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An evaluation of the Chromis programme: Treatment for psychopathic offenders

Philippa Laskey

Philippa.Laskey@cumbria.ac.uk

Introduction to Psychopathy

- Psychopathy is one of the most researched personality disorders in recent years (Caldwell, 2011).
- Psychopathy is a disorder with important implications for both the individual who experiences it and for the community they live in (Moreira et al., 2014).
- Psychopathy is a personality disorder comprising both affective and behavioural aspects (Dolan & Doyle, 2007)

Introduction to Psychopathy

Affective:

- Shallow affect
- Superficial charm
- Sense of grandiosity
- Manipulative
- Lack of remorse or guilt
- Callousness and lack of empathy
- Failure to accept responsibility

Introduction to Psychopathy

Behavioural:

- Poor behavioural control
- Need for stimulation and proneness to boredom
- Promiscuous sexual behaviour
- Impulsivity
- Criminal versatility

(Dolan & Doyle, 2007)

Can Psychopaths be Treated?

- The traditional view is that psychopathic individuals cannot be treated (Felthous, 2011).
- It has even been said that the wrong treatment programme can make their behaviour worse (Reidy, Kearns & DeGue, 2013).
- Effective treatment programmes for psychopathic offenders are important as psychopathy is a risk factor for violent recidivism (Laurell & Daderman, 2005).

What is Chromis?

- Chromis is a treatment programme for male offenders with high levels of psychopathic traits
- It aims to reduce their risk of violence
- It is used in one unit of HMP Frankland
- It aims to help offenders to engage in treatment, find new and fulfilling ways to live pro-socially and achieve their goals without the use of violence

(Tew & Atkinson, 2013)

What is Chromis?

The 6 core principles of Chromis:

- Complex needs and personal relevance
- Control and choice
- Future focused
- Novelty and stimulation
- Collaboration and transparency
- Status and credibility

What is Chromis?

- These principles aim to enable psychopathic offenders to engage in treatment
- It also enables them to see a personal benefit in behavioural change and the reduction of violence

(Tew & Atkinson, 2013)

The Structure of Chromis

The 3 main components of Chromis:

- Motivation and Engagement
- Cognitive Skills (Creative Thinking, Problem Solving, Handling Conflict)
- Schema Therapy

Motivation and Engagement

- Consists of 12 individual sessions
- Focuses on understanding what offenders really care about and want, and how they usually achieve this
- Uses the Good Lives Model as a tool to identify underlying themes for each participant

Cognitive Skills

There are 3 cognitive skills components:

- Creative thinking
 - Problem solving
 - Handling conflict
-
- These are designed to meet the needs of psychopathic offenders, by being challenging and stimulating
 - They will also provide them with ways to fulfil their life goals, without the use of violence

Cognitive Skills

These 3 components all work together to:

- Enable offenders to resolve problems, achieve goals, and make the most of opportunities
- Reduce boredom and monotony in offenders' lives
- Helps offenders to pro-socially avoid and resolve conflict, and to develop negotiation skills

Schema Therapy

- Explores and addresses the development and maintenance of unhelpful schema, beliefs, and consequent behaviours
- Is delivered in 3 stages: formulation, change, and generalisation, practice and maintenance

(Tew & Atkinson, 2013)

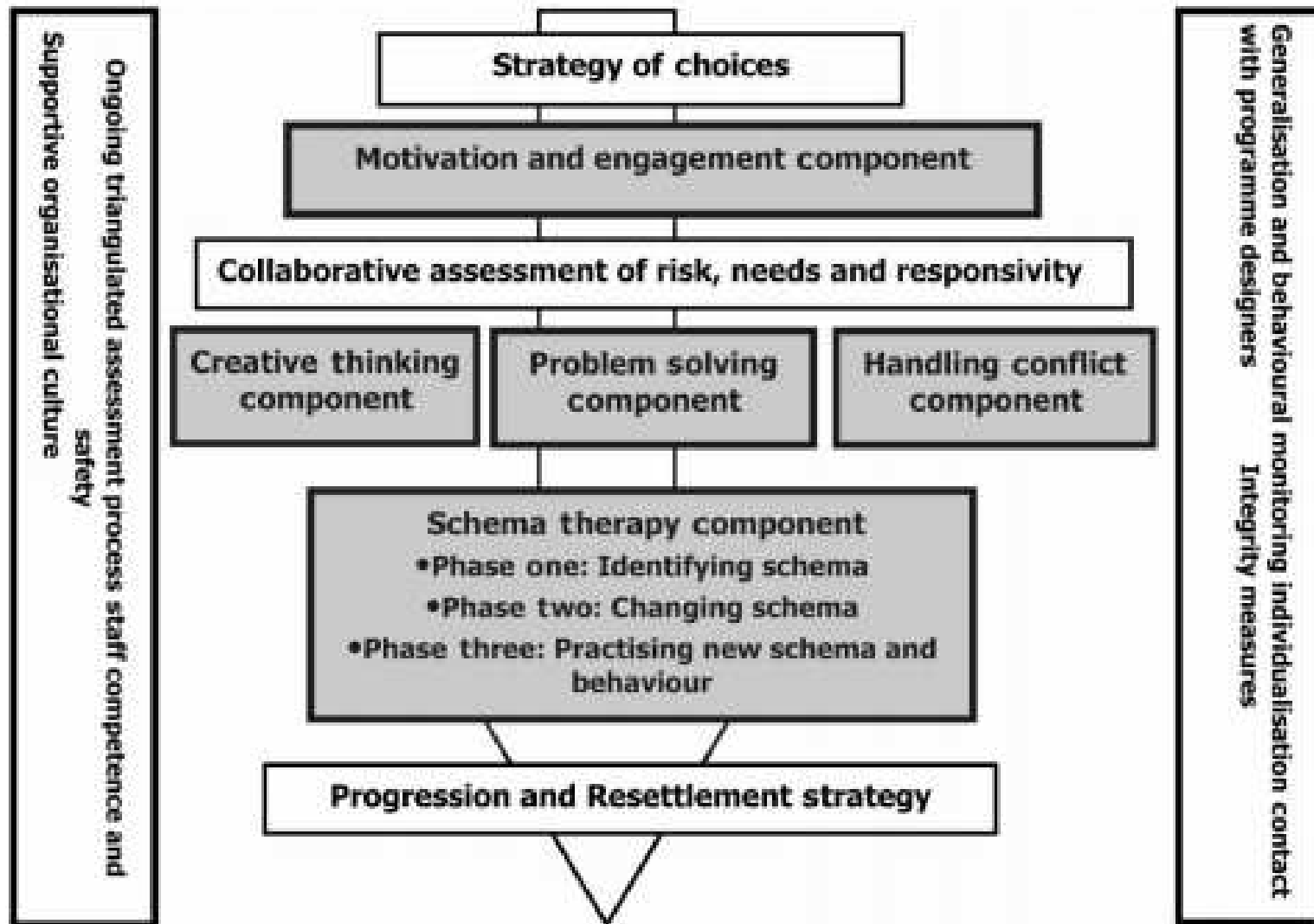


Figure 1. An overview of the elements of Chromis.
 Note: Grey-shaded areas are the Chromis components.

Does Chromis Work?

Research:

- Only one study investigating the results of Chromis
- Used 5 case study participants who had completed Chromis
- Found a reduction in self-reported anger and expected physical aggression, but there was a higher rate of verbal aggression than expected

(Tew, Dixon, Harkins & Bennett, 2012)

Does Chromis Work?

Evaluation:

- These results are promising but the increase in verbal aggression needs to be investigated
- Not enough time has passed to evaluate whether it reduces reoffending
- However, the use of techniques and principles that take into account participants' psychopathic traits is unique and appears to be an effective strategy
- Chromis is only run in one unit, in one prison. It is not known whether it would work elsewhere

Recommendations for the Future

- Continued research into the effectiveness of Chromis
- As more participants complete the programme, reoffending rates should be investigated
- Investigate its use for female offenders with high levels of psychopathy
- Identify whether this type of treatment would be useful for non-psychopathic offenders
- Consider the use of this programme in other prisons and institutions

Questions?

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