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Delivering cognitive skills programmes in prison: a qualitative study

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Foreword

Recent evaluations of the effectiveness of prison-based cognitive skills training programmes in reducing reconvictions have produced mixed results. The present study adopts a qualitative evaluation methodology in order to explore what constitutes effective programme implementation, impact and outcomes. This approach is based on the assertion that the nature and context in which a programme is delivered can affect treatment quality and ultimately influence treatment success. Thus, understanding how programmes are delivered and received can help us to interpret findings from reconviction studies by providing an insight into how factors such as the institutional context in which programmes operate can have an impact on treatment success.

The current study aims to enhance our understanding of the issues around the implementation and delivery of cognitive skills programmes in a prison context and to identify any non-reconviction treatment benefits. The research was undertaken in six male prisons and a total of 113 interviews were conducted with prisoners, programme tutors and other prison staff. A further five interviews were held with ex-prisoners on licence in the community.

The report notes that many interviewees reported short-term benefits associated with programme participation. These included increased self-confidence, the development of interpersonal skills and improved prisoner behaviour. Furthermore, it is argued that the nature of prisoners' motivations for participating in cognitive skills training is a key factor when it comes to assessing the effectiveness of such interventions. From an institutional perspective, where there is a lack of support for programmes at an operational and/or cultural level this can affect programme delivery and have a negative impact on treatment efficacy.

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Contents

Foreword	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Summary	v
1. Introduction	1
Background	1
Previous evaluative studies	2
Aims of the research	4
Methodology	4
Structure of report	7
2. Perceptions of programmes	8
Programme graduates' perceptions of the purpose of cognitive skills programmes	8
Programme staff perceptions of the purpose of cognitive skills programmes	9
Perceived strengths and limitations of programmes	10
Perspectives of reconvicted graduates	15
Perspectives of 'desisting' Programme graduates	16
3. Programme staff: recruitment, training and support	18
Recruitment and selection of programme tutors	18
Training	20
Experiences of supervision and support	22
Perceptions of staff morale	23
4. The institutional context of cognitive skills programmes	25
Perceptions of non-programme staff	25
The institutional context and the operation of programmes	27
5. Perceptions of motivation	31
Accounts of motivation	32
Institutional factors impacting on motivation	35
6. Non-reconviction benefits for prisoners and prisons	37
7. Conclusions	40
References	43

List of tables

Table 1.1	Prisons by type of programme and ISR and IQR scores	5
Table 1.2	Number of prisoners interviewed at each establishment	7
Table 1.3	Number of prison staff interviewed at each establishment	7

Summary

The dual purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of what factors influenced the successful or unsuccessful delivery and impact of accredited cognitive skills training programmes for adult male prisoners, and to identify whether or not there were any non-reconviction benefits arising from the provision of such programmes. As such, the study contributes to the debate about 'What Works' in practice by providing an insight into how, and in what contexts, cognitive skills programmes produce beneficial results.

A qualitative evaluation research methodology was adopted. Face to face interviews were conducted with prisoners and prison staff at six prisons in England. Included among the interviewees were: 62 prisoners who had successfully completed either an Enhanced Thinking Skills (ETS) or Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) course (Programme graduates); ten prisoners who had been reconvicted having completed a cognitive skills course during a previous custodial sentence (reconvicted graduates); 33 members of staff directly involved in the administration and delivery of cognitive skills training (programme staff) and eight members of staff with no involvement in course provision (non-programme staff). Five ex-prisoners who had undergone a prison-based cognitive skills programme and were currently on supervision in the community were also interviewed (desisting graduates).

Key findings

Perceptions of the aims, objectives and rationale of cognitive skills programmes

- Prisoners reported that the sources and quality of information about the aims of programmes varied from hearsay among inmates to a range of written and oral information from prison staff. Some interviewees reported that prison staff had given the impression that programme participation was mandatory, especially to secure a favourable parole report.
- Few programme participants or programme staff referred to the link between the aims of programmes and the ultimate objective of desistance from offending.
- A minority of programme staff volunteered information about the theoretical rationale that underpins cognitive skills programmes.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses of programmes

Programme strengths

- Programme staff appeared dedicated, hardworking, caring and enthusiastic about the merits of cognitive skills programmes. Programme tutors were held in high regard by Programme graduates. Occupational background was considered to be irrelevant by Programme graduates when it came to determining what made a good tutor.
- The majority of Programme graduates enjoyed group work, role-play and games as part of programme delivery. Listening to the viewpoints of others was cited as an important learning experience by many Programme graduates.
- Interviewees reported that most participants benefited in some way from programme participation. Programme staff thought that three types of prisoners benefited the most: men who had underachieved in statutory education; men whose behaviour was impulsive and some men with addiction problems. Evidence from the study suggests that some prisoners who had been convicted of drugs-related crimes benefited from programme participation in the short term.
- 'Stop and think', problem-solving, seeing the perspectives of others and social skills were aspects of programmes most often cited as being useful and beneficial by Programme graduates.

Programme limitations

- Some prisoner interviewees reported that including sex offenders in a group did not work well because it inhibited other group members, particularly those with children.
- Interviewees thought that selecting programme participants on the basis of parole date order disadvantaged some highly motivated prisoners who were not at the parole stage of their sentences, whilst simultaneously giving access to some parole stage prisoners who were not motivated to change.
- The timing of access to programmes in a prison sentence was an issue for programme participants. Access to courses at mid-sentence was preferred so that skills could be practised and refined in the prison environment before release.
- Most Programme graduates reported the need for ongoing post-programme support in prison so that learning could be consolidated and skills developed.
- A 'one size fits all' approach to programme delivery, content and pace was reported to be unresponsive to the needs of certain types of prisoners, such as very able participants; prisoners with literacy problems; men for whom English was not their first language and participants with low IQ levels.
- Rigid adherence to programme manuals was seen as counterproductive by some programme staff. Tutors would have welcomed the opportunity to make slight alterations to the programme content in order to reflect the varying life experiences of programme participants and enhance participatory learning.

The recruitment, training and support of programme staff

- A difficulty in recruiting prison officers as tutors was reported in all six prisons. Tutor selection procedures were seen by some programme staff to be biased in favour of applicants from a human sciences background. The perception, among some prison officers, that tutoring was a 'soft' role also acted to deter prison officer applicants.
- The majority of programme tutors thought the two-week training course was too intensive and that more time should be given for trainees to deliver sessions from all of the key components of the programmes.
- Not many tutors remembered the theoretical aspect of their two-week training course because they felt overloaded with information. Tutors would have preferred this part of the training to be separate.
- The perceptions of the support provided by the Offending Behaviour Programmes Unit (OBPU) varied a great deal among programme staff – most felt that OBPU was insufficiently staffed and that they were operating in a constant state of crisis management, resulting in a patchy service.
- Audit reports of video monitoring by OBPU elicited some strong feelings among programme staff. Tutors found the audit reports demoralising and some interviewees thought that only the superficial elements of programme consistency were being monitored by OBPU.

Perceptions of staff morale and retention of programme tutors

- Heavy workloads, shortages of tutors and a lack of institutional support were reported to be affecting the morale of programme staff.
- Unequal pay structures for programme tutors had affected staff morale and the retention of programme tutors.
- The retention of prison officer tutors was affected by promotion and also feelings of split loyalties in prisons where they were often called upon to perform operational duties.

The institutional context of cognitive skills programmes

- The nature and extent of support for programmes at an institutional level affected programme delivery, with subsequent implications for treatment impact. From an operational perspective, difficulties were reported in maintaining the continuity of programme delivery when sessions were disrupted because of delays in unlocking prisoners and escorting them to classrooms. From a cultural perspective, where there was a lack of a rehabilitative ethos at the institutional level, the negative attitudes of some prison officers to the aims of cognitive skills training adversely affected the way in which prisoners viewed programmes.
- Programme staff reported that some prison officers were uncooperative at the operational level of programme delivery.
- Programme staff reported that overt support for programmes from senior management improved staff morale and endorsed the importance of cognitive skills programmes throughout the prison.
- The role of the programme manager, in promoting staff awareness and developing a pro-programme culture among non-programme staff, was considered to be a key to the successful implementation of programmes.

Perceptions of motivation

- Among both staff and prisoners, motivation was identified as a key factor in producing positive treatment outcomes. Individual characteristics of programme participants, institutional climate and programme processes all had a bearing on motivation.
- Long waiting lists for access to programmes by parole date order affected the quality and levels of motivation of programme participants.
- Interviewees' accounts of motivation were analysed and three main themes identified: self-development; instrumental thinking; hostile attitudes and behaviours. These three themes underpinned the four main types of accounts of motivation which corresponded with aspects of 'the cycle of change' model developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1982). This model describes the psychological processes underlying behaviour change and outlines the stages that people pass through as they adopt new behaviours.

Non-reconviction benefits for prisoners and prisons

- The non-reconviction benefits for prisoners included: improved social interactions with prison officers and other prisoners; increased levels of self-confidence; enhanced problem-solving skills and improved literacy skills. For some men the experience had sparked an interest in further learning and self-development.
- Benefits for prison management were illustrated through examples of improved prisoner behaviour as a result of programme participation.
- Some staff and prisoners reported that cognitive skills programmes were effective in preparing men to participate in other offending behaviour programmes.

The perceptions of reconvicted and 'desisting' Programme graduates

- Reconvicted Programme graduates cited unsuccessful resettlement experiences, addiction problems and lack of maturity as reasons for their re-offending. Some men reported seeing cognitive skills training as a prison experience and not something that was relevant to their lives on release.
- Programme graduates who had not reoffended since being released from prison reported a desire to change for the better. They were either motivated to change before starting a cognitive skills programme or became motivated to change as they engaged with the programme.

- In contrast to the reconvicted graduates, those graduates who had desisted from offending seemed to live structured lives with secure anchor points such as work, training courses, secure accommodation and supportive personal relationships.
- Those desisting Programme graduates who had addiction problems showed signs of having adopted a proactive approach to coping with their condition.
- Programme graduates who had not reoffended gave examples of how they had practised cognitive skills training in everyday situations following their release from prison.
- Programme graduates who were living in the community and had not re-offended reported being frightened of the possibility of going back to prison. Given that they had found employment and developed stable personal relationships they had come to the realisation that they had 'too much to lose' by engaging in any further criminal activity.

Recommendations: policy and practice

While caution should always be exercised when drawing policy and practice recommendations on the basis of a single research study a number of observations, based on the findings, are worthy of mention as they have implications as far as the potential effectiveness of programmes is concerned.

- The 'one size fits all' approach to programme delivery was considered problematic for prisoners with poor literacy or language skills and/or a low IQ. Therefore, an adapted version of the ETS course might provide more effective treatment for these prisoners.
- Audit reports of video monitoring may not be achieving the desired aims of ensuring programme integrity and quality because of the strong negative feelings they can evoke among programme tutors.
- The inclusion of sex offenders in tutor groups alongside other prisoners was considered to have an inhibiting effect on the other group members. It may be appropriate for sex offenders to complete ETS in groups together.
- A number of prisoners expressed a need for access to programmes at an earlier stage in their prison sentence; this may have implications for the efficacy of the present system of access by parole date order.
- Prisoner interviewees reported a need for ongoing support in order to help them to apply newly acquired thinking skills while in custody and later when released. The provision of cognitive skills booster sessions in prison and in the community would help to consolidate learning and support the maintenance of improved behaviours.
- Cognitive-behavioural approaches alone will not prevent reoffending. As evidence from interviews with reconvicted graduates and desisting graduates has indicated, resettlement issues (accommodation, work, training and help with addictions) play an important part in determining the likelihood of re-offending. The effectiveness of cognitive skills training will be enhanced if it forms part of a structured resettlement plan.
- The context in which programmes are delivered can influence treatment effectiveness. Institutional cultures within prisons can sometimes be unsupportive of interventions such as cognitive skills training. Local institutions can develop strategies to promote acceptance of and support for therapeutic and rehabilitative interventions. For example, one prison in the study ran a staff awareness course as part of the induction programme for new staff and was also piloting a pro-social skills course for prison staff.

1. Introduction

Background

Recent years have witnessed a rapid expansion in the provision of treatment programmes designed to rehabilitate offenders both in community and custodial settings. The pessimism generated by the 'nothing works' doctrine about rehabilitation, which might have still been influencing the seeds of renewed optimism in the 1990s, has been replaced by a growing 'cautious optimism' that some types of intervention can have a positive impact on reducing offending behaviour (Vennard *et al.*, 1997: 1). Since the mid-1990s, there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of prisoners undertaking offending behaviour programmes. In a twelve-month period spanning 1996-1997, just over 1,300 prisoners completed an accredited offending behaviour programme; the comparable figure for 2002-2003 was 7,303 prisoners. The target for 2003-2004 is to have 8,900 prisoners completing offending behaviour courses in over 100 establishments in England and Wales (HM Prison Service, 2003: 35). These figures do not include prisoners undertaking specialist drug rehabilitation courses or sex offender treatment programmes.

Research evidence suggests that the more successful offending behaviour programmes are those that feature a cognitive-behavioural approach and focus on cognitive skills training (McGuire, 1995). Within the prison context, the two most widely adopted programmes are Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) (Ross, *et al.*, 1988) and Enhanced Thinking Skills (ETS) (Clark, 2000). One of these programmes is running in around three-quarters of all the prison establishments in England and Wales. The R&R programme was first introduced into the prison system in 1992. The following year, a modified version of this programme was launched, entitled Thinking Skills. This too underwent some modification and became the ETS programme (Clark, 2000). The original curriculum on which the R&R programme was founded has been updated and revised in recent years (Ross, *et al.*, 2000). Although the changes have focused on programme content and delivery, the underlying principles and conceptual framework have remained the same.

The R&R programme is based on a substantial research literature that indicates that many offenders either lack, or have poorly developed, cognitive skills (Ross and Fabiano, 1985). As a result of these basic cognitive deficits, offenders are seen as acquiring an anti-social lifestyle largely because they are '...unaware of how their thinking is propelling them into difficulties, and ... are unable to extricate themselves since they lack the skills to do so' (Porporino and Fabiano, 2000: 13). Consequently, the programme uses cognitive-behavioural modification techniques to replace well-established, maladaptive patterns of thinking with cognitive skills that promote both appropriate reactions and pro-social behaviour. The idea was to modify impulsive and egocentric ways of thinking by teaching programme participants to reflect, or 'stop and think', before acting. The programme is best described as 'a structured curriculum-based educational model' (Ross, *et al.*, 2000: 10). It is founded on the premise that the application of cognitive skills can be taught through a process of step by step instruction and purposeful reinforcement. Six key areas of social-cognitive functioning are addressed by the programme: self-control and self-management; interpersonal problem-solving and social interaction; rigid/inflexible thinking; social perspective taking; analytical thinking and moral reasoning.

As previously mentioned, the ETS programme was modelled on the R&R programme. Consequently, they have many features in common. For example, they both subscribe to the same 'model of change', in which anti-social behaviour is seen as a product of the lack of those basic cognitive skills that enable the individual to make pro-social behavioural choices (Blud and Travers, 2001). There are also many similarities between R&R and ETS, particularly with respect to treatment targets and programme content, structure and delivery. However, there are also differences between the two programmes. For example, the R&R course comprises 38 sessions, providing 76 hours of treatment contact. In contrast, the ETS programme consists of 20 sessions, giving 40 hours of treatment contact.

In 1996, the Prison Service introduced a system of accreditation for treatment programmes delivered to prisoners. This initiative was extended in 1999, with the setting up of the Joint Prison/Probation Accreditation Panel, later renamed the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel, which effectively introduced a comprehensive and systematic process for the regulation and monitoring of intervention programmes in both prison and community settings. The purpose of the accreditation system is to ensure that individual programmes are designed in line with the principles of evidence-based practice and are consistently delivered to maximise the effect of the treatment. The underlying assumption is that if an accredited programme is delivered as specified, it will lead to a reduction in reconviction rates. In order to achieve and maintain accredited status, a programme must demonstrate that it meets certain assessment criteria (Home Office, 2000). Each site offering accredited cognitive skills training is subject to an annual audit by the Prison Service to ensure that the accreditation criteria are met.

Not only has there been a sustained annual increase in the number of prisoners participating in accredited R&R and ETS programmes over recent years, but additional courses have also been introduced into the Prison Service's repertoire of accredited cognitive skills programmes. Some of these new programmes target specific types of offenders. For example, the Controlling Anger and Learning to Manage programme (CALM) is designed for individuals whose offending behaviour is associated with a failure to deal with their emotions and control their anger. The Cognitive Self-Change programme is targeted at high-risk violent adult offenders, while 'Healthy Relationships' is an accredited programme that focuses on domestic violence.

Some commentators maintain that this widespread adoption of cognitive-behavioural programmes has taken place despite any firm empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of this type of treatment for offenders (Merrington and Stanley, 2000). Clearly, if research is to inform practice in offender rehabilitation, we need to acquire a fuller understanding of the advantages to be gained from using cognitive-behavioural techniques as an intervention strategy. Systematic evaluation studies are needed to identify the components and contexts of effective treatment programmes. Some recent progress has been made in this area, particularly in respect of the R&R and ETS programmes. The following section provides a brief introduction to previous research in this area.

Previous evaluative studies

A number of meta-analytic studies and reviews of offender rehabilitation programmes were conducted throughout the 1980s and 1990s, largely based on work in North America. In general, the results of this work showed that some interventions had an important effect in reducing reoffending rates (Andrews, *et al.*, 1990; Lipsey, 1992; Losel, 1995). Although not all the individual meta-analytic studies reported positive findings (Whitehead and Lab, 1989), it has been estimated that, when taken together, the results from meta-analyses show a net intervention effect of a reduction in recidivism of between ten to twelve percentage points (McGuire and Priestly, 1995; McGuire, 2000).

From the empirical evidence available, it would appear that some rehabilitative intervention programmes are capable of producing significant, although moderate, reductions in reoffending (Vennard, *et al.*, 1997; Hollin, 2001). By and large, programmes that employ cognitive-behavioural methods are considered to produce the most promising results (Robinson and Porporino, 2001). According to an evaluation of the R&R programme in Canada, a cognitive-behavioural approach can have a positive impact on those prisoners who have a cognitive skills deficit and are at a medium-to-high risk of reoffending (Robinson, 1995). As for community-based interventions, research in a British context suggests that cognitive-behavioural work can have a modest impact on reconviction rates. In their evaluation of the STOP initiative (Straight Thinking on Probation), which was modelled on the R&R programme, Raynor and Vanstone (1996) measured treatment efficacy by comparing the predicted and actual reconviction rates of programme participants with those of various groups of sentenced offenders who did not take part in the programme. At the end of a

twelve-month follow-up period a seven-percentage point reduction in reconviction was observed. However, this initial reduction was not sustained over time.

It is only relatively recently that any attempt has been made to undertake a systematic evaluation of the impact of prison-based R&R and ETS programmes in the UK. As regards outcome analysis, Friendship, *et al.*, (2002; 2003a) found, using a retrospective quasi-experimental research design, that when comparing the treatment group with the comparison group, the percentage point reduction in reconviction was 14 per cent in the case of medium-to-low risk offenders and 11 per cent for medium-to-high risk offenders.

This study was based on adult male prisoners who participated in cognitive skills training during the period 1992 to 1996. However, subsequent evaluations based on samples of male offenders completing prison-based cognitive skills programmes between 1996 and 1998 (Falshaw *et al.*, 2003) and 1998 and 2000 (Cann *et al.*, 2003) found no significant differences in reconviction rates between treatment groups and matched comparison groups. Although Cann *et al.*, (2003) reported no difference in reconviction rates between adult men who had started a cognitive skills programme and a matched comparison group, after removing non-completers from the data, a significant treatment effect was observed for adult male completers. Within this group there was a more marked treatment effect for high-risk programme offenders, with a 6.9 percentage point difference in reconviction rates compared to the matched comparison group.

A feature of previous studies of the effectiveness of prison-based offending behaviour programmes is that they have relied largely upon reconviction as the sole measure of treatment outcome. As a result of this narrow focus, information is lacking on precisely what works, how a positive impact is achieved and under what conditions successful outcomes are produced. Some research has focused on the short-term impact of cognitive skills training and how this might be influenced by aspects of programme implementation and delivery. For example, Blud *et al.*, (2003) have reported positive short-term changes in treatment target behaviours and attitudes. These changes were found to be more marked among prisoners who were assessed as being in the 'high-need' treatment category and located in establishments where tutors were delivering programmes more frequently.

Clearly, there is a need for a more detailed understanding of the ingredients of effective treatment programmes. In this context, Friendship *et al.* have suggested the adoption of 'an integrated model of evaluation ... to assess the real impact of treatment' (2003b: 124). One of their key recommendations was that reconviction data should be supplemented with other measures of treatment outcomes. In this vein, they have proposed that short-term outcome measures, such as prisoners' experiences of the treatment process and programme completers' behaviour whilst in prison, should be introduced into evaluation studies to ensure that a broader view of treatment effectiveness is obtained.

A fully comprehensive evaluation requires that attention is given to both outcome and process variables. With regards to the latter, the nature and context in which a programme is delivered can influence treatment quality and/or treatment success. For this reason, consideration needs to be given to the institutional context in which programmes operate. As noted by Friendship *et al.*, 'each prison establishment, whilst working towards the same aim, can promote a different culture which can be either beneficial or detrimental to the treatment process' (2003b: 122). Where an establishment culture fosters or condones institutional resistance to therapeutic interventions this can have a negative impact on treatment efficacy.

It is only relatively recently that evaluative studies have begun to address the short-term impact of prison-based cognitive skills programmes and the particular influence of programme delivery factors in this context (Blud, *et al.*, 2003). Further exploration of contextual issues, such as the relationship between programme tutors and programme participants and the level of institutional support, calls for the use of qualitative methods of investigation. As described below, in the present study of offending behaviour programmes in a prison setting a qualitative evaluation research design was adopted to help improve knowledge of what constitutes effective implementation, impact and outcomes.

Aims of the research

The following two key questions provided the focus for this evaluation of HM Prison Service's accredited cognitive skills programmes:

- What factors contribute to successful and unsuccessful treatment delivery, impact and outcome?
- What are the non-reconviction benefits, if any, for prisoners and prisons arising from the provision of cognitive skills training programmes?

Prior to addressing these two questions it was necessary to determine what constituted successful treatment outcome(s) and non-reconviction benefits? For the purposes of this study, non-reconviction benefits were defined as reported instances, from both prisoners and members of staff, of observed improvements in thinking and behaviour that reflected programme content. As such, non-reconviction benefits were interpreted as examples of successful treatment outcomes at an intermediate level. Thus it was assumed that the factors and mechanisms that affect these short-term, intermediate outcomes were also likely to affect the longer-term outcome of cognitive skills training as measured by reconviction rates.

Methodology

In programme evaluation, quantitatively-oriented experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies help us to ascertain *what* works, but tell us little, if anything, about *how* specific interventions or programmes actually work (Chen and Rossi, 1981). Consequently, these research designs, when used in isolation to measure treatment effect, have limited clinical application. As Friendship *et al.* note, a quasi-experimental methodology, with a narrow focus on reconviction as the sole outcome measure, 'ignores vital differences between individual participants in their response to treatment' (2003a: 119). Thus, it should not be assumed that a particular therapeutic intervention has the same benefit for each individual programme participant. It is necessary to gain an understanding of 'what works for whom in what circumstances'. According to this evaluative strategy, it is not programmes themselves that are seen to 'work', but it is the actions of the stakeholders that make them work. As Pawson and Tilley assert, '...the causal potential of an initiative takes the form of providing reasons and resources to enable programme participants to change' (1997: 215).

Given that the dual purpose of the current research was to develop an understanding of issues around the implementation and delivery of cognitive skills programmes, and to explore the views about treatment benefits and impacts held by prison staff and prisoners who had completed such programmes, a qualitative evaluation research design was adopted. Despite there being no single good practice model for qualitative programme evaluation (Shaw, 1999: 85), there is a long established tradition of the use of qualitative research methods in evaluation contexts (Greene, 1994; Patton, 1987; 1990). Qualitative inquiry, in the form of a naturalistic study of process-outcome relations, brings an important dimension to evaluation research design. The emphasis placed on the importance of interpretation (Denzin, 1989) ensures that a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis has much to offer when it comes to investigating the experiences of programme providers and recipients. These methods also have a key role to play in 'change-process research' (Reid, 1990), where intermediate 'micro-outcomes' can be identified in the examination of the formal and structured elements of programme initiatives.

It was decided by the steering group that in-depth, qualitative interviews would be conducted in six establishments selected from the male prison estate in England and Wales. The intention was not to conduct a comparative evaluative study of the provision of cognitive skills training in each of the six establishments, but to investigate in a broad sense the importance of contextual factors in understanding process-outcome relationships and explore how programme participants interpreted, made sense of and applied the cognitive skills they had been taught.

As described in Table 1.1, the sample contained both local and training prisons. Some prisons provided ETS programmes only, whereas some offered both ETS and R&R programmes. In compiling the sample, consideration was given to the Implementation Quality Rating (IQR) and the Institutional Support Rating (ISR) each prison received in the 2002/2003 annual audit of cognitive skills programmes conducted by the Offending Behaviour Programmes Unit (OBPU). The overall IQR score is an amalgam of the scores awarded for performance in the following four areas: (1) *Treatment Management*: this covers tutor selection, training, assessment and supervision, staff turnover and the procedures for selecting programme participants. (2) *Throughcare*: this examines the continuity of programme delivery with particular reference to the links made with other services and agencies such as the offender's community probation officer. (3) *Quality of Delivery*: this is determined by monitoring dropout rates and video monitoring programme sessions to ensure that cognitive skills training is delivered in accordance with the programme manual. (4) *Institutional Support*: this embraces all operational and programme management aspects.

As illustrated in the table, there was some variation between individual prisons with regards to ISR and IQR scores. The prisons in the sample were chosen to represent establishments from the top end and bottom end of the distribution of rating scores. However, given the nature of the rating scheme used in the annual audit, the range of scores produced was fairly narrow. This may be indicative of the fact that there is indeed little variation between establishments with regards to the quality of the organisation, implementation and delivery of accredited cognitive behaviour programmes. Alternatively, it may be a reflection of the fact that the scoring method is not sufficiently sensitive to reflect the variation in institutional performance across the prison estate.

Table 1.1: Prisons by type of programme and ISR and IQR scores

Prison establishment	Type of programme	Prison category	ISR * 2002-2003	IQR # 2002-2003
1	ETS	B Training	100%	100%
2	ETS	C Training	100%	100%
3	ETS & R&R	B Local	98.61%	100%
4	ETS & R&R	C Training	94.44%	100%
5	ETS	B Local	94.44%	95%
6	ETS & R&R	B Training	93.06%	95%

* Institutional Support Rating # Implementation Quality Rating

As part of the preparatory fieldwork, members of the research team made initial visits to each establishment. In each of the prisons the organisation, administration and delivery of cognitive skills programmes was managed by a tripartite management team, composed of a treatment manager, programme manager and throughcare or resettlement manager. All treatment managers had a background in psychology, were trained programme tutors and actively involved in programme delivery. They had responsibility for recruiting and assessing potential programme participants, monitoring programme integrity and assessment procedures, and providing guidance and support for programme tutors. Programme managers were responsible for ensuring that all the practical arrangements were in place to support the delivery of cognitive skills training. In addition to this they organised staff awareness training, to ensure that all non-programme staff in the establishment were made aware of the nature and content of cognitive behaviour training programmes. Throughcare managers were responsible for liaising with the prisoners' community-based probation officers and encouraging their attendance at post-course review meetings held for prisoners who had completed the programme.

Each establishment had a small team of programme tutors. Tutors were drawn from a variety of professional backgrounds and included psychologists, psychological assistants, prison officers, probation officers and general education tutors. In five out of the six prisons in the sample individual teams of tutors were mixed in this respect. In the remaining establishment

all the tutors were either psychologists or psychological assistants. Where prison officers were trained as tutors they were either employed as full-time, dedicated tutors or undertook tutoring on a part-time basis and continued to maintain responsibility for carrying out certain operational tasks associated with their role as a prison officer.

Interviews were conducted with both members of prison staff and prisoners selected from within the six establishments. In the main, interviewees were drawn from four broad groupings:

1. 'Programme graduates': adult male offenders over the age of 21 years who had recently completed a cognitive skills programme;
2. 'Reconvicted graduates': adult male offenders over the age of 21 years who having completed a cognitive skills programme on a previous sentence had since been reconvicted and returned to prison;
3. Programme staff: principally programme managers, treatment managers, resettlement managers and course tutors (both experienced and recently qualified); and
4. Non-programme staff: members of prison staff with no involvement in the organisation, administration or delivery of cognitive skills training courses. This group included prison officers and civilian tutors.

Additional interviews were also conducted with five men who had been released from prison on licence and were being supervised by the Probation Service. These men were deemed to be 'desisting Programme graduates', on account of having completed a cognitive skills programme, been released from prison and not reconvicted for a further crime. At the time of interview these men had been on licence for five months, six months, seven months, 14 months and 19 months respectively.

Given that a central focus of the research specification was to explore prisoners' views and experiences of the whole treatment process and investigate their perceptions of the benefits arising from cognitive skills training, it was decided to exclude from the sample of interviewees those prisoners who had failed to complete a cognitive skills programme (i.e. programme dropouts). The characteristics of programme dropouts and the nature of the attrition process are worthy of separate investigation.

In general, the interviews with prisoners and programme staff were designed to explore issues around the implementation and impact of cognitive skills training programmes. The interview schedules covered four key areas: views and experiences of the treatment process; issues around offenders' ability and motivation to change; factors perceived to affect treatment success and failure; the type of treatment benefits to be gained from undergoing cognitive skills training. Slightly modified versions of the interview schedule were used for interviewing non-programme staff and reconvicted graduates.

As illustrated in Tables 1.2 and 1.3, a total of 113 qualitative interviews were conducted with prisoners and members of prison staff in July and August 2003. Members of the research team visited each prison prior to the interviews taking place to meet programme staff and make arrangements for identifying suitable interviewees. On average, interviews lasted around forty-five minutes and were audio-tape recorded. The interviews were fully transcribed and entered into a qualitative software package, MAXqda, for the purpose of conducting a thorough, systematic analysis.

Table 1.2: Number of prisoners interviewed at each establishment

Prison establishment	Programme graduates	Reconvicted graduates
1	10	1
2	10	2
3	11	1
4	11	1
5	10	1
6	10	3
Total	62	10*

*One additional interview was conducted at a prison that was not in the original sample.

Table 1.3: Number of prison staff interviewed at each establishment

Prison establishment	Programme staff	Non-programme staff
1	4	0
2	6	1
3	6	1
4	5	2
5	5	2
6	7	2
Totals	33	8

Structure of report

Data addressing the two principal research questions are presented in the following five chapters. Issues relating to programme delivery, impact and outcome are explored in the following four chapters, while the question of non-reconviction benefits arising from cognitive skills programmes is dealt with in Chapter 6. Chapter 2 illustrates the various views of cognitive skills training held by individuals drawn from four broad groups: prison staff responsible for delivering programmes; prisoners who had completed a cognitive-behavioural course; programme completers who had been subsequently reconvicted; desisting Programme graduates who had been released from prison and not been reconvicted. Chapter 3 focuses on the experiences of programme staff with regards to recruitment, training and supervision. Given that the prevailing culture within an establishment can either support or undermine the treatment process, Chapter 4 examines the institutional context within which offending behaviour programmes are delivered. Chapter 5 explores perceptions of motivation from the points of view of both programme providers and programme participants.

2. Perceptions of programmes

This chapter explores the perceptions and experiences of programme participants and programme staff in relation to ETS and R&R programmes. A total of 62 Programme graduates, ten reconvicted graduates and five 'desisting' graduates were interviewed, along with 33 programme staff. Programme staff included programme managers, treatment managers, programme tutors, resettlement managers, a psychological assistant and senior prison psychologists.

Programme graduates' perceptions of the purpose of cognitive skills programmes

There is evidence that the way in which programme participants were informed about the purpose of cognitive skills programmes affected the nature of their motivation to participate. Furthermore, the quality of motivation and level of commitment displayed by programme participants were found to influence group dynamics and programme impact and thus have implications for programme outcomes.

During the process of 'recruitment' to cognitive skills programmes a minority of prisoners were given the strong impression, by prison staff, that participation was mandatory especially in order to secure parole. For example, as part of the interview schedule, a Programme graduate was asked if he was given any information about ETS at the recruitment stage to the programme. He replied *"Not that I remember, no. I didn't feel I had a choice, they stipulated that I had to do ETS as part of parole; without doing it I wouldn't get parole, so in a sense I was made to do it"* (Programme graduate: 219).

As discussed in Chapter 5, motivation is a complex factor. A 'stick and carrot' approach to programme participation could encourage more instrumental motivations in prisoners that may not translate into lasting change in thinking patterns and offending behaviours.

The majority of Programme graduates had reported being given some basic information about the purpose of cognitive skills programmes. One Programme graduate had discussed the R&R programme with a prisoner officer prior to participation and this interviewee commented that he had been told:

...Not a great deal, but he did try to come over as being positive. What I did find from other officers was that in order to benefit from the R&R and ETS your social skills should be quite basic really, so if you are quite limited in social skills or problem-solving skills the R&R or the ETS will be very useful for you... (Programme graduate: 412).

Another interviewee had discussed participating in a programme with a programme tutor and he had been informed that the purpose of the course was:

...to give people tools to deal with everyday life, problem solving, social skills, encouraging people to see the whole picture, rather than a blinkered view... (Programme graduate: 412).

However, for some programme participants, other prisoners were the main or only source of information about the courses. One Programme graduate recounted how he first heard about the purpose of an ETS course as follows:

...I got told from the lads that have already been on the course that it was just a way of synchronising your thinking, advance your thinking, sort of thing, and use it more constructively... (Programme graduate: 14).

While there were numerous examples of this kind of factual information being passed on by former programme participants, interviewees also referred to the negative comments about cognitive skills programmes they sometimes encountered from inmates who had *not* participated in a course. As one interviewee commented:

...Well I will be honest, there was so many people slagging it off, saying oh, you shouldn't do that it's a load of rubbish, but then you realise why they are slagging it off – because they haven't done it themselves...the majority of people, I think, that have done it, have got something out of it ... (Programme graduate: 619).

In general, it is interesting to note that in referring to the purpose of cognitive skills programmes, very few interviewees (either programme participants or programme staff) emphasised the link between the aims of the courses and the ultimate objective of desistance from offending. For many the programmes were seen as providing the skills necessary for tackling a whole range of personal issues and social circumstances, but at the same time they were not viewed as offering a singular, universal solution. For example, one reconvicted graduate when asked why ETS had failed to stop him reoffending replied: *"Well, you see it wasn't ETS... see people have to understand that groups are stepping stones, I don't believe that any one group, is going to be the remedy to any one prisoner's ills"* (Reconvicted graduate: 64).

This reconvicted Programme graduate drew attention to the fact that prisoners often suffered multiple problems, particularly where offending behaviour was drugs-related. He argued that ETS should not be seen as the solution to all problems but rather as a foundation course that underpins a number of specific approaches to addressing a variety of offending behaviours.

Programme staff perceptions of the purpose of cognitive skills programmes

From the 'What Works' literature (McGuire, 1995) it is known that knowledgeable and skilled programme staff constitute a key element in the successful delivery and impact of cognitive skills programmes. To illustrate this point, McGuire argues that "practitioners must have a sound theoretical and intellectual understanding of the basis for the programmes that are being used" (1995:232). In the light of this, it was important that the current study explored what programme staff perceived as the objectives of ETS and R&R programmes and examined their understanding of how these programmes worked. Interviews with programme staff were therefore designed to discover their perceptions of the objectives of cognitive skills programmes and the theory and ethos that underpins the content of programmes. Responses to these questions fell into three broad categories according to levels and quality of description.

The first category of responses included programme staff who perceived the programmes as a means of improving the general life skills and social skills of prisoners. The prevention of further offending was not mentioned as a primary programme objective. As an illustration of the first grouping, a recently trained and inexperienced programme tutor explained what she thought were the aims and objectives of ETS as follows: *"To try and teach grown men stuff that they had perhaps not picked up when they were younger, we are just teaching general social and life skills"* (A new tutor: 214).

In the second category of responses programme staff talked about the link between defective thinking skills and criminal behaviour but were somewhat sceptical about the feasibility of Programme graduates applying enhanced thinking skills in their lives outside prison. There was very little information volunteered about the theoretical underpinnings of the programmes. For an illustration of responses in this second category, an experienced programme tutor stated how she thought cognitive skills programmes addressed offending behaviour by explaining *"I would say it's more the thinking behind doing things, to teach them that there is thinking behind every action and to take a step back from the situation before reacting impulsively, but over and beyond that I don't really know"* (Experienced tutor: 13).

The final category of responses included programme staff who had a clear understanding of the objectives of programmes and how cognitive skills programmes are intended to work. Their responses demonstrated some knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of programmes. These interviewees also talked about 'non-reconviction benefits' for prisoners and prisons. The following comment from an experienced tutor is illustrative of this third category of responses.

...I think they are trying to get group members to understand their own thinking patterns more so that they are aware of where their thinking comes from, so they learn that they can actually change...then through the aims of the course they can address their offending behaviour indirectly by getting them to consider consequences more, by getting them to develop a range of alternatives so they don't follow the same patterns...to develop a range of skills so that they interact with others more pro-socially so that they can solve their problems in a more effective way...(Experienced tutor: 25)

From the responses illustrated above and the feedback about the training programme staff received, there is scope for teaching the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of cognitive skills programmes more effectively.

Perceived strengths and limitations of programmes

From interviews with programme participants and programme staff a number of programme strengths and limitations were identified in relation to issues of delivery, content, impact and outcomes.

Programme strengths

As regards programme delivery, interviews with Programme graduates revealed that tutors were generally held in high regard and described as being honest, sincere, patient, skilled, helpful and able to respond to different learning styles. Praise for tutors was unequivocal, with very little distinction being made between tutors from different professional backgrounds. The occupational background of a tutor (psychologist, prison officer, probation officer etc.) was seen as being irrelevant when it came to determining what made a good tutor. Prisoners insisted that personal qualities and individual characteristics were more important than professional background in this respect. The qualities most cited in a good tutor were: confidence, skill in group work/group dynamics, patience, integrity, a caring attitude and a sense of humour. One Programme graduate described the qualities of a good tutor and talked about the tutors on his programme in the following way:

...Being able to deliver the programme itself and listen and talk to you and if you had got problems sit and talk to you, yes, it's the way they deliver it, especially (names of tutors) they could pull a situation on board and talk you through it, and they would always talk calmly, never rush things and if you ask a question they would answer and yes, they were perfect... (Programme graduate: 30).

Prisoner interviewees also reported appreciation at being treated with respect and as an equal by tutors and programme staff. The reciprocal use of first names when addressing one another within the context of the classroom was a novel and important experience for many programme participants. It fostered an atmosphere conducive to learning and created an informal environment in which group work was undertaken.

In relation to the experiences of programme tutors, evidence from the data suggested that tutors derived a great deal of job satisfaction from their role. They reported a sense of achievement in enabling participants to learn new skills and to further develop themselves through participation in cognitive skills programmes. To illustrate some of these points a programme tutor talked about the way in which she remained confident about the

effectiveness of cognitive skills programmes, despite some of the negative experiences she encountered on a daily basis. She said:

...Well I think for me, my belief is when I see positive results in individuals in the group that is the only way you can be positive about the programme really, because you see it emerge as the sessions go on. You see someone learning skills and become better at using certain skills and recognising different things in themselves and learning things about themselves...I mean statistics are OK to relay to other people...but it's definitely just seeing it in the individual...(Experienced tutor: 613).

This excerpt was representative of how most programme staff viewed the usefulness of cognitive skills programmes.

When interviewees were asked about the kind of prisoner who might benefit the most from programme participation, an experienced tutor described a type of prisoner who had typically underachieved in the statutory education system as follows:

...I feel that it helps reasonably bright people who haven't, for whatever reason, got on with school and suddenly find themselves being able to understand something about themselves and about the way that their mind works...they are suddenly learning stuff and get very excited about the fact that it is not too difficult for them...they are getting positive feedback from people in the prison, which is important...and finding out that they are quite bright...they are sort of fired up and see a better future for themselves... (Ref: Experienced tutor: 516)

This excerpt illustrates how participation in a cognitive skills programme can have a positive impact on the self-esteem of prisoners. Increasing levels of self-esteem in programme participants has been found to be associated with reduced reconviction rates and less severe further offences (Robinson *et al*, 1998; Annis and Chan, 1983).

Another programme tutor felt that the type of prisoner who benefited the most from programme participation was one who had underachieved in the statutory education system. She explained *"I have seen the benefit in those people who have not done particularly well at school and they have come and learnt new skills and they have actually taken it on board..."* (Programme tutor: 613). However, she continued by adding:

...and those who have got into drugs a lot, I have seen quite positive responses coming from those kinds of people who have had problems with drugs, because they have never been able to see the impact it has had on other people before...(Programme tutor: 613).

To endorse this comment, evidence from the interview data suggests that some prisoners who had committed drugs related crimes showed short-term benefits from programme participation.

An ex-prisoner officer tutor felt that prisoners who were impulsive benefited the most from programmes and she commented *"it is the impulsive prisoners...the biggest change you see in people is with that type of prisoner, I'm not saying it works for all of them, but you can see a change"* (A senior prison officer: 518).

However, the same interviewee added *"everyone benefits from the course...I think different people benefit in different areas"* (Senior prison officer: 518). Another interviewee, the head of a prison psychology department, made a similar point:

...I seldom meet an inmate that hasn't got something from the programmes, they [prisoners] talk about widening their perspective, they talk about giving them options, giving them skills, helping them not to think in such black and white ways, showing

them the difference between facts and opinions and to consider all factors... (Head of psychology department: 617).

These three comments are representative of the different kinds of responses from programme staff about their perceptions of prisoners who were seen to benefit from programme participation. However, the majority of programme staff responded by saying that they felt nearly everyone benefited in some way.

Delivery of programmes through group work was a topic that elicited a range of responses from Programme graduates. The majority of prisoner interviewees found working in a group useful and enjoyable. To illustrate a positive experience of group work a Programme graduate narrated his experience as follows:

...the lads were always encouraging of each other, you wouldn't put anyone down, you know – even on breaks and that... you can tell a group is actually interested in doing well when they are coming out on a smoke break or a coffee break and they are still talking about the subject that's been discussed...that was a regular thing with our group, you know, you would have a laugh and a joke...you would come out and you would want a light for me cigarette and you would say "right I am going to use me negotiating skills..." (Programme graduate: 14).

Another Programme graduate described how aspects of delivery by group work, through role plays and games, made a good contrast to sitting and listening, he commented "...at the end of the day the group work gave you something to do, you were really participating after sitting there for an hour listening to repeat after repeat after repeat, while my attention faded away..."(Programme graduate: 17). This endorses the finding from the 'What Works' literature (McGuire, 1995) that active and participatory methods of treatment delivery are more effective with prisoners than more passive approaches to treatment.

Being able to listen to other people's views was also cited by Programme graduates as a positive aspect of group work as one Programme graduate explained:

I mean I was able to listen to other people and get their points of view, so that's probably the only thing that I really got from it, just sitting down there and listening to other people, how they interpreted the situation, probably different from what I could see, so it was just that (Programme graduate: 112).

A number of interviewees reported that hearing differing viewpoints was quite a revelation to them and reported that this had helped them to reappraise their own beliefs and to understand that other people might see things differently.

With regard to programme content, the majority of programme participants thought that at least some aspects were interesting and useful. Parts of the programme most frequently mentioned and remembered in positive terms were 'stop and think', problem-solving, social skills and perspective taking. To illustrate some of these points a Programme graduate explained:

Well, apart from, you know, stop and think it's looking from other people's point of views, do you know what I mean? I thought that was good as well. Not speaking for myself, but criminals don't look from other peoples' point of view, it's a self-gratification thing...if you felt for the people you rob, you wouldn't have done it in the first place, so it's self gratification (Programme graduate: 116).

When interviewees were asked about course content they invariably referred to the impact particular aspects of the course had made on them. For example, when one interviewee was asked what part of the course he found the most useful he replied:

...Stop and think – to stop me being impulsive and to think about the consequences and sequels of any action you do. There are some actions that you do that are not reversible. It is too late when you have done them – the more serious actions; to be

aware that, you know, you have got to be able to listen to somebody and see their point of view – that is one thing that... if you want me to summarise it, the course has changed me a lot and has given me a lot of different beliefs...(Programme graduate: 38).

Another Programme graduate described how the programme had made an impact on his aggressive behaviour by helping him to identify alternative strategies for dealing with problems. As he explained:

...Well I would personally say that I had tunnel vision; I saw one track and my own personal beliefs, what I said was gospel, sort of thing, no matter what everybody else said, I wasn't listening to them, my way is the right way, even though it was the wrong way...getting new perspectives on situations gave you a number of alternatives which opened a whole new variety of doors to deal with that situation...(Programme graduate: 49).

From these extracts it could be argued that being exposed to the views of others, in a controlled but relaxed environment, is an important element that underpins the successful impact of programme content.

An experienced programme tutor reported on how he felt the content of programmes impacted on participants as follows:

...I think the 'I' language and the assertiveness in practice and making them aware of how their beliefs affect their behaviour and how their behaviour affects the way people treat them. That has a big impact... (Experienced tutor: 25).

Programme staff also made observations about how the impact of programme participation had translated into positive changes for prisoners. To illustrate these observations an experienced programme tutor talked about the changes that he had noticed in programme participants: *"we can see how someone becomes more confident, interacting better with other members of staff and they have actually said this. The guy I talked about earlier, you could see a significant change as the five weeks went on"* (Experienced tutor: 25). This particular excerpt illustrates some of the short-term benefits and outcomes that can be gained through prisoners participating in cognitive skills programmes. (The issue of programme impact is returned to later in Chapter 6 when discussing perceived non-reconviction benefits.)

Programme limitations

In terms of programme delivery, a minority of programme participants reported that they would have preferred a one-to-one delivery or some one-to-one support outside of the programme. This was particularly expressed by prisoners with literacy problems; those for whom English was not the first language and those who found role-play difficult and stressful. Furthermore, group work had not been a happy experience for some interviewees, mainly because of the disruptive behaviour of other group members. Some interviewees also reported that including prisoners with sex offences in a group did not work well because it inhibited group discussion. Some participants did not feel comfortable about discussing family issues, particularly involving children, in a group setting that included sex offenders.

Some programme staff observed that the way programmes were 'rolled out' could have a negative impact on programme effectiveness. A minority of programme staff felt that the delivery of more than three sessions in a week to one group could interfere with learning. An experienced ex-tutor explained how too much time in the classroom could be counter productive. She said:

...I think ideally three sessions a week would be good for them...we are asking them to go away and do assignments and sometimes those assignments involved sort of practising social skills and if they had a session say Monday morning and they had to

do their homework by Monday night, they may not have been out of their cell in that time and therefore not had the opportunity to practice... so I think four sessions a week was probably too heavy going. If you did Monday, Wednesday and Friday then they've got an extra day to do their assignments and also to practise whatever it is they've done in the session that day... (Senior prison officer: 518).

This ex-tutor stressed the importance of having the opportunity of putting skills into practice so that new ways of behaving could be rehearsed until learnt, thus increasing the likelihood that these newly acquired skills would be transferred successfully to life outside prison.

Other critical perceptions about how programmes were delivered centred upon the rigidity of programme content and delivery. A number of programme staff felt that delivery of programmes through strict adherence to manuals, made the content of programmes inflexible, out of touch with the experiences of participants, and at times, patronising. To illustrate one of these points a treatment manager commented:

...it's good what they've been taught but I think how they're being taught could maybe change. I find sometimes it can be quite patronising, talking to inmates as if they can't solve problems...one of the things is not to install sort of middle class values on people but the way it's taught is almost saying OK well if you have a problem you go up to someone and use this assertiveness script, but people don't talk like that, you know we're dealing with people whose backgrounds – they wouldn't even know how to start to talk like the way you try and get them to talk, so what we're teaching them is good, but how we're teaching them I think could be changed...(Treatment manager: 13).

This illustrates a perception of a misfit between the way programmes were delivered and the reality of life for a lot of prisoners. Another interviewee, an experienced tutor, also felt that the content of programmes could be patronising:

...When I'm tutoring it feels quite patronising and a lot of the examples that we have to use during the course are not things that they can relate to at all, you know we ask them daft questions...they just can't relate to them and because they can't, they can't apply the skills to their lives...I think they find it really difficult to take away what we're trying to teach them... (Experienced tutor: 13).

The majority of programme tutors and treatment managers recognised the importance of programme integrity but also felt that a little more flexibility in the delivery of programmes could allow for a better match between the needs of programme participants and the contents of the programmes. As one programme tutor said “you are tied to actually having to use a lot of this material as standard – maybe there should be more sort of leeway” (Programme tutor: 36).

A rigid ‘one size fits all’ approach to programme delivery was considered by programme staff to be unresponsive to the needs of prisoners with literacy problems, low IQ, the very bright or those for whom English was not their first language. To illustrate one of these points a resettlement manager talked about the feedback he received from Programme graduates about ETS and R&R programmes. He explained:

...I mean you have got ten people in a group of varying abilities, um, a lot of the feedback I get at reviews is, it's too quick, it's bang, bang, bang, we are going onto the next thing, there is no time in between to recap or to review and I think the slower ones struggle with the pace of it... I've never done R&R but I've been told the brighter people – they were getting bored with it because there was a lot of repetition...there is insufficient time now [on ETS] for people to really retain and practise what they have learned and it comes up time and time again in review... (Resettlement manager: 313).

A number of programme staff interviewees were of the opinion that in order to cater for the needs of prisoners with literacy problems or with lower IQ levels, there should be an adapted version of ETS. As one experienced ex-tutor explained:

...they do something in SOTP – the adaptive programme for people that have sort of like low/medium levels of IQ, whatever it is, and I definitely think they need to do something like this for ETS. I mean we've excluded, we've not given people the opportunity to do ETS because they can't read or write and some of the skills [ETS] can be taught in other ways which are a bit more inventive...(Senior prison officer: 518).

Furthermore, programme staff reported that participants, for whom English was not the first language, also had difficulties with the course. Programme tutors found it difficult to assess the progress of these prisoners. According to one prison officer tutor:

...people whose English isn't particularly good struggle with the course, just for the assignments and it's difficult to assess their level of understanding because we're asking them to give it to us in a written format, so they may have a good understanding but putting it down on paper, they just can't do...(Programme tutor: 518).

Another issue that programme staff and graduates perceived as an important programme limitation was the way in which participants gained access to programmes by parole date order and received one intensive programme dose before being released. The majority of programme staff and programme participants would have preferred prisoners to have had access to cognitive skills training at an earlier stage in their sentence; this was considered particularly pertinent for men serving long prison sentences. A commonly expressed view was that prisoners would benefit from cognitive skills programmes early on in a prison sentence, as this would give them an opportunity to practise newly acquired skills whilst in custody. Furthermore, it was felt that early cognitive training would help prisoners to work through their sentence plans and ensure that they were suitably prepared to take advantage of other specialist courses. A number of prisoners and programme staff also suggested that booster or refresher sessions in cognitive skills training should be run for prisoners shortly before their release.

The perspectives of reconvicted graduates

Interviews were conducted with ten reconvicted Programme graduates in order to explore their experiences of programme participation and to try and establish why they had reoffended after being released from prison. Although it is not possible to draw firm inferences about programme failure on the basis of such a small number of cases, two main themes emerged from the interviews.

First, a couple of reconvicted graduates claimed that they had encountered some difficulties in following the cognitive skills courses they had initially joined. For example, one interviewee felt that he had not completely understood the R&R course he had taken during his previous custodial sentence because English was not his first language. However, his English had since improved and with the help of some one-to-one tuition he had recently successfully completed an ETS programme. One or two interviewees also expressed the view that they had not really been ready for cognitive skills training and had not taken it seriously.

Second, it was clear from the accounts given by a number of interviewees that they had found themselves in particularly difficult circumstances when released from prison. As one reconvicted Programme graduate commented:

...Unfortunately, circumstances and situations upon release, where I had no accommodation, nowhere to live, um, I was then in a position where the only place that was available for me to stay was round a friends, who was a drug addict, so I had

come out of prison after a drug offence, straight back into accommodation where the other two people who were staying there were heroin users...(Reconvicted programme graduate: 620).

At the time of interview this particular prisoner was planning more constructively and proactively for his release this time around and had applied for a place in a probation hostel in another area. He commented that he was now using his problem-solving skills to plan for his release, so as to avoid making the same mistake again.

The perspectives of 'desisting' Programme graduates

A total of five Programme graduates were interviewed about their experiences since being released from prison on licence, under the supervision of the Probation Service.

The interviews explored the extent to which they felt they had made use of the cognitive skills training they had received in prison. As resettlement problems and addiction relapse (mainly substance misuse) had been given as reasons for programme failure by reconvicted Programme graduates, particular attention was paid to the individual resettlement circumstances and experiences of the released graduates to enable comparisons to be made between the two groups. When evaluating the responses of the desisting Programme graduates it needs to be borne in mind that they had only been out of prison for a relatively short period of time, ranging for five months to nineteen months.

In contrast with the reconvicted graduates, all of the desisting graduates had secured accommodation, were in employment or undergoing training and reported having supportive relationships with significant others such as family members, partners, friends and probation officers. Where applicable, some interviewees had also distanced themselves from previous criminal environments and associates. In contrast with the reconvicted graduate subsample, the desisting group seemed to be dealing with addictive behaviours more proactively and effectively. Two of the interviewees had addiction problems and were attending voluntary support groups. One was receiving support from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and one was attending sessions run by Gamblers Anonymous. The interviewee with an alcohol problem had already attended AA for six years in prison, completed a prison-based accredited drugs awareness course and undergone counselling for two years. On release from prison he also attended a substance misuse rehabilitation centre for six months. Another interviewee, a sex offender, also seemed to be adopting a realistic approach to his risk factors. This interviewee had returned to the neighbourhood where he had committed his crimes. However, although he had suffered some verbal and physical abuse from people who were aware of his crime, he felt being known as a sex offender had helped to prevent him from relapsing.

All five interviewees claimed that they had used improved thinking skills in their everyday lives since leaving prison. The examples they gave covered a wide range of activities and behaviours and showed improvements in the following areas: the application of basic social skills; thinking ahead and considering the consequences; setting goals and personal targets; and controlling impulsive behaviour and emotional responses. As one interviewee explained:

...Last week I had a £10 note in my pocket and found myself thinking 'shall I buy a bottle of vodka or shall I keep this money in case I need it for petrol, or whatever' and I think I do constantly compare who I am now with what I was before and it came to my conscious mind that oh! I have learnt to think of the future and to think of the consequences. The kind of man I was before would have got me into trouble...I would have just wasted it... (Desisting graduate: 4).

All of the interviewees in the desisting group seemed to be living structured lives and were able to set realistic personal goals for themselves. This was described by one interviewee as follows:

...I have got my routines now because before, I don't think my life was structured...I write things down a lot now and I give myself schedules and I give myself goals and I done that goal, I tick it off and I go for another goal...(Desisting graduate: 2).

Whilst discussing the importance of creating a structured life, another interviewee reflected on how he was aware of the need to maintain this on a daily basis.

...I still have to maintain it daily – it is ongoing, I haven't forgotten this time where I have come from, before, after I come out a couple of months, I had forgotten all about prison – I don't forget that today, I remember where I have come from because I really don't want to go back there, which gives me the incentive to move on and keep working on myself... (Desisting graduate: 5).

The fear of going back to prison was articulated as a strong motivating factor for 'going straight' amongst this group of interviewees. This was not only because of the deprivations associated with imprisonment but also stemmed from a realisation that they now had too much to lose if they reoffended. As noted above, these men had established important anchor points in terms of jobs and stable personal relationships. They had an investment in the community and expressed hope for the future; however, they had all arrived at this point in their own time, some quite quickly and others after many years of 'failures' and relapses.

While the possibility of future incarceration served as a strong deterrent to engaging in criminal activity, interviewees were adamant that any rehabilitative measure would only work if individual offenders had reached a stage where they wanted to change. One desisting graduate, who had reoffended after completing his first cognitive skills programme, explained why his initial participation had not prevented him from committing further crimes by commenting that:

... (I've) been in and out of prison quite a few times and I'm a recovering alcoholic...I was in denial for a long time with my alcoholism and when I went in this time, I wanted to change, you have got to want to change... (Desisting graduate: 5).

Another interviewee, accounted for why he had decided to take a thinking skills course in prison by stating, *"I knew then that I wanted to change and I wanted to change for myself"* (Desisting graduate: 3). The existence of a strong motivation to change was apparent in all five interviews with desisting graduates. Links between the typology of accounts of motivation, the cycle of change model (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1982) and measuring programme efficacy in terms of non-reconviction are explored in Chapter 5.

3. Programme staff: recruitment, training and support

Recruitment and selection of programme tutors

The recruitment procedures for programme tutors are organised in four stages. Stage one includes the completion of an application form and an informal interview with a treatment manager. Stage two comprises the completion of a semi-structured interview with a treatment manager to evaluate the candidate's level of cognitive ability. Stage three is an assessment day comprising a written exercise, a psychometric test, a presentation by the candidate to the tripartite team followed by questions and feedback from a treatment manager and finally an interview with the tripartite team. The fourth stage is a final assessment by the tripartite team based on the candidate's scores on each of the core competencies for the post and notes from the application form, informal interview and semi-structured interview. Successful candidates are put forward for the Cognitive Skills Assessment Centre and undergo a further appraisal during a three-day residential assessment course.

A multidisciplinary approach to the delivery of cognitive skills programmes necessitates recruitment from three main occupational groups: prison staff (disciplinary and non-disciplinary), probation staff and psychology staff. However, recruitment is not exclusive to these groups and anyone can apply to be a tutor as long as they meet some fairly basic educational criteria for the post.

From interviews with programme staff a number of key themes emerged around the issue of recruitment of tutors:

- Both prison officer tutors and programme managers thought selection processes for tutors favoured applicants from a psychology or human sciences background who were more familiar with the use of psychometric tests and psychologically-based conceptual frameworks.
- Some prison establishments required tutors to deliver the Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP) as well as cognitive skills training. As the nature of sexual offences can be distressing, not all potential tutors are willing to deliver SOTP. Thus the view was expressed that this requirement effectively deterred applications from would-be tutors who did not feel comfortable about working in this area of offending behaviour.
- The three-day assessment course was perceived by programme managers and tutors to be wasteful in the way in which it failed tutor applicants. It was felt that failed and borderline applicants were not always fully informed about their strengths and weaknesses or encouraged to re-apply by being advised as to how they might develop their skills. The staff development programme was suggested as a forum where this type of encouragement could take place.
- There was some variation in the ways in which individual establishments prepared tutor applicants for the selection process. Some institutions provided applicants with more background knowledge about cognitive skills training than others. As an addition to staff awareness courses, one prison offered mini-awareness training courses for prospective tutors.

Prisoner officer tutors and perceptions of selection procedures

Programme tutors from a prison officer background were considered to be an important component of a multidisciplinary approach to delivering cognitive skills training. Prison officer tutors are in a position to act as role models for prisoners through exercising effective cognitive skills and pro-social behaviour in their interactions with inmates outside the

'classroom'. In having closer contact with prisoners, prison officer tutors can also endorse and support prisoners in using cognitive skills and thereby strengthen the learning process. An experienced tutor summarised the impact that prison officer tutors were considered to have on programme participants as follows:

...we have time to talk to them and we are on first name terms so that barrier has gone...we are not prison officers we are a team... and trust is built up...they then see another side to the prison officer...I know as well that if you are exposed to anything, if somebody is walking the walk and talking the talk, you can respect that person, then you're more likely to follow them... (Experienced tutor: 68).

While the importance of engaging prison officers as tutors was clearly recognised, evidence suggests that there were difficulties encountered in recruiting from this group. The main reasons were as follows:

- Shortages of prison officers in some establishments, together with shift patterns of working, made it difficult for prison officers to be released from operational duties to undertake programme tutoring.
- Prison officer applicants thought they were disadvantaged in the selection process because they were perceived to be unfamiliar with psychological terminology, concepts, theories and assessment tools.
- Some programme managers felt that when a prison officer failed in his or her application to become a tutor this served to discourage other prison officers from applying.
- The existence of occupational cultures and professional rivalries was seen by some interviewees as deterring applications from prison officers to become tutors.
- The degree to which non-programme staff members were knowledgeable and supportive of treatment interventions was thought to affect prison officers' perceptions of the nature and value of tutoring and consequently influence the desirability of becoming a tutor.

Some of the difficulties experienced in recruiting prison officers as tutors were summed up by one programme manager as follows:

...I am not saying that officers are educationally lower than psychologists but sometimes officers tend to struggle with the selection process. If you see a person who was regarded as a really good officer and doesn't get through the selection process then unfortunately that has a knock-on effect with the other members of staff who think 'well if Johnny can't get through what chance have I?' So we have been struggling in the past with officer selection... (Programme manager: 321).

This perception that prison officers were disadvantaged in relation to the selection and training procedures because these were framed within a particular human science knowledge 'discourse' was frequently referred to in interviews. Within a prison community, failing the selection process to become a tutor was seen as being information that was shared with other officers and this was thought to deter some prison officers from applying to be tutors.

Another programme manager felt that the initial prison-based assessment procedures for tutor applicants discouraged some prison officers from applying because they held the view that they were not valued as potential tutors by psychologists. This interviewee stated:

...I think a lot of people, especially a lot of officers, are especially keen to go forward with it [applying to be a tutor] but feel there is a psychology kind of barrier [that implies a bias towards a psychology background] – "I have got psychology sitting in front of me, they are very anti-prison officers, how far is this going to take me?"... (Programme manager: 59).

This comment illustrates the professional barriers and mutual suspicions that can exist between discipline staff and psychologists in some prisons. In such a climate, it is easy to understand why officers may be deterred from applying to be tutors, especially when they feel that the selection procedures favour applicants who have a familiarity with the concepts and theories that underpin certain branches of the human sciences.

The programme manager quoted above claimed that he knew of prison officers who had trained as pre-release tutors and would make excellent cognitive skills tutors, however they had been deterred from applying because they felt that their lack of specialist knowledge would be a disadvantage. As he claimed, "*I know there are very good ones here [pre-release tutors] that I have tried to target numerous times but they are like 'oh psychology again', so it's trying to get rid of that psychology sort of barrier*" (Programme manager: 59)

Within the context of the occupational culture of prison officers there was evidence of a disjunction between the custodial/disciplinary role of the prison officer and the idea of the prison officer as a programme tutor. This is illustrated in the following comment by a treatment manager describing her experience of trying to attract new tutors from among discipline staff and encountering difficulties because of the negative image of tutors held by discipline staff.

...I think it also comes down to the culture in the establishment if it's not particularly pro-programmes...because I think it's people's perceptions – obviously a particular perception that when their colleague comes over here [to tutor] they doss, that's it, they are outside – they are not doing the proper work of unlocking, they are not front line anymore, so they think – you know they come over here and they take it easy, they are back in a group room and it's all very soft... (Treatment manager: 55).

From this and other interviews, three broad conclusions can be drawn. First, there was a widely held view that prison officers engaged in operational tasks were undertaking 'hard' duties, whereas those involved in rehabilitative work had the 'soft' and easy option. Second, these types of misconceptions and stereotyping were more apparent where it was felt that there was a lack of awareness of cognitive skills programmes among uniform staff. Finally, these features were more likely to be characteristically found and amplified in establishments where the prevailing prison culture was less supportive of therapeutic interventions and the ethos of rehabilitation.

Training

Training experiences of programme tutors

In this section the perceptions of all programme staff (programme managers, treatment managers, resettlement managers and tutors) are presented and explored.

All programme tutors are required to attend a two-week residential training course that has to be passed before they are allowed to deliver a programme. When a tutor has delivered two programmes he/she is eligible to be considered for training for accredited tutor status. After accreditation, tutors can complete advanced training courses to develop their skills further.

The majority of tutors interviewed felt that their training had been adequate but made a number of comments and suggestions for improvements:

- The first two-week training course was thought to be too intensive and stressful. Tutors would have preferred this course to have been longer, thus enabling them to prepare for and present sessions from all of the key areas of the programme.
- It was suggested that the theory aspect of the programmes should be tackled separately from the skills aspect of the training – preferably before the two-week training course or at the accreditation training stage.

- The majority of tutors said they would have appreciated help and guidance with the content of note taking after sessions and in report writing for the post-course review.
- It was felt that feedback from trainers during the two-week training course could have been more structured and systematic.
- Some trainees, particularly those from a non-psychology background and without any pre-training preparation, felt overwhelmed and confused by the two-week training course. A lack of familiarity with the concepts and terms used in psychology was a particular cause of concern.
- Programme and treatment managers reported a shortage of training places for tutors and lengthy waits for tutor training.

With regard to the two week training course, one newly qualified tutor commented, "*I thought it was very, very fast paced, it was really - if you can just deal with it...but it showed you how you prepare a session and present it but it didn't actually tell you how it tied in with the rest of the sessions*" (New tutor: 315). This interviewee explained that he was so worried about preparing and presenting his own sessions, that he was not able to relax and make sense of the sessions being presented by other trainees. He finished the training with little knowledge of how the sessions interlinked and built upon one another.

Another recently trained tutor suggested that the two-week course could be usefully extended to three weeks so that everyone has the opportunity to present sessions from all of the key sections of the programme. He explained:

...Perhaps making it three weeks, it is so intense cramming it into two – and perhaps having people doing more than presenting four sessions...definitely making sure that everyone does a social skills session and a moral debate...in hindsight if we had done one of each area you could be confident that you had done it... (Newly qualified tutor: 315).

This interviewee continued by saying that he felt unprepared and very anxious about delivering a moral debate session as he had not had the opportunity to prepare and present this during training.

Training experiences of other programme staff

A resettlement manager reported on her experience of training for cognitive skills programmes on a two day resettlement managers' awareness training. She felt that even with a psychology background and familiarity with cognitive behavioural programmes she was not adequately prepared by the two-day course. She explained:

...I mean, to be quite blunt, I didn't find it sufficient so I spent a lot of energy myself, actually video monitoring the groups, finding out how the course runs, looking at the objectives and what people hope to get out of it – but I mean I have a degree in psychology, so I am familiar with cognitive behavioural work...so I mean I had a broad understanding of what it was about, but yes, the training I think, is insufficient for the role that's provided by the prison and you do actually have to spend a lot of your own energy finding out more about it... (Resettlement manager: 313).

Fortunately, this interviewee was able to find out about the programmes herself. However, in doing so, one could speculate that she was reliant upon the cooperation of other programme staff which may have made extra demands on their valuable time and energy.

Treatment managers reported that due to the infrequency of training courses for their specific role, they were often in post for months before starting a training course. As one new treatment manager explained:

...To be honest I've haven't had any real training in TM [Treatment Management], I think the next training is something like October for me I've been in the role since

May...so I feel I've kind of missed out a bit really and I would have been doing the job for about five or six months by the time I go on the new TM training. I just feel a bit like flapping around really and sometimes I stand there and I think 'oh I don't know the answer to that', whereas I think if there was more support at the beginning that would help...(Treatment manager: 612).

Training courses for treatment managers are provided at six-monthly intervals, so a newly appointed treatment manager could be in post for five months before receiving any training. As treatment managers carry a heavy responsibility with respect to programme quality and effectiveness, it is important that they are offered guidance and support in their roles, especially while they are awaiting access to formal training.

Experiences of supervision and support

The quality and integrity of programmes were audited and maintained through the supervision of programme tutors by treatment managers; feedback from programme participants on course modules and video monitoring of programme sessions also took place. Video monitoring was used at the local level for the supervision of tutors and the Offender Behaviour Programmes Unit regularly selected a random sample of videotapes as part of a systematic audit to assess programme integrity.

The majority of programme staff who were interviewed expressed satisfaction with the level and quality of supervision and support they received at the local level. Informal sources of support were found within the tripartite team at both senior and peer levels. The only criticisms of the supervision provided for tutors by treatment managers was that some treatment managers did not have enough experience of running programmes to be able to help the development of the tutees' practice. At one prison, an acting treatment manager had been appointed who was not a senior psychologist; this was perceived as being professionally inappropriate by the psychology tutors on the team and was a cause of some discontent.

Perceptions of services and support provided by OBPU varied a great deal. Some interviewees reported satisfactory or improved experiences of services and support, whilst others expressed strong negative views. As an organisation OBPU was described by different interviewees as "faceless", "bureaucratic", "chaotic" and "in a constant state of crisis management" and operating in a "Big Brother type fashion, there to scrutinise the hard work in the provinces" (Senior psychologist 15).

The topic of video audit reports from OBPU elicited some strong feelings among programme staff who felt that the monitoring focused upon superficial aspects of programme delivery rather than programme integrity itself. One senior psychologist felt that videos were audited for "surface elements of consistency" rather than for adherence to the rationale and essential *modus operandi* of the programmes. Tutors perceived these audit reports as having a demoralising effect on their practice. Tutors felt that by evaluating more 'superficial' aspects of programme delivery the difficulty and complexity of their work was undervalued. Tutors reported that they would prefer some dialogue with OBPU about the audit reports of videos rather than a *fait accompli* approach. This is illustrated in the following comments by an experienced programme tutor:

...I do feel undervalued by OBPU, it makes me think I am not as valuable to them as I think I am...I have heard other people say 'I don't mind what they [OBPU] have said here [in report] but they have said that! (I didn't turn the flip chart over at the right point) and it really gets my goat -! Or they say the person didn't hand out a 71a or whatever, and I handed it out in the beginning - the actual feedback is wrong, but it's too late, the awful thing about it of course is that you have no chance to discuss it, there is no forum to discuss your feedback... (Experienced tutor 516).

Although the correct source of feedback about tutor practice is via treatment managers, and the purpose of video monitoring is to audit for programme integrity and quality, some tutors perceived the content of audit reports as undermining and frustrating on a personal level. From this evidence it could be concluded that audit reports, in their present format and mode of presentation, are perceived by some tutors as a source of petty criticism of their classroom performance rather than an objective assessment of treatment integrity. Feedback from video monitoring needs to be done sensitively and in a supportive manner in order to achieve the desired aims of ensuring programme integrity and maintaining the standard of programme delivery.

Perceptions of staff morale

Some prisons experienced problems with severe tutor shortages and heavy tutor workloads. The following two excerpts highlight the difficulties some programme staff faced as a direct result of staffing issues and heavy workloads:

...staff leaving the department and a lot of uncertainty really around whether we're going to meet targets or not I think that's the main pressure really, because if we haven't got the staff we can't run the groups and we don't get the targets...(Treatment manager: 612).

...The biggest drawback was time. Sometimes I was starting a course when I was still writing reports or doing case conferences from the previous course and my hours that I accrued, I mean I was always sort of about one hundred toil hours up [time off in lieu] ...(Former programme tutor: 518).

Besides heavy workloads and shortages of tutors, the morale of programme staff was also adversely affected by a perceived lack of support at an institutional level. For example, from an operational perspective, programme staff felt that some prison officers did not appreciate the importance of ensuring that there were no undue delays in unlocking prisoners and escorting them to classrooms. Where prisoners turned up late for a class, or failed to arrive at all, this created problems for tutors trying to deliver a structured session and maintain programme continuity.

Another issue that programme staff raised as affecting staff morale was the unequal pay structures for full-time programme tutors. There was considerable disparity of remuneration between programme tutors according to their professional/occupational backgrounds. A tutor employed as a psychological assistant might be earning around £12,000 per annum whilst working alongside prison officers employed as full-time tutors yet earning twice that salary. The perceived unfairness of the situation was expressed in interviews by comments such as the following:

...you can't even go there in your head because it's not fair at the end of the day, if you are looking at it [tutoring] in monetary terms you wouldn't be doing the job basically because there is such a discrepancy to people doing the same job...(Treatment manager: 55).

...It [unequal pay structures] does cause problems, because considering the responsibilities that we place on tutors, it seems to me to be grossly unfair to pay psychology assistants twelve thousand pound a year and they are doing essentially the same job, often better than prison officers who are on twenty...(Head of psychology department: 617).

For psychological assistant tutors with a psychology degree, heavy workloads had made it difficult for them to study for chartered status and as a consequence some of these tutors had left the service. Non-graduate, psychological assistant tutors had very few opportunities to develop their careers within the prison service and some had left the service for more highly paid work in the probation service. This failure to retain trained tutors was seen as

having negative consequences as far as programme delivery was concerned. As one interviewee observed, *"I think there is the potential to undermine the quality of the delivery of the programme, because we aren't reaping the benefit, the full benefit of the experienced people who are moving on"*(Head of psychology department: 617). Poor retention of prison officer tutors tended to be caused by the promotion of an officer/tutor to a senior prison officer rank, or through difficulties caused by split loyalties between the role of tutor and the operational role of a prison officer.

From the interview data it can be concluded that programme staff felt more positive about their roles where there was a dedicated programme manager and/or a programme manager who was knowledgeable and enthusiastic about cognitive skills programmes. In prisons where programme managers were required to perform other disciplinary and operational duties and/or where they had little previous knowledge or interest in rehabilitation programmes, other programme staff tended to feel less supported and valued. Where this was the case the environment was not conducive to promoting or supporting the effective delivery of cognitive skills programmes.

4. The institutional context of cognitive skills programmes

As cognitive skills programmes do not operate in a vacuum it is important to consider how institutional contexts can impact on the efficacy of programmes. This chapter begins by exploring the perceptions of non-programme staff about the usefulness of programmes: the views of non-programme staff can reflect aspects of the informal institutional culture in which programmes operate. This is followed by an exploration of how the informal institutional culture can impact on the daily operations of programmes and the morale of programme staff. The final topic to be covered in this chapter is an analysis of how institutional support at senior management level can influence the attitudes to cognitive skills training held by prison staff and programme participants.

Perceptions of non-programme staff

Eight interviews were conducted with individual members of staff who were not involved in the administration or delivery of cognitive skills training. This small sample included prison officers of varying grades, workshop trainers and a civilian member of staff in a prisoner management unit. Basically, the findings from these interviews reflect the views expressed by programme staff about institutional culture in relation to rehabilitative programmes and occupational divides and rivalries.

Members of non-programme staff who had regular, sustained contact with prisoners who had participated in cognitive skills programmes claimed to have noticed some positive changes in their behaviour or attitudes. However, the prevailing view was that this participation was not a reflection of a genuine desire to change on the part of the individual concerned but a strategy employed to gain a good parole report. As one senior officer explained:

...there are some people who it [the programme] will work for but for the majority of people who I've met, prisoners who have done the course have said 'yeah, great it's told me loads of things that I already knew' and when you ask them why they did it, it's because they wanted parole...you do occasionally see people who have kept it in their heads and try to use those skills...and they'll use them but only on a short term basis... (Senior prison officer: 63).

Most of the interviewees in this sample did not believe that the programmes would affect the likelihood of further offending. A workshop supervisor said, "I am aware the Home Office's ultimate aim is to stop the reoffending, um, I don't think that's going to work at all because as soon as they leave the prison they go back to their old ways" (Workshop trainer: 69).

Some interviewees also felt that investing more resources in addressing literacy problems and improving employment skills would be more effective in preventing re-offending than any further investment in cognitive skills programmes. To illustrate this point one interviewee said, "Let's see if I can quote properly now, sixty per cent of prisoners received into custody are ineligible for ninety-six per cent of jobs advertised, because of their levels of literacy" (Senior prison officer: 63).

Indeed, some interviewees thought that without occupational skills and access to work, cognitive skills programmes could have the unintended consequence of producing more efficient criminals.

...I would say the majority of people have no belief in them (programmes) at all, they'll talk about it every now and again but one of the things that I say about it is, it's OK putting someone on a programme to make them think better, but if they haven't

got education or any skills they still can't get a job, so if that's the case then it makes them better criminals... (Senior prison officer: 63).

A culture amongst non-programme staff that was indifferent to the idea of rehabilitation was evident in the comments made by some interviewees. One senior prison officer in an establishment with a lower Implementation Quality Rating explained how non-programme staff tended to view rehabilitative programmes as follows:

...From the point of view of the average member of staff at (name of prison) they're not actually interested in it [programmes], if you get put on a training course you have to go, so you go there and you sit through it and then forget about it because a lot of staff are not interested in the in-depth work with offenders. They're interested in coming in, making sure they're all there and going home at the end of the day...(Senior prison officer: 63).

Negative attitudes and pessimistic expectations of cognitive skills training were not restricted to members of staff working in institutions with relatively low IQR scores. These views were expressed, to varying degrees, by all the non-programme staff in the sample.

Evidence from the data suggested that the unsupportive attitudes of some prison staff had a detrimental affect on the general morale of programme staff and the levels of motivation of programme participants. Programme staff were aware of the negative influence that some non-programme staff had on prisoners' perceptions of cognitive skills programmes. As one programme manager explained, programme staff tried to counteract this through the prison staff support programme, "as part of staff support we ask prison officers not to pooh pooh the idea of rehabilitation. We ask them to reinforce what the prisoners are learning through being positive role models" (Programme manager: 321).

The level of support displayed by non-programme staff for cognitive skills programmes seemed to depend largely on their own personal views on crime and punishment. The same programme manager explained how he categorised different types of attitudes to crime, punishment and rehabilitation. He argued that prison officers fell into two main categories as follows:

...There is one who tends to be sort of archaic, they tend to be living in the dark ages where prisoners come into prison, we throw them in a cell and throw away the key. Then the other side, there is the officer who is into resettlement, the one who is willing to go the extra inch, if you know what I mean, and actually try to help these chaps... in my experience of four prisons it tends to fall into those two areas, Mr and Mrs Security and Mr and Mrs Resettlement... (Programme manager: 321).

Some non-programme members of staff were seen as undermining the work of programmes and programme staff by the negative comments they made to prisoners. One treatment manager gave an illustration as follows, "Just things like 'I don't know why you are bothering to do that, it's a waste of time' and this is coming from an officer to an offender" (Treatment manager/programme tutor: 612).

Furthermore, programme staff felt that the dismissive attitudes of some non-programme staff towards cognitive skills programmes also undermined prisoners' motivation to participate in thinking skills training and value what they were taught. An experienced tutor explained his feelings as follows:

... the feedback the cons get, because the staff [prison officers] are unimpressed with the extra work...it is fed back to the cons saying "that R & R is a load of crap" and one negative word from a member of staff can undo all the positive stuff that we do. We could spend weeks on that prisoner and you get an official put down. That member of staff may not realise the damage they have caused... (Experienced tutor: 410).

Not only did programme staff emphasise the need for prison officers to have some knowledge of the programmes through staff awareness and staff support programmes, they also recognised the need for staff to demonstrate and support pro-social behaviour when prisoners were rehearsing their newly acquired skills. One programme tutor felt that her role was made twice as difficult because non-programme staff were unsupportive of programme participants who were trying to behave in a more positive way. As she explained:

...you are trying to teach them new skills of being more pro-social, like... 'assertiveness for work is better than aggressiveness'...but then they (programme participants) will come in again and again saying "well that officer swore at me when I tried to"... "that officer dismissed me" and "that officer walked off" and "that officer was rude and abusive to me"... (Treatment manager/tutor: 55).

The influence exercised by non-programme staff in this respect clearly has implications as far as treatment efficacy is concerned. As described above, the prevalence of negative attitudes towards programmes has the potential to create an atmosphere in which programme staff feel that they are working in conflict with the rest of the prison officer community. This situation is exacerbated when programme staff feel uncertain about the extent to which the institution is committed towards promoting a pro-programme culture.

The institutional context and the operation of programmes

The operational difficulties faced by programme staff in delivering cognitive skills programmes was summarised by one treatment manager as follows:

...morale can be a bit low where tutors are continually up against it...you are continually up against staff not unlocking, or unlocking but in their own time, or the room isn't ready and we have got to set it all up and you're running late because you have been stopped by this member of staff – you know the list is endless and that can affect the morale, even the most dedicated person, would start to think, why am I busting my gut to do this, when no-one else really seems to give a damn... (Treatment manager: 59).

This interviewee continued by explaining how low morale had contributed to staff shortages, so that when a tutor became ill there was no one to provide cover and sessions had to be cancelled.

The cancelling of classes breaks the continuity of a programme, with the result that the learning experience is disrupted and the continued commitment and motivation of programme participants is threatened. As one prisoner commented:

...I was really interested in it (the programme) and all that and then they stopped and they started and they stopped a couple of times, it confused you because once you get what they're saying and all that going and it stops like that and then you would come back and what you already learnt is really gone out of your head...(Programme graduate: 58).

This excerpt illustrates how operational difficulties, caused by poor institutional support, can affect continuity of programmes and the motivation of participants.

The daily operations of cognitive skills programmes in prisons were also reported to be affected by staff shortages, changes in shift patterns and heavy workloads. For example, in one prison the loss of uniform staff to tutoring duties resulted in non-programme staff resenting the additional work they had to do to support the operational aspects of cognitive skills programmes. An experienced tutor explained as follows:

...The way staff view the programme is more negative as people are taken out of the system to do it and they [non-programme staff] are having to do more work and take on more hassle and their image of the programme goes down...(Experienced tutor: 410).

This tutor suggested that these professional resentments were a result of recent alterations in shift patterns. He went on to say that these changes in shift patterns gave programme staff the opportunity to deliver more programmes and be available to programme participants outside the 'classroom'. It would appear that a lack of resources and a shortage of prison officers were responsible for creating some hostility to cognitive skills programmes among non-programme staff.

Perceptions of institutional support from senior management

Some programme staff perceived that institutional commitment to cognitive skills programmes was brought about by a need to reach performance targets rather than a reflection of a belief in rehabilitation. As one experienced tutor stated:

...there are a lot of targets to be met...so I think more people are obliged to support [the programme] because they know it's going to help the whole prison and the cost factor, because we have to deliver so many courses a year that is part of our contract - so I think that they [targets] are quite influential I don't really know if managers and people at the top really believe in it [rehabilitative ethos] believe in the process of it... (Experienced tutor: 13).

This highlights the pressure on prison management to reach the key performance targets for accredited programmes. Without clear evidence of institutional support for the ethos of rehabilitation, an institutional culture of cynicism can be created which, once again, can have a demoralising effect on programme staff.

Where there was evidence of support for cognitive skills programmes by local prison management, interviewees felt that this raised the profile of the programmes, and generated a positive impression throughout the prison establishment. This in turn influenced the degree of support that non-programme staff demonstrated for cognitive skills programmes and increased programme staff morale.

In one prison the governor presented certificates to Programme graduates and an experienced ex-tutor described the effect this had on the morale of programme staff and participants as follows:

...They [the prisoners] really valued that, so I think once that started the support increased... as a member of staff it makes you feel that you are doing something valuable, so he [prisoner] thinks it's valuable as well - my SOs (senior officers) and POs (prison officers) at the time were very like ...'oh, if you need that time take it, do this, do that...', they were very flexible with me... (Senior prison officer: 518).

Thus, just a little demonstrated support for programmes from senior prison management had a beneficial affect on staff morale and a positive impact on the delivery and implementation of programmes.

However, while direct and overt support from the governor was undoubtedly influential, it was acknowledged that it was essential for all levels of senior management to demonstrate their support by maintaining regular contact with programme staff. As one programme manager explained:

...I think the team as a whole that actually deliver it (the programme) get overlooked a bit at times, I mean we tell them we support them, but to my knowledge I don't think

any member of the senior management has ever been up to the R&R rooms upstairs, definitely not in the time that I have been involved in it... (Programme manager: 41).

By and large, the perception held by some members of programme staff was that support for programmes from senior management was more about chasing targets than about really valuing the ethos of cognitive skills programmes and rehabilitation in general.

The role of programme managers and institutional support

As part of the tripartite team, the role of programme manager was central to promoting the operational and cultural support for programmes in prisons. Operational difficulties and poor institutional support were often addressed through the work of the programme manager, normally a senior officer or governor grade who acted as a vital link between programme staff and discipline staff. Where the programme manager occupied a dedicated role, he or she had the time to promote staff awareness throughout the prison and provide the practical support programme staff required. However, for a programme manager to be able to function effectively, adequate support from senior management was essential.

One programme manager explained the importance of improving levels of communication throughout the prison so that staff worked more effectively as a unit:

...If they (staff and management) could be more proactive and responsive to our needs - we are part of this prison whether they like it or not, we don't profess to cure people we are just a little part in the prison services' arsenal, and we try to do our job just as landing staff try to do their job, so if we all understood our places in the prison, within the service and all meshed together that would make my job a whole lot easier... (Programme manager: 321).

This illustrates the need for a more integrated and holistic approach to the way prison staff view the activities of different staff groups within the prison set-up. Our research data suggest that the professional rivalries and suspicions that exist between discipline staff and treatment-oriented programme staff underpin many of the informal institutional problems encountered by programme personnel. Promoting greater understanding of treatment programmes within the prison context, through educative programmes and staff development courses, would probably help to reduce friction between the different groups.

Interviews with programme staff revealed that programme managers often had many other work responsibilities in addition to overseeing the running of cognitive skills programmes. One treatment manager illustrated how time constraints caused the two occupational roles of treatment manager and programme manager to overlap. She explained:

... it's the time they get allocated to do the job, I think its almost like an add-on and to be fair to them they are not always allocated an amount of time where they can actually do the job justice, of course things are not going to get done and because we are in the thick of it, we pick up that slack and start doing programme manager work.. ...and we we're so stressed we didn't have time to do it either... (Treatment manager: 55).

Where there were insufficient resources in terms of time, treatment managers sometimes found themselves called upon to do the work of programme managers. This created some confusion among tutors when it came to seeking advice on particular issues. Tutors often resorted to consulting the treatment manager, who was not always the best-placed person within the institution to resolve the problem. Some interviewees felt that formal lines of communication needed to be clarified. In the words of one treatment manager:

...they (programme staff) will come and unload stuff to us, we are not the best person to tell, in a way it's a waste of time because we can't pass it on, we don't have time to listen to every operational detail, we can't do anything about it, so please go and see

the programme manager - and that's a fine line as a treatment manager, because you don't want to discourage a tutor at all but its directing them to the right people...(Treatment manager: 55).

In prisons where the role of programme manager was not a dedicated one, heavy workloads did not enable the development of more effective staff awareness programmes. Effective staff awareness programmes should positively influence the local institutional culture and encourage prison staff to become programme tutors.

One treatment manager thought that staff awareness programmes needed to be radically improved to ensure that tutor recruitment levels increased amongst prison officers. This interviewee felt that the total responsibility for programme targets had been placed on the shoulders of programme staff. She made the point that it takes the whole prison culture to work together for successful programme delivery. As she explained:

...there is a popular misconception that we run the whole thing and we are responsible for it, it's like recently we are not achieving our targets, we are busting a gut to try and achieve them, but if staff aren't coming forward as tutors, we can't run programmes...if we don't have the facilities, we can't run them and that's stuff outside our hands, we are not the people that just sort it out, it takes the whole culture to get people coming forward (Treatment manager: 55).

Once again, this illustrates how members of programme staff felt generally unsupported by the prison institution, at operational, management and informal cultural levels.

5. Perceptions of motivation

How and why prisoners are motivated to access a cognitive skills programme are key factors that need to be considered when assessing the impact of programme treatment and the effective targeting of prisoners for programme inclusion. Motivation is a complex concept that encapsulates dynamic interactions between social and psychological phenomena. In this study we initially adopted a sociological approach to the topic of motivation by identifying and typifying the ways in which prisoners and prison staff account for motivation and attitudes to programme participation. However, as the analysis of the accounts developed it was interesting to note some overlap between the emergent typology of accounts and psychological theory on motivation, particularly in relation to Prochaska and DiClemente's model of the cycle of change (1982).

During the process of data collection different types of patterns of participant engagement and motivation for inclusion in cognitive skills programmes began to emerge. These patterns were discussed and verified in interviews with both Programme graduates and programme staff. After successive processes of data analysis, theory building and further verification, three main themes in accounts of motivation were identified: self-development; instrumental thinking, and hostile attitudes and behaviours. While in most cases types of accounts were underpinned by only one of these themes, in one type the 'Sceptic,' two themes were present; an initial theme of instrumental thinking was followed by a theme of self-development.

The key explanatory components underpinning these three main themes can be roughly divided into institutional and individual factors as illustrated below:

Institutional factors

These embrace the following:

- the extent to which an institution embraces a rehabilitative culture;
- the way in which prisons represent the purpose of programmes to prisoners; and
- the timing of programme participation in a prisoner's sentence.

Individual factors

These include:

- The effects of programme participation on the individual – through programme content, delivery, ethos, tutors, nature of group and experiences of personal change.
- The personalities, personal biographies, family circumstances and levels of maturity of programme participants.
- Individual progress through the six stages of change outlined in the 'cycle of change' model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982). The stages of change are outlined as follows: *Pre-contemplation*: where a person is not aware of the need for change. If a person at this stage is told they have to participate in treatment they are likely to react defensively. *Contemplation*: characterised by an awareness of problems but ambivalence about the need for change. *Determination*: this is the stage where a person acknowledges the need for change and might actively seek help. *Action*: at this stage a person engages in particular actions that are intended to bring about change. *Maintenance*: the challenge at this stage is to sustain change both in thinking and behaviours. The final stage in the cycle is *relapse*: if relapse occurs an individual might repeat some or all of the stages of change. According to this model, relapses are considered to be normal occurrences and part of the process of trying to change thinking and behaviour. It is not considered unusual for a person to complete the whole cycle of change two or three times before maintenance is sustained.

Accounts of motivation

The 'Hostile Participant': Both programme staff and programme participants provided accounts that described troublesome group members. From these accounts the so-called hostile participant appeared to display 'deviant' motivations in his interaction with the programme by trying to undermine tutors, manipulate group processes and express racial prejudice or homophobic views in order to provoke other group members. Interviewees usually described the troublemaker as a younger group member who displayed a macho masculine identity. Programme staff accounted for these types of group members in objective and non-reactive ways whilst group members typically expressed some moral outrage about the ways in which their attitudes and behaviour tended to spoil things for other group members.

Programme graduates described difficult group members in a variety of ways.

...some of them would try to manipulate and take control...always talking over other people, never giving other people a chance... (Programme graduate: 619).

...there can be some intimidating men, which (sic) are nasty...trying to take over, trying to put everything down...they were just slagging - and they put everything down and everything that (name of tutor) said - try and put her down and you know, knock the course down in anyway they could...(Programme graduate: 65).

...they were coming out with statements which didn't register to a normal person and all negative and some directed at (names of tutors)...a couple of real detrimental things to say and they say that to two young girls [tutors]...I won't say what it was, you feel embarrassed and you feel so embarrassed with two young girls, but obviously they are used to it...(Programme graduate: 62).

Many tutors took an objective and non-judgemental approach to such displays of hostile behaviour and negative attitudes. Only on very rare occasions was it necessary to expel a course participant. Tutors often interpreted disruptive behaviour as a defensive mechanism rather than a deliberate attempt to cause trouble in a group, as illustrated in the following comment from a senior prison officer, who used to be a tutor.

...for one reason or another there's always a couple of people that are hostile and will try to undermine you and they will try to make the tutor look silly or whatever they can do. It's just a way of sort of like, taking the focus off them. I feel...that's it yes, the whole sort of skill of taking the focus off me and putting it on the tutor, making the tutor look silly means that they can't ask me questions...(Senior prison officer: 518).

Hostile behaviour in the classroom may take a variety of forms and have different causes. In some extreme cases it may be a manifestation of a serious clinical condition; a symptom of an underlying psychological disorder. Psychopathy, for example, is a personality disorder characterised by a persistent pattern of aggressive or anti-social behaviour in which the rights of others are violated. On a different level, what are observed as hostile responses or attitudes among programme participants may not be symptomatic of an underlying pathological condition but may be a reflection of the stage a person is at in the cycle of change. For example, according to the cycle of change model, defensiveness can be interpreted as an indication that a participant is at the *pre-contemplation* stage of motivation to change. In this case, they may feel that they have been coerced into programme participation and respond accordingly.

The 'Target Man' or 'Instrumentalist': In this type of account the participant did not appear to be primarily motivated by a desire to change his thinking or behaviour. The prisoner typically reported instrumental and pragmatic reasons for his involvement in the programme, which may be to achieve a particular goal such as completing his sentence plan, achieving re-categorisation or gaining parole. In this type of account the programme was viewed as

something that had to be undertaken in order to achieve the target goal or goals. This type of individual was perceived, by programme staff and other participants, as not really engaging with the programme but just 'going through the motions' and 'talking the talk'. However, these types of accounts of motivation also included expressions of personal satisfaction in having completed the course because it constituted a goal that had been achieved. In this respect, some of these accounts also include aspects of self-development.

Programme tutors were aware that prisoners had instrumental reasons for attending programmes. For example, as one experienced tutor commented:

...I think the inmates do think ETS is a quite a good course, you do hear a lot of people mind you saying that...well you can blag your way through it, you know, you just say the right things, you get a good report, you get parole... (Experienced tutor: 13).

In slight contrast, a Programme graduate talked about his initial 'instrumental' reasons for participating in a cognitive skills programme, but at the same time described how he had obtained a good deal of satisfaction and a sense of achievement in having reached his goals. This interviewee described how he had been very persistent in trying to get on an R&R programme.

Interviewee: *...I wanted to get it out of the way, what it was I wanted to get re-categorised into a category C prison and they said I have to complete my sentence plan, and if they had kept me waiting I wouldn't have completed my sentence plan, and now I have been made a category C prisoner.*

Researcher: *Right, are you pleased about that?*

Interviewee: *Very pleased, I was motivated and focused and I achieved well.*
(Programme graduate: 611).

Although this Programme graduate provided an entirely instrumental account of his motivation for participating in an R&R programme it was evident that he had gained something from achieving his goals and this fact in itself may be an indication of some form of self-development.

Although an 'instrumentalist' may have passed through the *contemplation*, *determination* and *action* stages of change, he seems to be following his own agenda. His goals appear to be primarily centred upon changing his circumstances rather than himself. Any personal changes in thinking, behaviour or self-regard could be seen as a by-product of the process of achieving his goals, such as a good parole report.

The 'Sceptic': Although this type of account begins with an instrumental description of motivation, the mood is sceptical rather than purely goal-orientated. These types of accounts typically start with comments such as "at first I thought....it was all a load of rubbish" and then continue by providing an account that is more about self-development and a change in motivation. After completing a few sessions the participants would report that they found themselves beginning to engage with the programme. The programme participants who provided this type of account tended to be younger and initial scepticism sometimes appeared to be influenced by peer pressure informed by a macho culture in prisons. This type of account of motivation can also be seen to reflect aspects of the *contemplation* and *determination* stages in the cycle of change model.

An example of this type of account is provided in the following extract from an experienced programme tutor talking about her perceptions of the changing levels of motivation among programme participants.

...They will start off and it will be like - well this is rubbish, I know this anyway but as the course progresses – like, this is getting more interesting and they can see the picture building and they engage a lot more, you definitely see changes along the way... (Experienced tutor: 13).

As a further illustration of this type of account, a reconvicted Programme graduate talked about his experiences of doing an ETS course. He explained “*people in prison do courses because they have got to do courses, not because they want to, even with the last ETS I thought ‘not another bloody course’, I was sceptical and then I got into it and could see the usefulness of some aspects of the course*” (Reconvicted programme graduate: 211).

According to some Programme graduates, a sceptical approach to programmes was more reflective of a macho culture among prisoners. These interviewees reported that peer pressure inhibited the expression of positive attitudes to rehabilitative programmes; some men would denigrate the programmes as a front even though they felt quite positive about them. As one Programme graduate commented:

...I think a lot of it is bravado saying ‘oh that’s crap that ETS’; inside they don’t – that’s not their view, they say that when they are in a group of lads but inside they feel that there has been a lot of food for thought but they don’t admit it in public (Programme graduate: 219).

This illustrates that people account for their experiences and perceptions within a social context. Issues of identity and identity maintenance, such as fitting in with certain perceptions of masculinity, can colour the way experiences are reported by prisoners, both among themselves and to researchers.

The 'Self Developer': This type of programme participant was thought to be highly motivated to change before embarking on cognitive skills training. Usually such individuals are seen as having reached an ‘all time low’ with their latest conviction and have come to the realisation that it is now time to make a concerted effort to change. They have reached a stage in their lives when they have begun to accept responsibility for themselves and others. These accounts usually contain references to the primary motivating factor for change being ‘wanting to be a better father’ or having a desire to ‘help other people’ (for example, by becoming a drugs counsellor). In accounts of self-development, participants seemed stimulated and excited by the programme and talked about completing other programmes such as those based on anger management or substance misuse. Crucially, the self-developer appeared to have reached the *determination* stage of the cycle of change before accessing a cognitive skills programme.

The following extract from a Programme graduate’s description of his motivation for participating in a cognitive skills programme provides a good example of a self-development account.

...I am doing thirteen years now and I have done six and a half years out of it, so you know before it was like I don’t really want to change, you know, now I actually want to change and it’s a continual learning process and it’s gone on. I know there is more to learn and it’s making me a better person...(Programme graduate: 14).

This also illustrates how some prisoners need to reach a stage of life, or state of personal maturity, where they want to change before successful learning can actually take place. This particular prisoner described how he used to see life differently.

...I have led a certain type of lifestyle you know, it was ‘Jack the lad’ attitude and fingers in every sort of pie, involved in the drug culture...I had this like - I don’t give a monkey’s attitude...and you know um, basically it was like I had reached an all time low, sort of thing, you know. You can’t keep up that type of lifestyle...(Programme graduate: 14).

Reaching an 'all time low' was often mentioned as a kind of 'turning point experience' (Strauss, 1959) in the accounts offered by Programme graduates. These kinds of transformational experiences have been described as 'epiphanies'; 'interactional moments that leave positive and negative marks on people's lives' (Denzin, 1989: 125). Denzin uses the term 'cumulative epiphany' to describe a situation where an accumulation of past events culminates in a turning-point experience.

Some Programme graduates in their personal narratives described how they eventually came to realise that their offending behaviour was having an adverse impact on the lives of their children and other people for whom they cared. For them this constituted a transformational moment or turning point. As one interviewee recounted:

...the way things had gone on, for the last few years, like me coming out of prison and messing me life up, you know spending a long time in jail now and I just thought, I can't be doing this all me life, I need to change now, I have got kids and I have got people to think of and its helped me think of other people now. I have been selfish and it's about time I need to change... (Programme graduate: 110).

Given the complexity of the interaction between individual characteristics, the nature and level of personal commitments, and external social circumstances, assessing levels of motivation for programme screening purposes constitutes a difficult and somewhat intuitive task.

In relation to programme screening, McGuire (1995) has argued that weak motivation should not be used as a factor to exclude prisoners from participation in programmes. He has asserted that "...increasing numbers of clinicians/researchers are viewing resistance and poor motivation as important intermediate targets of change" (1995:57). It could be argued that if motivation is a key mechanism to be considered in assessing the process/outcome relations of cognitive skills programmes, improving participant motivation should be considered as an important intermediate outcome and therefore included as such in future evaluations of the efficacy of cognitive skills programmes.

In the present study, programme staff reported that motivational interviewing techniques were used as an effective method of addressing 'poor' motivation and for decreasing programme resistance. A future longitudinal research study could investigate the relationships between motivation, relapse, motivational interviewing and any other stage-specific strategies to improve motivation in prisons and in the community.

It is interesting to note that although relapse is considered to be a normal and expected stage in Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) model of change, there appears to be a paucity of consistent information being gathered by the prison service on reconvicted graduates. At present this group of prisoners are difficult to identify in the prison system and very little information is being gathered about why relapse occurred – indeed relapse is currently equated with programme failure, rather than being viewed as a normal part of the process of change.

Institutional factors impacting on motivation

Although motivation varies according to individual differences and backgrounds, external factors can also affect and influence the nature and extent of motivation.

Our analysis suggests that the way programmes were represented and made accessible to prisoners had an affect on participant motivation, which has consequences as far as treatment outcomes are concerned.

How cognitive skills programmes are represented in prisons can affect prisoners' motivations for participating. For example, when he was asked about his experiences of being recruited for a programme and if he was given any information about ETS, a Programme graduate replied, "Not that I remember, no. I didn't feel I had a choice, they stipulated that I had to do

ETS as part of parole; without doing it I wouldn't get parole, so in a sense I was made to do it" (Programme graduate: 17). There were a number of examples in the data of prisoners stating that a programme had been presented to them as something they 'had to do' in order to get a good parole report. This approach does not accord with psychological theory on what motivates people to change, particularly in relation to freedom of choice and motivation. Indeed, Miller and Rollnick have argued that "intrinsic motivation is enhanced by the perception that one has freely chosen a course of action, without significant external influence or coercion" (1991: 22). However, it is worth noting that despite the 'carrot and stick' approach to programme participation, our data show that instrumental forms of motivation can lead to personal growth for some prisoners.

The impression that cognitive skills programmes were primarily completed for parole purposes was commonplace in interviews with both prisoners and members of prison staff. Long waiting lists for access to programmes resulted in most of the six prisons operating a system based on selection by parole date order. This was to ensure that every prisoner had a chance of being assessed for cognitive skills training before being released. The disadvantage of this system was that access to programmes was sometimes denied to prisoners who were motivated to change but were not near the end of their sentence. Programme staff reported that this led to prisoners either losing motivation as they waited to join a course or feeling aggrieved when they were finally accepted on a course, only to discover that some more instrumentally-motivated group members showed little commitment to change and behaved in a disruptive manner.

At some prisons, programme staff appeared to exercise discretion by allowing some highly motivated prisoners to jump the waiting list. However, this practice was viewed as unfair by some prisoners who had observed how some inmates had 'pestered' programme staff for early inclusion whilst other inmates had been waiting patiently in a queuing system.

A potential solution to these problems, suggested by some of our interviewees, was to offer access to programmes earlier in a prison sentence. This would ensure that highly motivated prisoners could receive cognitive skills training earlier in their sentences, which is particularly important given the fact that ETS or R&R courses are a prerequisite for accessing other offending behaviour programmes. Furthermore, loosening the informal association between cognitive skills programmes and the parole process would have a positive impact on the sentence management process for prisoners.

6. Non-conviction benefits for prisoners and prisons

Many interviewees (both members of prison staff and prisoners) provided examples of changes in prison behaviour, which they directly attributed to the application by programme participants of the skills and techniques they had learned on the course.

Programme graduates reported a wide range of positive programme outcomes. These included: improved interactions with inmates, prison staff, partners and other family members; an increased level of self-confidence; an improved sense of personal achievement on completing a programme; improved literacy skills; the acquisition of proactive enhanced problem-solving skills; and an increased interest in self-development and further learning. Many prisoners claimed that they were now less impulsive in their actions and had found calmer and less aggressive ways of dealing with people and problems in the prison environment.

Programme graduates gave many examples in interviews of difficult or potentially confrontational situations in the daily life of the prison where they had used their newly acquired skills to positive effect. For example, one Programme graduate described how he had mediated in a dispute between two prisoners.

...last night for instance, there was a bit of a dispute on the wing, you know between two of the lads...I got involved, and it's only later that I thought about this, but I come in and I sort of mediated and it ended up without friction...I thought I have used some of them skills I learnt on the course... (Programme graduate: 14).

He went on to describe in some detail how he had used specific techniques to deal with the situation.

...Well what it is...you have got the 'OPV' system [Other People's Views], it was gathering information, you know what I mean, I was using all that, I was generating alternatives...this is how it was going through my head – only knew about it later on, but this is how I was actually thinking and they ended up shaking hands and walking away and that's it! It was over and done with and it could have ended up quite serious...(Programme graduate: 14).

Another Programme graduate described how he had learnt how to control his aggressive behaviour in prison, which he attributed to his cognitive skills training.

...Oh yes, I have learnt to control myself, on quite numerous occasions I have come close to either hitting someone or whatever and I thought, he is not even worth it...I have just got to do my sentence...I have actually become enhanced because I have completed the R&R and I have changed... (Programme graduate: 49).

Improvements in behaviour were also identified by others. For example, programme and non-programme personnel recounted how they had noticed changes in the behaviour of men who had completed cognitive skills courses. An acting resettlement manager remarked that "if you ask wing officers, a lot of them have noticed a change in that how they're not so aggressive and they've calmed down and that sort of thing, stop and think before they get into an argument" (Acting resettlement manager: 12).

As this interviewee went on to describe, one outcome of programme participation was that some prisoners changed the ways in which they interacted with prison officers and other members of staff on a day-to-day basis.

...My personal experience is if they're [prisoners] not happy with something that one of the prison officers has done...or they haven't got paid for something, they'll stop and think and this has stopped them getting an adjudication or something...(Acting resettlement manager: 12).

Some Programme graduates reported how the changes in their behaviour had been commented upon by other people, such as members of their family. As one prisoner recalled:

...even my Mum and Dad...when they came on a visit they went "you're not the same as what you was like six months ago"...they said "you're much calmer now than you was six months ago when we come round to visit...your head was battered an you got tense and mad" and things like that, but I'm dead calm now...(Programme graduate: 319).

Other Programme graduates responded in a similar vein.

Well the family are impressed by the way I have changed...It's a marked improvement and they could see that – the way I react, the way I am with them, the way I am with the kids...they can see the change, they can see the difference...(Programme graduate: 14).

One interviewee commented on the changes his mother had noticed in his attitudes and behaviour, particularly in relation to his interactions with her. He explained that *"...she actually said she had seen a change there where I was showing consideration to others, especially her...(Programme graduate: 317)*. Programme tutors also related examples of positive comments made by those family members who attended the end of course review session, as illustrated in the following extract.

I've had very good feedback from the mother - would be the typical one - they come in and they've said "I've seen a side of him that I have never seen before – I don't know what you've done...he is writing better, he is more thoughtful..." (Experienced tutor: 410).

From the numerous situations described by prisoners, it would appear that Programme graduates recognised that not only were they responsible for their own actions, but that they also had the capacity to influence events by either adopting particular interactional strategies or practising new ways of relating to other people.

Besides improved interactions with significant others, Programme graduates reported increased levels of self-confidence as a result of programme participation. As one programme participant explained *"it has given me fantastic confidence...in work, for instance, the work that I am doing now on a chair that I designed myself...I think the ETS course has given me confidence" (Programme graduate: 38)*. Similarly another interviewee commented on how completing a programme had given him more confidence. He said *"Confident yeah, more confident and I felt this is good you know, it's doing something for me you know, cos I haven't got much schooling, this is a chance now to do something a bit more to help myself" (Programme graduate: 44)*. A number of Programme graduates expressed feelings of pride and a sense of achievement at having completed a thinking skills course. For some this represented the first time in their lives that they had participated in a learning situation and succeeded.

Another Programme graduate talked about how the experience of completing a programme had improved his self-confidence and helped him to deal with authority figures.

...Yeah, I suppose I am much better with authority – in my job before they would say "can I have a cup of coffee?" and I wouldn't do it, but now I think what the hell! Yes, I'll make a coffee for them, it's no big deal to me and the course has helped me to break away from that attitude and I know you have to work with the system – I don't

mind now, I have accepted it. It's given me more confidence, I can deal with it more calmly...(Reconvicted graduate: 48).

The way in which participation in ETS and R&R programmes prepares prisoners for other offending behaviour groups was mentioned by both programme staff and prisoners. A reconvicted graduate explained “*ETS courses make me understand and grasp the techniques and learning of any group, and I mean any group, because I don't think there is any group that an ETS student won't be able to become enthusiastic about...*” (Reconvicted graduate: 64).

Finally, a programme tutor commented on her perceptions of the kinds of benefits she had noticed as a result of prisoners participating in ETS. She commented as follows:

...I think sometimes their behaviour does kind of improve without even knowing it, they become a slightly nicer person, demonstrate pro-social behaviour, they do recognise in themselves that this is the wrong way to do things and change their behaviour slightly because someone has given them skills that perhaps they never had before – they are learning stuff that I believe they have not learnt when they were kids... (Programme tutor: 214).

From these excerpts it is possible to appreciate the ways in which course participation had a number of beneficial outcomes for prisoners and prison management. As cognitive skills programmes aim to enhance thinking and to encourage pro-social behaviour, a number of interviewees suggested that prison staff would also benefit from participating in a cognitive skills programme. Indeed, one of the prisons in the sample is currently piloting a pro-social skills course for members of staff.

7. Conclusions

Cognitive skills programmes are designed to introduce offenders to pro-social thinking skills and problem-solving strategies that will help them to avoid those patterns of thinking which are associated with offending behaviour. When evaluating the effectiveness of these types of interventions, it should not be assumed that programmes 'work' simply because they possess some in-built quality which elicits conditioned responses from participants. Indeed, as Pawson and Tilley have observed with respect to social programmes in general, these become effective 'if subjects choose to make them work and are placed in the right conditions to enable them to do so' (1994: 294). Consequently, when evaluating what constitutes effective practice with regards to cognitive skills training, one needs to be aware that levels of involvement in, and commitment to, such programmes may vary from one individual to another. Thus, in order to develop a full understanding of what constitutes effective practice, it is essential to explore what social and institutional factors enable prisoners to use the treatment programmes successfully and how the prison and resettlement contexts can encourage or inhibit that process. The issue is not simply one of 'what works', but 'what works for whom, in what conditions and in what type of setting'. In addressing some of these issues, the current qualitative study helps to complement and inform the research findings from earlier quantitatively oriented outcome evaluations.

The following broad conclusions can be drawn from this study:

- The institutional context of programmes has an important impact on the morale and retention of programme staff, the daily operations of programmes and the short-term impact of programmes on prisoners. This has implications for the success of programmes in terms of reducing offending behaviour.
- The overriding impression is that programme staff members are hard working and caring, and enthusiastic about the merits of cognitive skills programmes. The majority of prisoner interviewees were fulsome in their praise for programme tutors. They commented in particular on their group work skills, their ability to respond appropriately to the learning needs and behaviours of individual group members and the caring attitudes they displayed towards programme participants.
- The selection process for programme tutors was criticised by staff interviewees for failing to provide sufficient feedback from all stages of the assessment process in a way that would support those failed candidates who wished to re-apply. Selection procedures were also perceived by some prison officers and programme managers to be biased in favour of candidates from a psychology background. Difficulties were experienced in recruiting prison officer tutors in some establishments; this could be partly attributed to the existence of institutional/occupational cultures that questioned the value of rehabilitative work by portraying it as 'soft' and easy.
- Delivery of programmes through group work held a number of advantages for most prisoners. The ethos of groups had a positive treatment effect for some prisoners for whom learning to exercise mutual respect, trust, confidentiality, turn-taking and listening to the views of others, resulted in personal change and improved self-esteem.
- Programme staff reported that the requirement to rigidly follow instruction manuals when delivering programmes made it difficult for them to respond to what were the realities of life for some prisoners. This lack of saliency and sensitivity of programme delivery and content resulted in programmes being perceived as patronising by some programme staff and programme participants.
- The reported rigidity of programmes made them unresponsive to the requirements of some group members, who had needs and abilities outside the 'norm'. The pace of programmes suited a middle range of prisoners, in terms of learning ability, leaving the more able participants bored and frustrated and the less able participants struggling to keep up. Programme staff and programme participants reported the need for an adapted ETS programme for prisoners with literacy or learning difficulties.
- The timing of cognitive skills training within a custodial sentence, and the practice of using parole date order when processing potential participants, were important

procedural mechanisms that impacted on the motivations of prisoners and consequently had implications for both short-term and long-term outcomes. Highly motivated prisoners, especially those serving long sentences, expressed a wish to have access to programmes at an earlier stage so that they could practise their newly acquired skills whilst in prison, undertake other offending behaviour courses and proceed with their sentence plans. Access to programmes by parole date order was found to create an impression among both prison staff and prisoners that the primary reason for participating in a programme was to achieve a favourable parole report rather than undergo any personal development. This more instrumental approach could have implications for long-term outcomes.

- Motivation to change was observed as a key to successful programme participation. Four types of accounts of motivation were identified from interviews with programme participants and staff. Some correspondence was found with Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) model of the cycle of change. Further research on the relationship between 'relapse' as a cycle of change issue and reoffending could further our understanding of the effectiveness of cognitive skills programmes.
- Both programme staff and programme participants reported the need for continuing cognitive skills support for Programme graduates in prison so that skills could be practised and honed before release into the community.
- Most prisoner interviewees found at least some aspects of the content of programmes useful and interesting and felt that they had personally benefited through participating in cognitive skills training.
- A number of non-reconviction benefits of programme participation were identified for both prisoners and prisons. Prisoners gave examples of improved social interactions and relations with inmates, prison staff and family members. Most Programme graduates reported increased levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, improved problem-solving skills and in some cases improved literacy skills. The benefits for prison management included a reduction in confrontational encounters and evidence of more positive attitudes and behaviours on the part of Programme graduates.
- Reconvicted graduates reported that resettlement problems, such as going back to a previous environment where criminal activities were the norm, difficulties in finding employment and being unable to secure suitable accommodation, were the main reasons why they reoffended. A lack of personal maturity was also given as a reason for reoffending. These post-release conditions were not a feature of the experiences of those Programme graduates who had been released from prison and not reoffended. This group appeared to have experienced far fewer resettlement problems.

From the above it is clear that a qualitative approach has an important contribution to make to the understanding of the implementation, impact and effectiveness of offending behaviour programmes. From a qualitative perspective it is possible to explore how situational and institutional factors can promote or inhibit treatment effect and influence the quality of programme delivery. Also, by providing an insight into contextual factors, qualitative methods help interpret findings from quantitatively oriented studies. For example, although some recent studies have reported no differences in the one-year and two-year reconviction rates between treatment groups and matched comparison groups, it has been argued that it would be premature to take such findings as evidence of programme failure (Falshaw *et al.*, 2003; Cann *et al.*, 2003). As suggested by Falshaw *et al.* (2003), differential motivation among programme participants might be an explanatory factor. Where offenders are aware that failure to take part in cognitive skills training could adversely affect their chances of early release, they may display an initial motivation to attend a programme but not necessarily be equally as motivated to actively engage with the programme and change their behaviour. This view receives some support from the current study, where it was found that some accounts of motivation displayed an instrumental orientation to programme involvement.

Traditional quantitatively-based evaluation studies have relied on reconviction data as the sole or primary measure of treatment efficacy when assessing the impact of offending behaviour programmes. If we are to move away from an over-reliance on reconviction data and develop an 'integrated model' (Friendship *et al.*, 2003b) to evaluate treatment efficacy, a

multi-method research design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods needs to be adopted. As it is known that offenders do not benefit equally from the therapeutic process (McGuire, 2000), it is important that those who would benefit the most from programme participation are identified. Establishing 'what works with whom' requires careful monitoring of the changes an offender undergoes during the course of a programme. Further research into treatment change will help in developing an understanding of the link between the selection of offenders for cognitive skills training and treatment success.

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