

Good Practice Case Review

Serious Youth Violence

BACKGROUND

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- Child N (pseudonym) - male aged 16 years old.
- Started with lower-level offending including theft, criminal damage and assault, progressed to serious violence with weapons.
- Part of a peer group with other children who had similar experiences and were known locally with a criminal 'label'.
- N was on school roll, however couldn't access the school site due to risk behaviour resulting in withdrawal, limited attendance, verbally abusing teachers and committing offences such as criminal damage.
- N was charged with GBH, spent time in custody, across two periods of remand.
- Subject to a bail package which included a timetable of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) - up to 25 hours per week of structured activity and an electronically monitored curfew.
- **During this period, positive changes were observed and there was no evidence of further offending during this period.**

Areas of good practice:

ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE

2

- A new educational provision was started.
- Bail condition stipulated education five days per week and established a daily routine of attending education and returning home for curfew.
- The education provider provided transport to and from their centre from N's home address, removing a further barrier to attendance.
- During school holidays the education provider offered one day per week timetable including activities such as gym sessions, outdoor activities, bike repair sessions and family days out.
- In school holidays N created his own routine such as arranging to go swimming or attend the gym with friends during periods in which were not covered by his timetable.

SEPARATING GROUPS

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- Members of the peer group involved in serious violence were removed from the local area during the period that N was subject to bail. Whilst coincidental it reduced the influence that they had on each other and forced N to seek out a different peer group.
- The peers N found undertook activities including video games, attending the gym and swimming. N began to take on the behaviours of this group.
- While the circumstances which separated this group are not something which could always be achieved, measures such as separating young people educationally or within placements and use of civil powers such as anti-social behaviour injunctions can also be tools used.

TEACHING SKILLS, AS OPPOSED TO FILLING TIME

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- N had attended educational provisions and activities that lacked a clear goal or skills, these provisions were enjoyable, however they had not given N any sense of achievement.
- At his new provision N quickly became excited to attend and during appointments with professionals he would show photos of what he had achieved during education sessions, including objects he had built.
- N's rhetoric began to change with regards to the future and he talked about pro-social aspirations such as gaining work. Over the school holiday period N commented on the fact that he was looking forward to the new term starting.
- Experiencing achievement outside of offending began to change his self-concept to a more positive image.

PROMOTING POSITIVE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

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- N's ISS electronically monitored curfew (16 hours per day) was a risk management strategy imposed by the courts to prevent him from committing further offences in the community. It had the unintended consequence of compelling him to spend more time with his family and this strengthened his relationship with them via a combination of increased time spent together and fewer adversarial interactions i.e. coming home late or being challenged about his behaviour in the community.
- Youth Justice Team agreed a number of variations to N's timetable for 'family activities' these included days out with his mother, mother's partner and younger brother to a theme park, water park, mini-golf and a local farm.
- Family activities during the school holiday period were supported by funding sourced through one of N's education providers.
- N and his mother commented that their relationship had improved significantly during the ISS period
- As family relationships improved, N's rhetoric around his offending changed and he began to voice more consideration of the impact of his behaviour on his family. Positive family relationships enhanced N's 'stake in society' and therefore his motivation to desist from offending.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

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It was noted that there were some practical issues with applying this learning to all cases, such as:

- Restrictions are not always available.
- Limited resources.
- Few local alternative provisions.
- Family dynamics are not always positive.

RESOURCES

Click here for:

Effective
Support
Document

Click here for:

Graduated
Response
Tool