

BUDDY SUPPORT WORKER (BSW)

Background

Older offenders currently make up 14% of the prison population. There are 11,720 offenders aged 50+ in prison in England and Wales. (MOJ 2015).

Despite the growing older population and NOMS commissioning intentions, budget cuts have meant that neither prisons nor NPS have had the ability, or capacity, to invest in services and provision which meet the needs of older people.

This lack of targeted support can result in an older cohort who experience deteriorating mental and physical health, social isolation and feelings of hopelessness about the future. These presenting factors increase the challenge for successful resettlement and community integration.

The New Care Act

The New Care Act places responsibility on Local Authorities to work jointly with prisons to provide social care support for all prisoners who meet the eligibility criteria.

The Buddy Support Worker Role

The Buddy role is a key component to the new service provision.

All Buddies have been trained to National Care Standards. This training course has been adapted by Devon County Council, supported by RECOOP, to ensure it is appropriate for supporting prisoners with basic health and social care needs.

Addressing these issues in prison may help an older or disabled prisoner maintain their independence longer and help assess the ongoing support they may need when nearing release and resettlement.

What Buddies Do

- Assist the person in their basic needs around domestic cleaning and living space
- Assist where appropriate with basic tasks around writing e.g. apps, menus, reading and accessing reading materials, collection of meals
- Assist where necessary to visits or medical appointment, mobility within the unit and around the establishment if appropriate.
- Encourage at every opportunity the independence of the individual
- Offer assistance and support to engage in appropriate prison based activities and reduce social isolation
- Report any concerns that may arise in any aspect of a clients circumstances so that early intervention and referral can take place as appropriate.
- Monitor the requirements of the individuals needs and report changes as to whether they are becoming more and increasingly dependant / reliant on assistance or may be suitable for a lower, more independent level of support.
- Seek support and assistance from any other service within the establishment
- Ensure that the safety, wellbeing and dignity of the client is paramount at all times
- Always wear the correct protective clothing including Buddy T shirt

What Buddies Don't Do

- Any intimate care (Navel to Knee)
- No manual handling. Buddies are not allowed to help lift prisoners off the floor following a fall etc. In this situation if the fallen person can't be talked up off the floor health care or paramedics must be contacted.
- Have involvement with a client's 'Medical Care' including the issuing of any medications or applications of creams, medical dressing or eye drops.
- Assist in feeding or cleaning of teeth in the mouth.

PPE

Appropriate protective equipment must be provided to Buddies to ensure health and safety and infection control policies and procedures are met.

Guidelines including definitions of 'Intimate Care' and 'Personal Care' are laid out in **PSI 17/2015 Prisoners Supporting Other Prisoners.**