

A Problem Support Mentor Scheme: using
problem-solving skills in prisons
EPTA workshop
September 2021



ESRC is part of UK Research and Innovation

Outline for the workshop

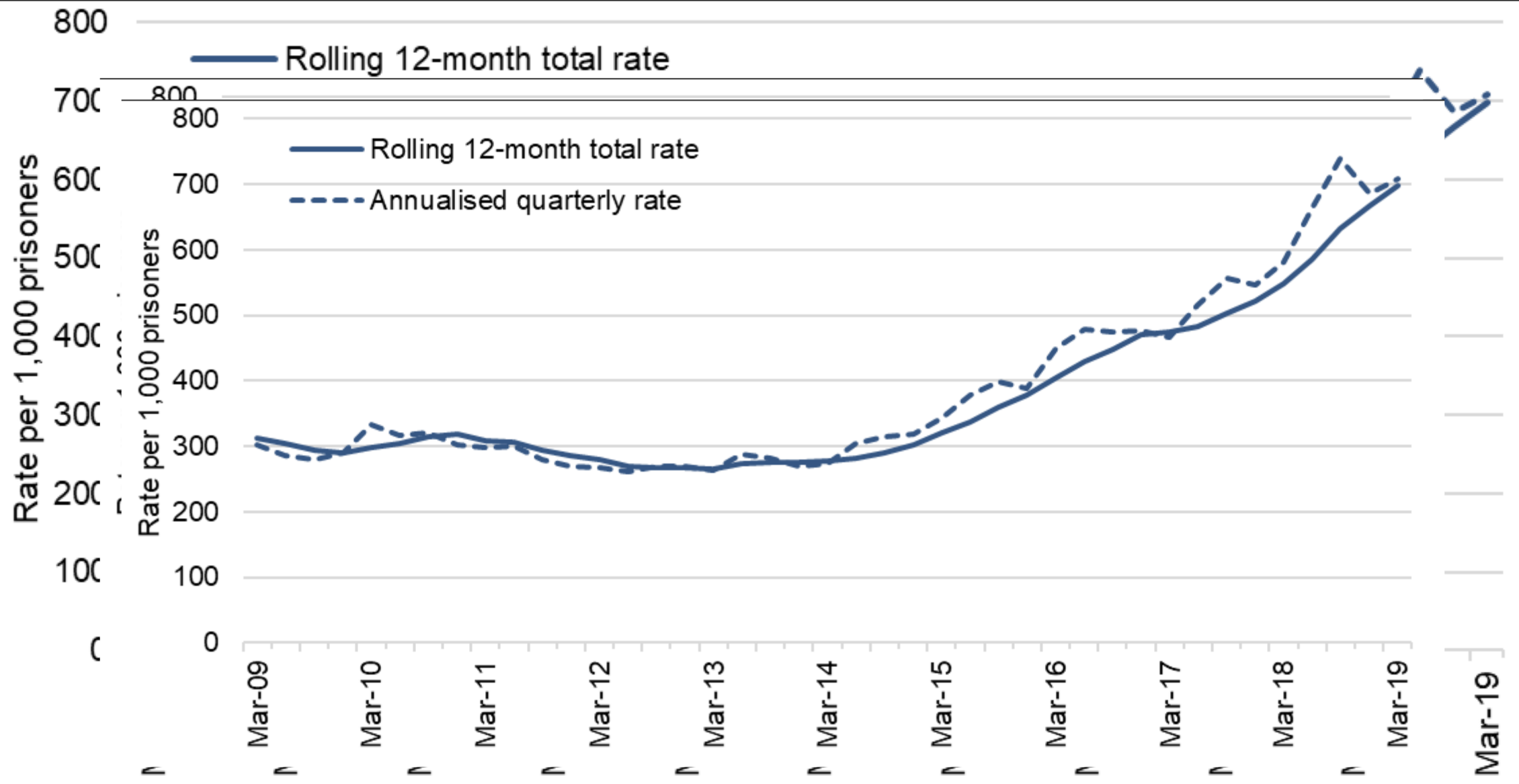
- Introductions and format for of the workshop
- Problem solving skills what are they?
- How are they used in a peer-led scheme in the UK [Dr Amanda E. Perry]
- Introducing the exercise: practicing your problem-solving skills [Maja Zawadzka]
- Feedback from the groups [Maja and Amanda]
- Viewing of a problem-solving skills animation [Maja and Amanda]
- Cultural adaptations and statistical findings [Dr Jaroslaw Rychlik]
- Summary and question and answer session [Amanda and Maja]

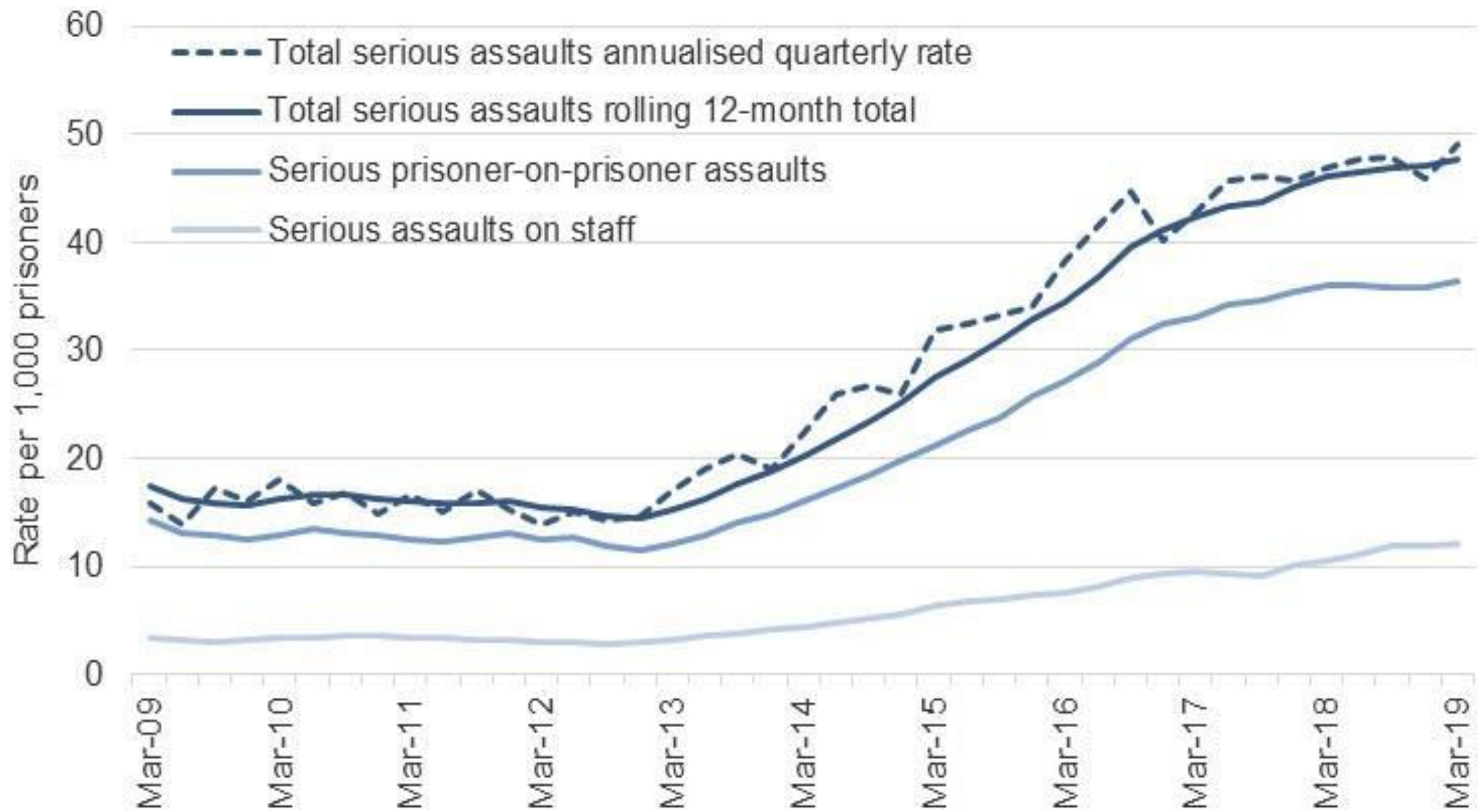
What are problem-solving skills?

- Underpin by psychological theory 1970s
- Provides a systematic step-by-step approach to resolving/dealing with problems in life

Why use problem-solving skills?





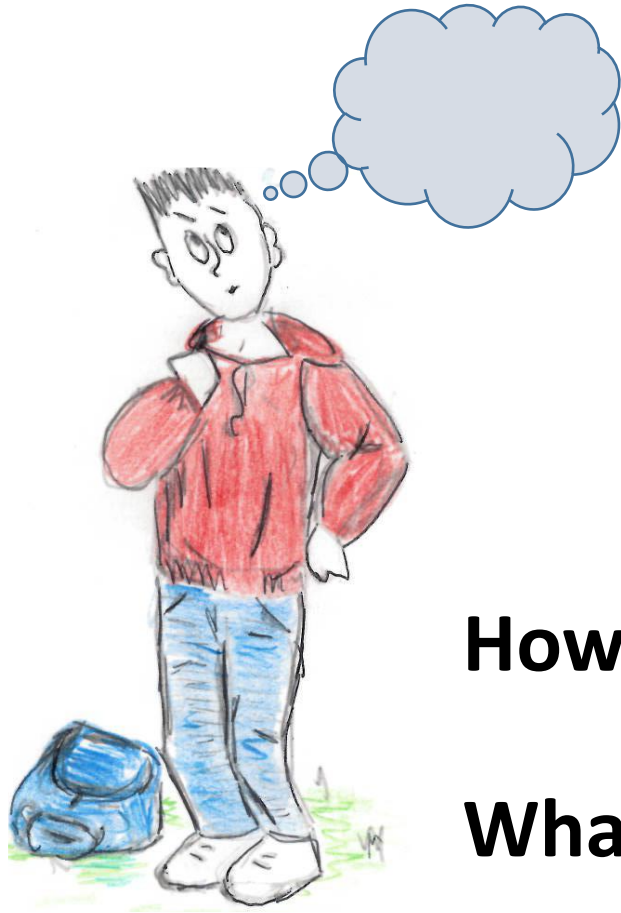


Step 1. Is there a problem?

How can Danny get from where he is to where he wants to be?



Step 2: Describe the problem



- Take a step back
- Count to ten

How can I define my problem clearly?

What is my problem statement?

Step 3: Gather information



- Be clear on what you need to find out.
- Use the 5 questions
Who? What? Where?
When? and How?
- Use all available resources to gather the facts.

Step 4: Think of options

Think of as many potential solutions as possible

Imagine what might help...

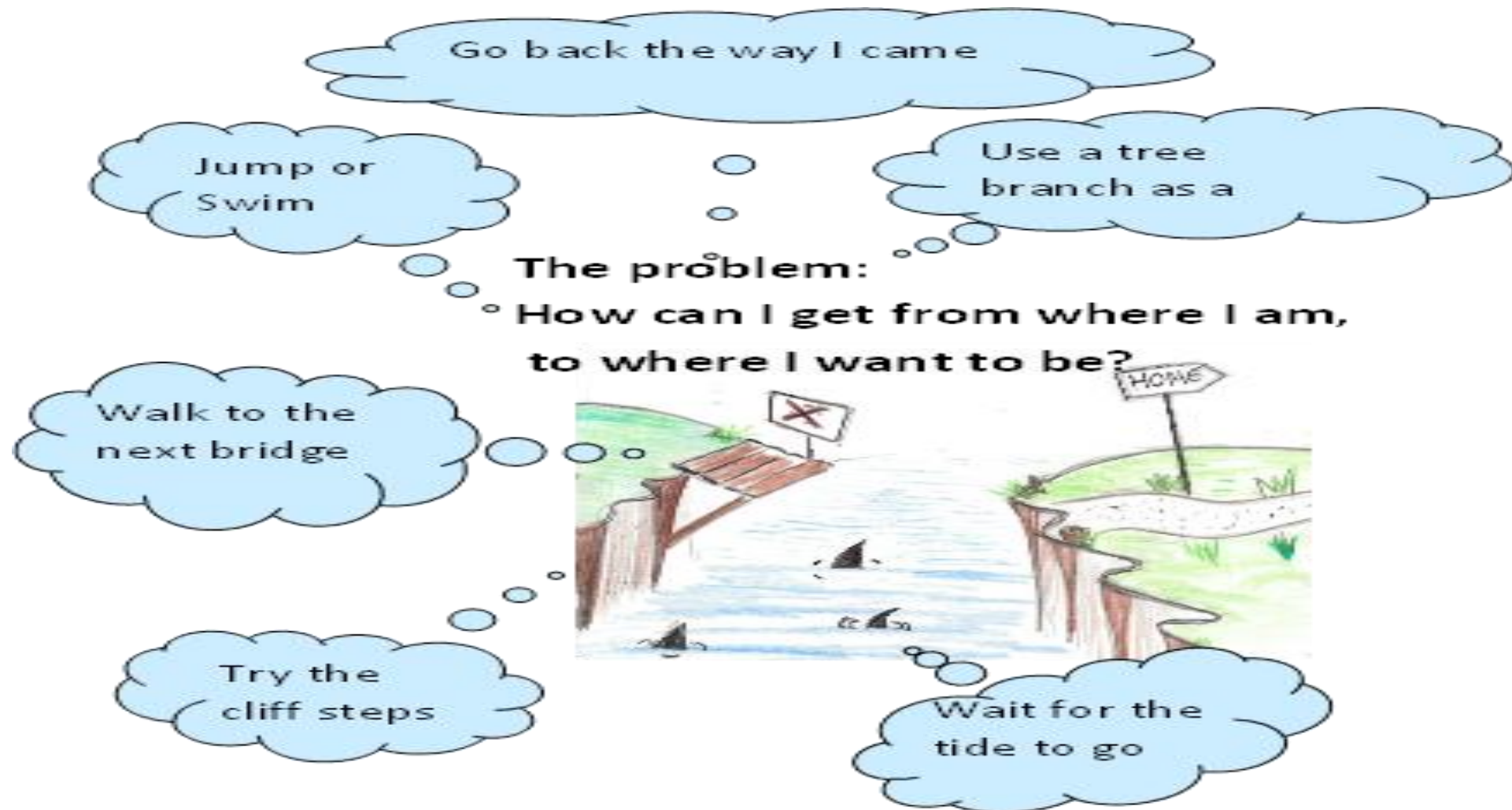
Think of small steps to achieve big goals.

Write the problem in the middle

Include all ideas, good or bad

Be creative, use shapes, colour, pictures

Danny's potential solutions



Step 5: Choose a plan

List each potential solution.

Rate each solution

✓ = Positive

or

✗ = Negative

The best option will have the more green ticks and fewer red crosses

	✓	✗
Jump or swim		✗ Too risky
Use a branch		✗ Too risky
Walk to the next bridge		✗ 5 miles to walk - too far
Go back the way I came		✗ 6 miles to walk - too far
Wait for the tide to go out	✓ Easy and safe	One hour to wait
Use the steps to cross the beach	✓ Easy and safe	One hour to wait

Step 6: Make a plan

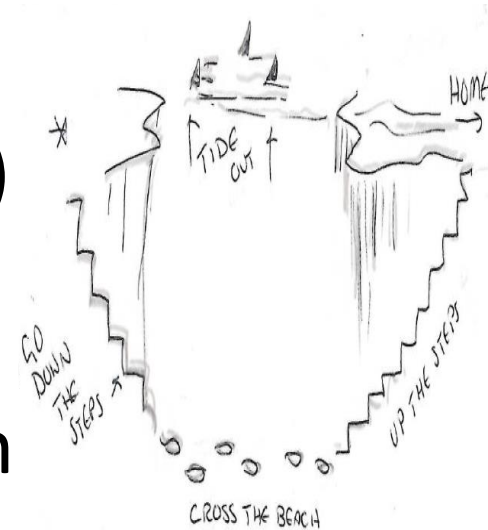
A good plan:

- Is specific to the problem
- Uses small achievable steps to help solve the problem
- Gives details of what action is to be done, when, where, who by, and how they should do it.

Step 6: Make a plan

Danny's plan

1. Ring home. Tell them I will get back later than expected.
2. Wait for the tide to go out (1hr)
3. Use the steps to go down the cliff side, then cross the beach
4. Go up the steps at the other side



Step 7: Try it out



Danny tried his plan and solved his problem but....

It is common to come up with a useful plan, start to carry them out, and then when things didn't go to plan conclude that it did not work.

If it goes wrong? Stop and think...

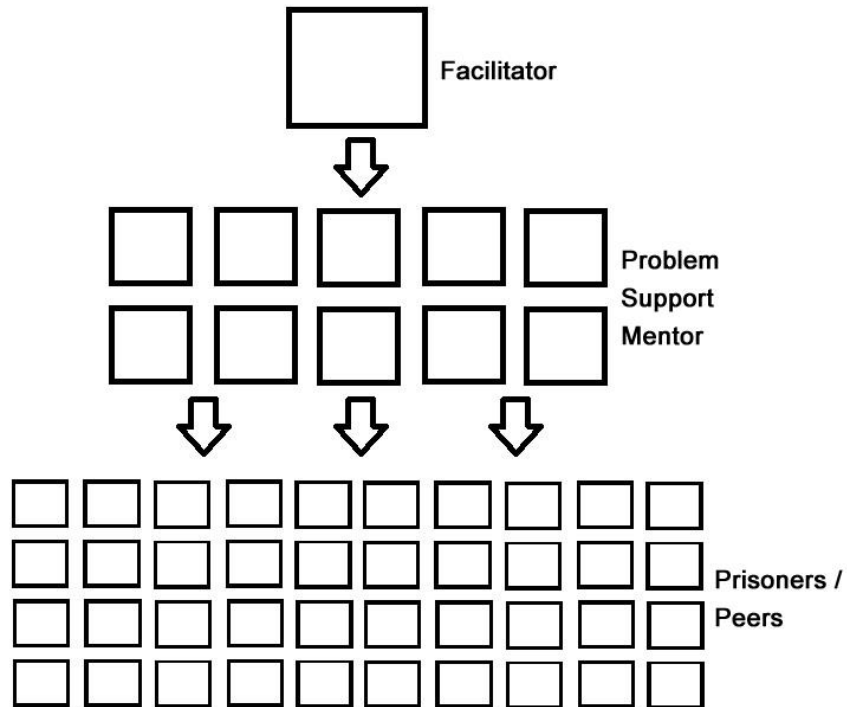
- Did your action plan get underway?
- What obstacles prevented you from completing your plan?
- What could you have done differently?
- What do you need to do to improve your chances of solving problems?



The men who own the scheme



How is the scheme set-up and what does it involve?

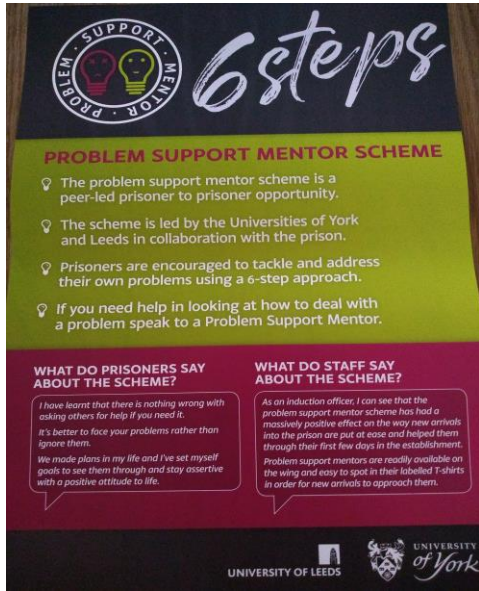


The scheme involves:

- Initial staff search to identify suitable participants
- an initial pre-workshop session to assess the suitability and willingness of participants to attend
- followed by five 1.5 hour workshop sessions
- a six week 'apprenticeship period' which is supported by attendance at bi-weekly supervision meetings
- a ceremonial event with involvement from family/staff/Governor and representation from the Universities of York and Leeds
- continued bi-weekly supervision sessions until transfer/release/disengagement

Sessions can be delivered in:

- small groups (up to 10)
- individually face to face



6steps

PROBLEM SUPPORT MENTOR SCHEME

- The problem support mentor scheme is a peer-led prisoner to prisoner opportunity.
- The scheme is led by the Universities of York and Leeds in collaboration with the prison.
- Prisoners are encouraged to tackle and address their own problems using a 6-step approach.
- If you need help in looking at how to deal with a problem speak to a Problem Support Mentor.

WHAT DO PRISONERS SAY ABOUT THE SCHEME?

I have learnt that there is nothing wrong with asking others for help if you need it. It's better to face your problems rather than ignore them.

We made plans in my life and I've set myself goals to see them through and stay assertive with a positive attitude to life.

WHAT DO STAFF SAY ABOUT THE SCHEME?


As an induction officer, I can see that the problem support mentor scheme has had a massively positive effect on the way new arrivals into the prison are put at ease and helped them through their first few days in the establishment.

Problem support mentors are readily available on the wing and easy to spot in their labelled t-shirts in order for new arrivals to approach them.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS UNIVERSITY OF YORK




**Problem Solving Skills
Problem Support Mentor Scheme
A Six Step Practical Guide
James' Story Workbook**



Prison _____
PSM Name _____
Prison Number _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS HM Prison & Probation Service


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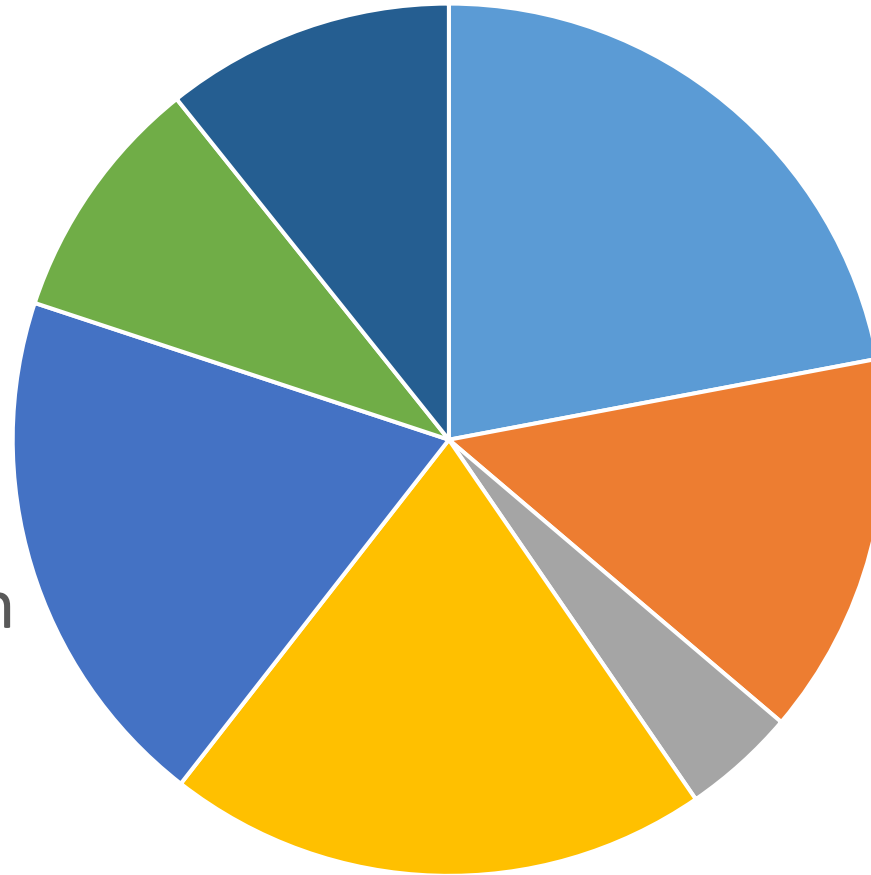


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Examples of data use so far....

- Housing
- Employment
- Bullying
- Family Relationships
- Physical/Mental Health
- Debt/Money
- Drugs/Addiction





Jack- A small group challenge

Jack is a male adult prisoner who has been sentenced for fraud and has brought shame upon his family. Jack has a wife and three children. His wife contacts him in prison to tell him that 'she can't do this anymore'.

WITH THANKS AND APPRECIATION TO:
THE MEN IN THE LOCAL PRISON
HMPPS INTERVENTION SERVICES
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

amanda.perry@york.ac.uk