Critical time Intervention for Severely mentally ill Prisoners (CrISP): a randomised controlled trial

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Many people in prison have long-term mental health problems. Mental health in-reach teams provide similar treatment and care in prison to that delivered by community mental health teams to the general public, but few people make contact with mental health services on release. Many people become unwell again and may commit further crimes. We investigated whether or not an intensive model of care, known as critical time intervention, started in prison and continued on release helped people to keep contact with mental health services in the long term. The intervention involves detailed assessment and planning for services needed after release, and help with sorting out housing/money issues and contacting family.

One hundred and fifty adult men with severe mental illness in prison took part. Half of the men received the new intervention, and the other half received the treatment that prison mental health workers usually offer. At 6 weeks and 6 and 12 months, we checked whether or not the participants were still in touch with community mental health services.

Those receiving the new intervention were more likely to have contact with mental health services at the 6-week and 6-month checks, but not at the 12-month check. This is positive because, in the time immediately following release, recently released individuals are at especially high risk of suicide or drug overdose. Staff and patients involved in the intervention were very positive about it; however, it was a more expensive way of supporting people. Further studies are needed to see if the intervention can help stop people committing crimes and whether or not it would work for other types of prisoners, for example women and young people.

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