy to mend a 'broken' society (of which crime and drug use were viewed as symptoms) through enhancing personal, professional, civic and corporate responsibility (Wincup, 2013). It manifested itself in a number of ways, two of which are particularly significant to the rise of mentoring. The first is advocating an enhanced role for the VCS, justified in terms of capitalising on the different strengths of organisations who might support desistance and recovery but might be understood a mechanism for 'colonising' the VCS and promoting the 'industrialisation' of rehabilitation (Rodger 2012, p.19). Mentoring is one means by which the VCS can demonstrate its distinctive expertise. The second way is the promotion of volunteering. The criminal justice system has an established tradition of civic engagement by volunteers, although as Corcoran and Grotz (2016) warn, using volunteers should not be viewed as a panacea. Moreover, among those in recovery from drug use there is a strong appetite to give something back through volunteering (Harrison et al. 2017), and evidence that this can help to sustain their recovery (Best et al. 2017). At the same time, the challenges of using peer mentors in the context of drug treatment should not be underestimated, not least because positive outcomes for peer mentors cannot be guaranteed. As Tober et al. (2013) recognise, peer mentors remain at risk of relapsing and reverting to becoming service users. Consequently, the provision of support for peer mentors should be seen as an integral feature of such projects with strategies in place to end mentoring relationships if they appear to present a risk to the mentor and/or mentee.

For the reasons described above expectations of mentoring are high and there has been an reluctance to consider the challenges associated with mentoring. Academics have expressed cautious optimism about the potential of mentoring to tackle crime and drug use. They have warned of the dangers of viewing mentoring as a 'silver bullet' and have drawn attention to the complexities which surround this illusorily simple intervention (Hucklesby and Wincup 2014, Newburn and Shiner 2005). The limited evidence base provides a further reason to be cautious.

Exploring the evidence base

Reviews of the literature within the criminal justice field (Jolliffe and Farrington 2008, Taylor et al. 2013) have noted the lack of good quality research evidence pertaining to mentoring and have suggested that it is at best 'a promising but not proven intervention' (Jolliffe and Farrington 2008, p. 9). A rapid evidence assessment of the impact of mentoring on reoffending revealed that whilst a number of quantitative studies found statistically significant differences in the reoffending rates of participants and non-participants, the quality of the evaluation was often a cause for concern (Jolliffe and Farrington 2008). Nonetheless, the review was able to identify some of the ingredients of apparently successful projects including regular contact between mentors and mentees and the use of mentoring alongside other interventions. At the same time, the authors raised doubts about the ability of mentoring projects to sustain their positive impact over time. A later review (Taylor et al. 2013) also drew attention to the lack of good-quality research evidence, whilst noting the difficulties of generalising about effectiveness and good practice given the diversity of mentoring programmes in operation. Similar to Jolliffe and Farrington, the authors reached the tentative conclusion that mentoring could lead to reductions in reoffending through providing access to services, continuity of support upon release from prisons and having positive impacts on some of the risk factors known to be related to reoffending; for example, employment. In relation to drug-using offenders, the studies reviewed by Taylor et al. (2013) found that mentoring was linked to reductions – albeit not statistically significant ones - in substance use, and one study found mentoring promoted engagement with drug treatment. These rapid evidence assessments are useful but they focus on quantitative studies, neglecting the important insights from qualitative work. For example, research on mentoring schemes for women released from prison in Australia introduces the concept of 'readiness', suggesting that mentoring might be effective with some but not all female prisoners (Brown and Ross 2010a). This was founded upon their observation that the strong impacts of mentoring they observed could be explained by the targeting of women who were already well-disposed to desist from crime.

Neither of the reviews discussed above distinguished between peer mentoring and other forms of mentoring. Fletcher and Batty (2012) explored the evidence base on the former as part of a broader review of offender peer interventions. Their overall conclusion was the

evidence base was 'meagre' (Fletcher and Batty 2012, p. i). Nonetheless, they were able to point to the benefits of using peers (for example, promoting greater levels of engagement among offenders compared to professionals) alongside drawing attention to the considerable challenges which surround their use, particularly in relation to recruitment, training and support.

Within the drugs field, the evidence base is even more limited and largely confined to US studies of its potential to prevent drug use rather than to support those in recovery (see for example, Das et al. 2016; Thomas et al. 2013). There is, however, a developing body of evidence on the utility of using peers within professionally-operated treatment, some of which we have already considered (see Tober et al. 2013). Humphrey and Lembke (2014) provide a brief review of what they consider to the most robust evidence, which points to US-based studies of dependent alcohol users. They identify the need for more robust evaluations of recovery-oriented schemes which encompass peer support and also the challenges of determining the effectiveness of schemes which extend beyond discrete projects and comprise of multiple interventions. We might also look to the evidence base on mutual aid which suggests that active or frequent engagement (for example, through being a sponsor in a self-help group) helps to support recovery (ACMD 2013). This has parallels with Reissman's 'helper principle' which observes that individuals are helped by helping others (see Pickard et al. 2013). Reissman (1965) argues for recognition of the impacting of helping on the helper which might include an improved self-image, access to a socially-valued role and an opportunity to enhance well-being by serving as a role model.

Despite the rise of mentoring coinciding with a stated political commitment to evidence-based policy, it has grown in popularity without robust evidence of its effectiveness to support desistance and recovery. Whilst one way forward would be to develop the evidence base; for example, through high-quality independent evaluations, we should proceed with caution. Conceptual confusion surrounds mentoring, not least because the policy communities have continually adapted mentoring to fit the presentation of the problem at the time and the prevailing political climate. Consequently, there is a danger of developing an evidence base which compares apples and pears. An alternative approach would be to follow the advice of Brown and Ross (2010b). They argue that there is a need to problematise the notion of effectiveness in relation to mentoring and reflect upon the precise contribution mentoring can make in supporting desistance, the mechanisms by which it should produce effects, and the type of impact that an effectiveness study might seek to measure. This requires us to take a step back and engage with theorising around desistance to consider which models might useful inform mentoring schemes for prisoners. As Brown and Ross (2010b, p.34) argue, there is a 'relative absence of theory' in relation to offender mentoring, and a similar observation can be made in relation to mentoring in the drugs field. The remainder of the article points to a possible way in which this might be addressed.

Theorising mentoring's contribution to supporting desistance and recovery

In an earlier article, my co-author and I argued that the Good Lives Model (GLM) has the potential to provide a theoretical base for mentoring adults in the criminal justice system (Hucklesby and Wincup, 2014). This article arose out of a series of evaluations of resettlement projects; two of which involved mentoring. We suggested that the GLM offered an alternative to the tendency for mentoring schemes to be tagged on to the R-N-R model and view offenders as a deconstructed set of deficits which mentors might help to fix. Briefly, the GLM is a strengths-based approach to rehabilitation (Ward and Maruna 2007) which aims 'to enhance individuals' capacity to live meaningful, constructive and ultimately happy lives so they can desist from further criminal actions' (Ward and Maruna 2007, p. 111). Advocates of the GLM (Ward and Brown 2004) argue that all human beings share the same inclinations and basic needs and are naturally predisposed to seek these *primary* goods. These abstract goods - life; knowledge; excellence in work, play and agency; inner peace; relatedness; community; spirituality; pleasure and creativity, see . https://www.goodlivesmodel.com) - contribute to 'good lives'. *Secondar*y or *instrumental* goods provide particular ways to achieve them; for example, through work or relationships. Offending or drug use can be viewed as mechanisms to achieve primary goods, albeit in ways which are often counter-productive. We argued that whilst mentoring typically has a practical orientation, focusing on enhancing secondary goods, it might have greater value in supporting offenders to construct visions of 'good lives' and exploring how to achieve them in 'pro-social, beneficial and personally meaningful ways which would enhance their well-being and reduce harm to others' (Hucklesby and Wincup 2014, p. 388).

There is a developing evidence based on the effectiveness of interventions informed by GLM principles, although to date this has predominantly focused on sex offenders. Willis and Ward (2013) reviewed empirical research studies and argued that the focus on dynamic risk factors in isolation was insufficient and that offenders need the embrace the possibility of better lives rather than just less harmful ones. It was too early for the authors to report the impact of the adoption of interventions based upon GLM principles on offending but possible to identify short-term positive outcomes; for example, enhanced levels of engagement.

Here I wish to suggest that the GLM can also provide a useful foundation for mentoring drug users too. It would be naïve to assume that a theoretical model developed to guide work with offenders can automatically be translated to another group. There are, however, strong arguments for exploring its potential given the similarities, and indeed overlap, between those working towards recovery and desistance. Both are highly stigmatised populations who typically have needs which extent beyond offending behaviour and/or drug use including poor health, worklessness and lack of access to appropriate accommodation. Moreover there

are similarities between the transformational processes of desistance and recovery which are dynamic and gradual, requiring those seeking to desist and/or recover to be active agents (Colman and Vander Laenen 2012). Given these complexities, mentoring cannot be expected to offer *the* solution. Nonetheless, it offers a potential contribution as part of package of measures to support those embarking on desistance and/or recovery journeys. In the remainder of the article I delineate the core features of mentoring schemes influenced by GLM principles.

Most importantly schemes must offer an individual approach to mentoring. This type of approach can take into account the mentees' 'particular preferences, interests and values' (Ward and Maruna 2007, p. 111), allowing those being mentored to establish what they feel are the most important outcomes. Central to this is the development of a 'good lives' plan. It begins with the establishment of what a mentee considers to constitute 'good lives' rather than imposing a particular aspiration on an individual. To formulate this mentors should talk to mentees about the different values they attach to primary goods. Once understood, future-oriented secondary goods aimed at satisfying primary goods in socially acceptable ways can be articulated and included in the plan. This will entail identifying existing strengths (for example, a particular skill) alongside noting obstacles (for example, no permanent address). Mentors are unlikely to have the knowledge, skills, expertise and access to resources to support mentees to implement the plan so professional input is essential. Moreover, there are challenges of sustaining mentoring relationships over time (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2007; Hucklesby and Wincup, 2014). Consequently, their most valuable contribution might be to offer support at the early stages.

There are numerous potential benefits of an individual approach to mentoring. It avoids the tendency to impose a formulaic model of mentoring which can occur when it is becomes bolted on to mainstream practices (Hucklesby and Wincup 2014). In such circumstances, mentees are typically steered to particular outcomes; for example, to obtain employment, and the expected nature and extent of interaction between mentor and mentee is tightly specified and monitored (Hucklesby and Wincup 2014). There are, however, challenges of realising an individual approach in practice. First, it can be difficult for mentoring schemes to build in sufficiently flexibility whilst holding on to a shared vision for mentoring projects. There are also challenges in terms of the measurement of outcomes (Taylor et al. 2013), which is particularly problematic in an era increasing dominated by payment-by-results approaches to service contracting.

The discussion above has alluded to the fact that mentoring requires considerable human and financial resources. Professionals are needed to undertake the detailed work to implement the 'good lives' plan. This might include more risk-focused work to address an individual's vulnerability to relapse and/or reoffending. In addition, it might involve referrals to specialist services such as mental health or helping service users to access accommodation.

Professionals are also needed to recruit mentors, provide initial and follow up training, and offer supervision. This is particularly important if mentors are peers. Whilst becoming a mentor has the potential to support desistance and/or recovery, it may also place it under threat.

Conclusion

Mentoring – in a number of forms - has been promoted effectively as a mechanism to support those seeking to desist from crime and/or drug use. Alongside policymakers it has attracted the support of a large number of VCS organisations and a significant number of individuals who are engaged as volunteers, some of whom have lived experience of desistance and/or recovery. Kingdon's multiple streams approach was used to identify the breadth of factors which have allowed mentoring to become a key intervention within criminal justice policy, and an emerging one within drug policy, despite a lack of robust evidence. Whilst well-established in criminal justice policy, and increasingly so in drug policy, we have observed that there is insufficient understanding of how mentoring might address the problems it has been established to solve. Consequently, we have emphasised the need to look carefully at what mentoring can contribute to supporting the processes of desistance and/or recovery; processes which are rarely straightforward, linear or short-lived. Engaging with the GLM provides an opportunity to explore further its potential as part of the solution to supporting desistance and recovery in a challenging political climate.

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