
Independent Evaluation of the Trevone House model

Executive summary

September 2023

1. Introduction

The Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University (IPC) was commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) to undertake an independent evaluation of Trevone House, an innovative facility providing care, support and accommodation for young people aged 16 to 25 years who are either currently looked after, are care leavers or have been treated at in-patient child and adolescent mental health units (CAMHs Tier 4).

The evaluation focuses on the model including its key features and differences from other models of supported accommodation. This report sets out the methods used and the findings of the evaluation.

2. Trevone House

Gloucestershire established Trevone House to provide a range of accommodation and support for young people aged 16-25 years. Trevone House aims to provide trauma informed care in a high-quality physical environment. It differs from commonly available provision in that it offers a combination of services on a single site and with a high level of support through 24/7 staffing including specialist mental health roles.

The services planned at Trevone house comprised:

- Supported accommodation for care leavers.
- Wellbeing suites providing step-down from in-patient mental health treatment ('Tier 4 CAMHs').
- Edge of care emergency accommodation:
 - to avoid young people being held in police custody unnecessarily; or
 - to assess young people detained under section 136 of the mental health Act
- A day centre or 'staying close hub' for care experienced young people providing in-reach and outreach.

The first two components have been operational since the opening of Trevone House in 2020. The third is partly operational: emergency accommodation, has been provided for young people in crisis, including those held by the police, although the section 136 suite has not yet been used for its intended purpose. The fourth component, the day centre/staying close hub, has not been opened to date.

3. Overview of the Evaluation

The evaluation team at IPC employed a theory-based, mixed methods evaluation approach to answer the following questions:

- What are the key elements of the Trevone model and comparator models?
- What are the differences between Trevone and more traditional arrangements for care leavers and young people, including differences between cohorts of young people typically placed in each model?
- What are the outcomes associated with the models in the following areas: wellbeing, education and employment, missing episodes, placement stability, etc.?
- For whom, why, how, and in what contexts do these models of provision work? That is, how the models deliver the outcomes and any underlying differences and mechanisms.
- To what extent do the different models deliver any potential quantifiable cost savings (as opposed to traditional post-16 services)?

The evaluation was implemented between December 2022 and August 2023, and consisted of the following activities:

- Reviewing policies and existing research evidence about the different models.
- Documenting the Trevone House theory of change through multi-agency workshops
- Collating and analysing data routinely collected by the local authority, other statutory services and agencies, and providers related to an agreed set of outcome indicators across the models (e.g. missing episodes) for 41 looked after young people aged 16-17 and 26 care leavers.
- Reviewing and analysing case records of 50 young people in each type of accommodation selected randomly to explore the models from a longitudinal perspective.
- Exploring the perceptions of key stakeholders about the effectiveness and outcomes of the models via semi-structured interviews (n=9).
- Interviewing social workers or leaving care personal advisors (n=7) to explore their perception of the impact and quality of the support.
- Undertaking individual interviews with core staff members at Trevone House and one of the comparison providers about the strength and weaknesses of each model (n=18).
- Identifying potential cost savings delivered by the different models associated with positive outcomes / avoided negative outcomes

Various challenges were encountered during the evaluation which required adaptation of the methodology originally proposed. Particularly, the voice and the lived experience of young people does not feature as strongly in the report as it was originally intended as it proved hard to recruit young people for interview. The case file sample was increased and interviews with social workers and leaving care personal advisors were added to mitigate this issue.

The evaluation received ethical approval from the Health and Social Care Research Ethics Sub-Committee of Oxford Brookes University (UREC Registration No: 231674).

4. Key evaluation findings

Our evaluation found promising evidence that the Trevone model is achieving outcomes which are similar and in many cases better than the more common dispersed supported housing model. The outcomes for young people in the wellbeing suites appeared particularly positive. The case file analysis suggested that positive trajectories were more common for young people placed at Trevone than in the comparator group, whilst the data analysis suggested that the rate of missing episodes at Trevone was lower.

There is clearly a demand for the service, with high rates of occupancy and many young people requiring accommodation with a high level of support.

The case file analysis confirmed that the cohort of young people requiring supported accommodation typically have very significant needs. Childhood trauma, mental health issues, substance misuse and child exploitation were very common factors. The vast majority have grown up in Gloucestershire and need accommodation close to their networks and communities.

Young people placed at Trevone House appeared to differ from those placed elsewhere in some respects: they are more likely to have significant mental health issues and more likely to be female. The group placed with comparator providers was more diverse in terms of ethnicity, included more males and were more likely to have significant issues related to child criminal exploitation. The group of young people who had had placements with multiple providers in the study were more likely to have poorer outcomes. However, there were several instances where young people did much better with one provider than others, illustrating the value of choice and the importance of matching.

Professionals – social workers, leaving care personal advisors, housing officers - expressed mostly positive views about the Trevone model, highlighting various key elements such as the availability of staff support on site, the trauma-informed approach, or the fact that it allowed young people to progress towards independence in their own pace.

However, conclusions about the outcomes of the Trevone model are tentative for several reasons:

- It is still new and the model is evolving. It is possible that the impact of Trevone (whether positive, neutral or negative) would be more apparent over a longer time frame, particularly given the amount of adversity and trauma which young people had typically experienced prior to placement.
- There is a lack of robust data about young people using Trevone or alternative services and performance measures and outcomes are not clearly defined.

- It is difficult to attribute outcomes to a provider of accommodation and support because there are many factors involved which are outside of the providers control or even influence. Contingent events often appear to change the trajectory of young people positively or negatively.

The evaluation also highlighted differences between providers in the comparator group. Of particular note, one of the providers achieved similar levels of success to Trevone and also had more robust data than any other provider in the study. This suggests that commissioners should be wary of generalising – the sector includes both good, and less good providers. The extension of the Ofsted inspection and registration regime should provide more independent validation of quality.

Interviews with staff at Trevone House and other supported living providers highlighted the difficulties in getting specialist support for young people, for example for mental health or substance misuse. This underlines the extent to which all supported accommodation providers operate in a complex system and they need effective commissioning arrangements and the support of the whole system of services in order to be effective. Implementing a robust and standardised set of measures would facilitate future evaluation and allow more confident conclusions to be drawn.

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