



A Process Study of the Horizon Programme

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The Horizon programme is an intervention delivered to men who have a sexual conviction as part of an antisocial criminal orientation and are considered to be at a medium, high or very high risk of reconviction. The programme can be delivered in both custodial and community sites and is suitable for men accepting responsibility for their offence and those maintaining their innocence. There has been a staged implementation of the Horizon programme, which has enabled a process study to take place in 2016 at six early implementation sites. This study aimed to gauge the perceptions of both the staff delivering Horizon and the participants completing the programme, in order to evaluate the programme's design and identify how it could be best optimised for successful delivery across all sites. Focus groups were conducted with the facilitators and treatment managers delivering Horizon, and individual interviews were carried out with the group members of the first completed programme. While the study is a reflection of staff and group members' opinions of the initial implementation and processes of Horizon, it does not measure the impact of the programme on outcomes such as reconviction.

Key findings

- Completion rates for the first Horizon programme at the initial implementation sites were high, with 83% of those who started the programme completing it (90% completion in custody sites and 75% completion in community sites).
- Both staff members and group participants provided positive feedback on Horizon. Group members identified that they had increased confidence, greater assertiveness, increased problem solving skills and improved relationships following completion of the programme.
- Staff members liked that Horizon was more strengths based and future focused than previous treatment programmes. They also praised the flexibility and responsiveness of the programme, and that it could be accessed by those maintaining their innocence.
- Both group members and staff made some suggestions for improvement to Horizon, including: changing the order of some of the modules; giving the programme a consistent pitch; providing more session time on moving on e.g. disclosure of offences and follow-up work; and more optional one-to-one time.
- Staff raised additional concerns regarding the perception of the programme from outside treatment teams, i.e. parole boards, offender supervisors etc. as the discussion on risk has been reduced on the programme.
- Staff expressed uncertainty at selecting the right participants to go on the programme due to the withdrawal of the tool used by staff to identify risk and protective factors.
- Both staff and group members agreed that a shorter programme like Horizon was preferable to previous longer programmes and provided sufficient dosage for the targeted cohort, however it was felt that some additional sessions would be beneficial in order to adequately deliver everything in the programme.
- Staff expressed a preference for group members to disclose their conviction(s) to avoid later difficulties in role play scenarios etc. Group members were more divided on disclosure, suggesting this should be discussed and agreed by the group at the start of the programme.
- The research has led to a number of recommendations for improvements to Horizon including changes to the delivery order of the modules, improvements to the manual and training, and some additions to programme content.

The views expressed in this Analytical Summary are those of the author, not necessarily those of the Ministry of Justice (nor do they reflect Government policy).



Introduction

HMPPS has updated their suite of treatment programmes for men with sexual convictions, to reflect the current evidence base and to streamline services. These programmes use an integrated model of change to provide a bio-psycho-social explanation¹ of sexual offending (Mann and Carter, 2012), which builds on the principles of the Risk Need and Responsivity (RNR) (Andrews and Bonta, 2013), the Good Lives Model (GLM) (Ward, Mann and Gannon, 2007), and literature supporting desistance from crime (Farmer, Beech and Ward, 2012).

Horizon is one of the newly developed programmes. It is delivered to men assessed as medium, high and very high risk of reconviction². It targets issues of problem-solving, self-regulation, relationships, sexual attitudes and behaviours. As it is less offence-focused than earlier programmes, it is suitable for both men who accept responsibility for their offence and those who are maintaining their innocence³ or minimising⁴ their offence. The programme has received full accreditation⁵ by the Correctional Services Advice and Accreditation Panel (CSAAP).

Staged implementation of the Horizon programme enabled a process evaluation on the initial implementation sites to be conducted in 2016 to gauge both staff and group member perception of the programme. The study aimed to evaluate the design of the programme and identify how it could be optimised for successful delivery across all relevant sites.

Approach

Three custody sites (HMP Wakefield, HMP Whatton and HMP Usk) and three community sites (East Midlands, North West and Thames Valley) were included in the study. Study participants included facilitators and treatment managers responsible for the delivery of Horizon and group members of the first Horizon programme to be completed at each site.

All participants who started on the programme at the study sites were invited to take part in a semi-structured, one to one interview. Of these, 29 group members (60% custody group completers, 40% community group completers) agreed to be interviewed. Focus groups

were carried out with 22 staff members (85% of staff members delivering Horizon at the sites) across the six sites. The interviews were transcribed and subject to thematic analysis using the approach advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006), which allowed for both inductive and deductive development of the key themes. In addition, demographic information on programme participants, as well as completion and attrition rates were collected.

Results

Participant characteristics

Of the 30 participants who started Horizon in custody, 27 completed (90%), while 21 of the 28 starters in the community completed the programme (75%). This can be considered high when compared to other custody and community programmes (Olver, Stockdale and Wormith, 2011). Of those that did not complete, one withdrew because he did not wish to continue with the programme, with the others withdrawing for non-programme related reasons such as transfer or recall. All group members had been convicted of at least one sexual offence and assessed as medium, high or very high risk using the Risk Matrix 2000 (Thornton, 2002) or had an appropriate clinical override⁶ for the programme. Table 1 shows the demographic data collected for the programme participants at the implementation sites.

Staff and participant feedback

Nine main themes were identified from the thematic analysis:

- programme impact
- programme content and structure
- training
- course materials
- selection and assessment
- course exercises
- length of programme
- disclosure of offences
- staff support

These themes are discussed in greater detail with supporting quotes below.

¹ A multidimensional perspective that recognises the importance of biological, psychological, and sociological influences on criminal behaviour.

² At the time of the process study Horizon had only been introduced for use with medium risk men. It has since replaced programmes for medium and above risk men with sexual convictions.

³ Group members who are upholding a not-guilty stance to their conviction and denying that they committed any offence.

⁴ Group members who admit their offence but downplay their responsibility, particular details of the offence, harm caused, or planning involved.

⁵ The process of reviewing, validating and approving interventions which have been designed to reduce reoffending. Specialist sub-panels comprising three to five experts review each programme according to published evidence-based criteria.

⁶ Candidates are primarily allocated to treatment on the basis of their static risk measured by the RM2000. In exceptional circumstances treatment managers can 'override' this and allocate candidates to a more appropriate programme, as long as this decision can be defended.

Table 1: Demographic information for Horizon participants at all evaluation sites

Site	Starters	Completers	Number maintaining innocence	Number of group members with previous convictions	Average age	Age range	Average IQ	Ethnicity
HMP Wakefield	10	9 (90%)	2 (plus 2 minimising)	Pre cons – 3 No pre cons – 3 Unknown - 4	41	28-65	97	8 (80%) White 2 (20%) Not stated
HMP Whatton	10	8 (80%)	1	Pre cons – 2 No pre cons – 1 Unknown - 7	38	26-64	95	6 (60%) White 1 (10%) Asian 3 (30%) Not stated
HMP Usk	10	10 (100%)	2 minimising	Pre cons – 4 No pre cons – 0 Unknown - 6	47	23-65	101	5 (50%) White 5 (50%) Not stated
East Midlands Probation	8	5 (62.5%)	1 (plus 1 minimising)	Pre cons – 2 No pre cons – 5 Unknown - 1	37	23-47	N/A	5 (62.5%) White 3 (37.5%) Not state
North West Probation	10	6 (60%)	2	Pre cons – 5 No pre cons – 2 Unknown - 3	35	24-50	N/A	5 (50%) White 1 (10%) Asian 1 (10%) Mixed race 3 (30%) Not stated
Thames Valley Probation	10	10 (100%)	2 minimising	Pre cons – 2 No pre cons – 7 Unknown - 1	32	20-62	N/A	5 (50%) White 4 (40%) Not stated 1 (10%) Asian

Programme impact

Group member responses to the programme were positive, with frequent examples given by programme participants demonstrating the use of skills they learnt that were in line with the treatment targets of the programme. These included an increase in confidence and assertiveness, increased problem solving skills and improved relationships with their family. Staff members also identified how the majority of group members had made some level of progress on Horizon, most notably increases in their confidence and developing a positive self-identity.

“I’m more confident now, I’m more open and honest with people...I feel like I learnt a lot about being supportive as well.”
HMP Usk Participant

“I really recognise the difference between old me and new me...everything is new me, there is no old me anymore.”
HMP Whatton participant

“The majority of them said that it had boosted their confidence, they felt really low after their conviction, but now they have got their self-respect back, they’re more confident.”
Thames Valley Probation staff

Programme content and structure

Staff members were positive about updating the rehabilitative programmes and liked Horizon being strengths based and future focused. The flexibility and responsiveness of the programme was praised by staff. Suggestions for improvements to the programme content included moving some sessions of the programme forward (e.g. the New Me and Sex module) to ease anxiety and help with working with the group members.

The pitch of the programme was felt to be inconsistent in places, with probation staff particularly concerned about men who had committed internet related offences. Probation staff were especially concerned about the limited time provided to moving on from the programme such as how to disclose offences when applying for jobs, or starting a new relationship. The programme group members discussed how an increase in the number of one on one sessions, more time spent on dealing with feelings of shame and guilt, and greater consideration given to moving on from the programme i.e. finding employment, disclosing offences, and follow-ups, would strengthen Horizon.

“A lot of the men had anxiety leading up to New Me and Sex so it would have been better earlier on.”
HMP Whatton staff

“It would have been good to have more in depth coverage of disclosure and moving forward.”
North West Probation participant

Training

All of the staff delivering Horizon had attended conversion training provided by HMPPS. Staff members felt that the conversion training was insufficient, requiring them to complete additional reading prior to delivery in order to feel confident. The training was felt to include too much on basic delivery skills which were not relevant to staff who had been delivering programmes for some time.

"I didn't feel equipped for anything from the training... you don't really look at the manual, or one particular session."

North West Probation staff

"The first day just felt like I'd been back on Core Skills. Everyone doing the conversion training should be able to already deliver programmes so it felt like a waste of time."

HMP Usk staff

Course materials

Generally the facilitation manual was felt to be well written and the flexibility of sessions was noted as a positive feature. In places the manual was thought to be less clear, with instructions being difficult to follow, and some materials referred to not being provided. Additionally staff mentioned that they did not have access to a theory manual or a management manual, which are essential resources for a programme.

"The manual was good, straight forward and easy to follow. Some of the exercises though have quite big explanations for things that aren't really that complicated. Some of it wasn't so clear."

HMP Wakefield staff

"We haven't had any laminates, management manual or theory manual, it's the kind of thing that's really helpful when you're starting to run a new programme."

Thames Valley Probation staff

Selection and assessment

Risk factors are approached differently on Horizon to previous rehabilitative programmes, and some concerns were raised among treatment staff about this approach, particularly as to whether group members would

understand their risks. There was further concern as to how the programme would be perceived by parole boards, offender supervisors and other prison staff, given the reduced discussion of risk on the programme. Staff were also concerned at selecting the right participants for the programme due to the withdrawal of the Risk and Success Factors Analysis (RSFA)⁷ which is a tool used by programme staff to help identify factors which have both increased, and protected against, an individual's vulnerability to offending.

"I still think offender managers out there are very much, for understandable reasons, focused on risk management... I think there's a perception that we're not doing the job unless there is a level of offence acceptance and responsibility."

East Midlands Probation staff

"I'm uneasy that it's all risk without any assessment of treatment need... we could end up with men who are on the wrong programme. Their treatment needs may actually be higher or more suited to the higher level programme."

Thames Valley Probation staff

Course exercises

The group members praised the variety in delivery methods on Horizon, particularly the creative aspects and visual representation of components (e.g. the success wheel and life map). While some participants were unsure about the skills practice exercises, the majority of negativity expressed was due to lack of confidence and embarrassment. Despite this, many of the group members felt the skills practice sessions were worthwhile and some found them to be enjoyable. Staff also felt that the different exercises were a positive feature of the programme, although a minority expressed difficulty in implementing some of the exercises, such as mindfulness.

"It was good because it covered all aspects of learning, the reading, exercises, and it was a case of if you don't understand it this way, let's try it another way."

North West Probation participant

"There's some really nice exercises in the manual that we utilised."

Thames Valley Probation staff

⁷ An intervention planning tool used by treatment staff to identify factors which increase an individual's vulnerability to offend, and those factors which have protected against offending.

Length of the programme

Horizon is considerably shorter than previous sexual offending rehabilitative programmes, reduced from 120 hours down to 60. Staff members agreed that the shorter length of Horizon was sufficient dosage for the targeted cohort, although some of the timings of the programme were noted as being quite restricted. This included time spent for group members to provide feedback on some exercises (e.g. life maps), and for the skills practice exercises. They felt that one or two additional sessions would allow them to cover all of the programme areas more comfortably. The group members also felt that a shorter programme was preferable to a longer one, but agreed that some areas felt rushed and would have benefitted from having more time spent on them.

"I think it was the ideal length for me. Some of the other courses are very long and I would get stressed. It was a good length of time."
HMP Usk participant

"Each module should be just that bit longer. Just an extra session or something. It felt a bit rushed."
Thames Valley Probation participant

Disclosure of offences

Group members were divided on their views as to whether it was better to disclose their offence or not. Some felt that not disclosing had had no impact on their progress, whereas others felt that not disclosing made aspects of the programme more difficult. Many staff members felt that a disclosure of conviction would be beneficial to working with the programme participants. Staff were also generally positive about the programme being available to those maintaining innocence, although some were more hesitant and felt that the number of group members maintaining innocence in each group should be carefully managed.

"Disclosure at the beginning, we wanted that. It would be easier when you get to the role plays."
HMP Whatton participant

"I don't think it really mattered. I was on the programme to get some help, even though I didn't talk about what I did, I still achieved that."
HMP Usk participant

"I think if that was maybe set out at the start where they could just say what their conviction was, it's out in the open, it's done and left and everyone knows where they are for the role plays."
HMP Usk staff

Staff support

Staff discussed how they had not felt fully supported by HMPPS Headquarters during the implementation of Horizon, particularly experiencing issues with receiving answers to queries and inconsistent guidance. They accepted this may be due to initial teething problems arising at the start of new programme implementation. Despite Horizon being less offence focused than previous sexual offending programmes, staff still felt they would like the option for counselling sessions as staff safety is a key priority. However, a substantial amount of time between running groups was felt to be less important, as long as both pre and post programme work could be completed.

"It's been okay, but we've had a lot of questions and not a lot of answers."
HMP Whatton staff

"It's draining running a programme so it's helpful sometimes to have that extra help. We've got to keep ourselves safe."
HMP Usk staff

Conclusions

Horizon has been designed to consider the emerging evidence on pathways of offending (Proulx and Beuregard, 2014, Carter, Barnett, Stefanska-Hodge and Higgs, 2014) and desistance (Farmer, Beech and Ward, 2012, Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010). This is incorporated with the existing literature on Risk, Need and Responsivity (Andrews and Bonta, 2013) and the Good Lives Model (Ward, Mann and Gannon, 2007), to provide a programme for men with a sexual conviction and assessed as medium, high or very high risk of reconviction. Horizon differs from previous sexual offending rehabilitative programmes in that it is shorter, less offence focused and can be accessed by both those accepting responsibility for their offence, and those maintaining their innocence.

The early process study was generally positive of Horizon; the strengths based and responsive approach of the programme was praised by the staff and making it accessible to those maintaining innocence was also seen as a key strength. Although the study was designed to examine the early implementation of the programme, there are indicators that Horizon may have been successful in achieving some of its aims, as group members discussed how they could demonstrate where they were utilising the skills they had learnt, and reported increased confidence, assertiveness, problem solving skills and better relationships, which are gains in line with the treatment targets of the programme.

However, the study also identified a number of areas where the programme needed to be developed and enhanced, as well as improvements made to the delivery and support provided. From these findings, a number of recommendations have been identified and are discussed below.

Recommendations

The key recommendations suggested from this process study are:

- some sessions of the programme should be moved forward (e.g. the New Me and Sex block) to ease anxiety and help with working with the group members;
- inconsistencies in the pitch of the programme should be addressed so that it is accessible for all levels;
- more content should be provided on moving on from the programme with a particular focus on future disclosure of offences, gaining employment and arranging follow-ups;
- more content should be provided on how to deal with shame and guilt;
- group members should be provided with more optional one to one sessions;
- clearer guidance should be provided to treatment staff regarding selection and assessment of need;
- conversion training should focus on programme content rather than core skills;
- the facilitation manual needs some editing to clarify exercises, correct mistakes and reduce unnecessary jargon, and all materials need to be present in the facilitation manual;
- staff should be provided with a theory and management manual;
- group members should be given an option as to whether they wish disclose their conviction at the beginning of the programme to ensure the whole group is comfortable;
- one or two additional sessions may be needed to be able to cover all of the programme content;
- there should be some wider education (i.e. to Offender Managers, Parole Boards etc.) as to how rehabilitative programmes work to encourage desistance so that in the wider culture so they understand how the programme addresses risk.

Since the process study has been completed, the findings and recommendations have been taken into consideration by the programme developers and the suggested recommendations have been implemented where appropriate.

Limitations

It was not possible to obtain feedback on Horizon from all participants of the initial delivery groups. Forty per cent of programme completers, and all of the non-completers declined to participate in an interview and therefore the findings are based on those who agreed to be interviewed rather than all those who took part in the programme.

Only three prison and three probation sites were included in the study which may limit the generalisability of the results. What happens in these early adopter sites may not necessarily reflect what happens in larger scale implementation.

Evidence has been found of socially desirable responding and impression management amongst men who have sexual convictions (Mathie and Wakeling, 2011), which could suggest that the participants in this study are more likely to respond positively to questioning about their experience of Horizon.

It should be kept in mind that this study aimed to consider the opinions of staff and participants at the initial implementation sites of Horizon. The main benefit appears to have been an increase in confidence and self-esteem in the group members, however if this is seen without improvements in skills or shifts in attitude, it could be problematic, as described by Andrews and Bonta (2013). The positive response from the study participants is encouraging, however it is not an indication of successful outcomes for the programme. Further evaluation work is needed to determine the success of the programme in affecting longer term changes in behaviour.

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