

Reducing Re-offending by young people through effective offending behaviour intervention

Summary

Preventing offending and re-offending are the core aims at the heart of any criminal justice organisation. From the implementation of Youth Offending Teams nationally in April 2000 Sunderland quickly established itself as a high performing award winning service reaching the top of the national performance tables in April 2005. Re-offending rates, however, remained stubbornly high. It was identified that a more structured and co-ordinated approach to offending behaviour intervention was required and just one year later dramatic improvements in performance were achieved.

Key Learning

- **A structured approach** – whilst offending behaviour work with young people should always be needs led the absence of a structured approach can result in an ad hoc and inconsistent approach that is not evidenced based.
- **Engagement** – engagement of service users in the design and development of offending behaviour intervention provides both a learning experience for those involved as well as a useful resource for work with other young people.
- **Evaluation** – outcome monitoring and evaluation must be built into offending behaviour work from the outset. This requires investment in and commitment to, appropriate performance management information systems and dedicated, specialist performance monitoring personnel.

Background

Sunderland is the largest city in England's North East Region with an overall population of 280,600 (2006 mid year estimate) and a youth population of 28,421 (2007 mid year estimate).

In March 2006 Sunderland made it's annual performance submission to the Youth Justice Board which showed that re-offending had *increased* by 1.3% against the baseline, despite a national target to reduce re-offending by 5%.

'The problems and how we tackled them'

Sunderland YOS realised that a clearer offending behaviour intervention strategy was needed to reduce re-offending by young people. Our approach included:-

- The development of an Offending Behaviour Resources *Directory*. This involved investment in a range of offending behaviour programmes such as 'Be Safe Weapons' as well as offending behaviour resources such as work packs, DVD's and specialist board games.
- Development of an Offending Behaviour *Matrix* linking criminogenic need to the resources available. This enabled practitioners to link the risks and needs of individual offenders identified through assessment with resources available through the matrix and directory. It also enabled a tiered approach based on the offending career and stage of the young person in the criminal justice system.

- Appointment of a dedicated Group Work Co-ordinator to deliver accredited programmes, train other staff for co-delivery and advise on appropriate interventions to be delivered on a one to one basis linked with assessed need.
- Identified gaps in available resources and pro-actively sourced relevant material and participated in national research to identify solutions e.g. interventions to address racially motivated offending.
- Involved service users in the design and development of new resources to ensure interventions appropriate to young people and to address gaps in the resources directory.
- Built on the performance management and evaluation capacity of the service through a dedicated and specialist performance team to ensure the evaluation of offending behaviour interventions to evidence 'what works'.
- Involved youth justice practitioner staff in the evaluation of individual resources both to ensure appropriate resources were available and to ensure staff were aware of what was available.

By involving our service users in the design and development of interventions we were able to produce a number of offending behaviour resources for work with other young people and we are now able to offer these resources to other Youth Offending Teams/Services and agencies working with young people. The resources we developed include:-

- *'Cut Up' DVD - A film made by young people about the effects of knife crime. A worksheet accompanies the DVD*
- *Ontrack Board Game - This board game encourages young people to explore risk-taking behaviour through guided discussions on reasons, consequences and possible solutions*
- *'That's Entertainment' DVD - A film made by young people. The film and accompanying workshop pack provides activities and discussion topics for use with young people when considering the problems of under-age drinking, drug use, boredom and anti-social behaviour*
- *'Tackle It' Interactive DVD - A film made by young people showing an exploration of myths and realities surrounding substance misuse. The DVD provides workshop facilitators with scenarios and up to date information to use when working with young people to increase their understanding of the issues.*

Key Personnel

The appointment of a dedicated offending behaviour Groupwork Co-ordinator was considered critical to the success of the offending behaviour strategy. Eric Hodge took up his post as Group Work Co-ordinator in 2006 and has since gone on to be awarded the North East Youth Justice Award 2008 in the category of 'Contribution to tackling youth crime'.

Equally important was the decisions taken to ensure that the service Planning and Information Team was strengthened with capacity building in relation to analysis

skills. The dedicated specialist data analysts and performance staff within the team ensure that evaluation of programmes and interventions is developed from the outset with robust performance data on the success of significant offending behaviour programmes. The team is headed up by Kelly Davison-Pullan, Policy and Performance Manager who is a key member of the service strategic management team.

What could we have done better?’

Through our performance monitoring work we have become aware outcomes are not achieved for all offending behaviour. We have got better at ensuring that evaluation and performance monitoring are built in from the outset of programmes rather than at the end. We have also improved at taking tough decisions to re-design, re-shape or cease to deliver those programmes that are not producing the desired outcomes.

‘Outcomes and impact’

Our resources directory was identified as good practice by the national joint inspection team for Youth Offending Services. We are now able to evidence the success of specific offending behaviour programmes such as the Be Safe Weapons programme which aims to address knife and other weapons offending by children and young people. Our figures show that 9 months after the programme 85% of those going through the programme have not committed a further violence or weapons related offence.

By having clear performance data on the success of specific offending behaviour programmes we are able to understand better how our offending behaviour work is contributing to our overall performance on reducing re-offending. In March 2007 Sunderland YOS achieved an 8.5% reduction in re-offending, exceeding the national target of 5%. With the alignment of the national performance framework for Youth Offending Services with local authority performance monitoring and Local Area Agreements (LAA's) local monitoring shows that at the end of 2008 we are well on track to meet our target for 2008 -2009.

Next steps

As a service Sunderland Youth Offending Service is committed to testing out new and innovative ways of working to reduce re-offending. We will continue to measure the effectiveness of these interventions and re-shape and re-design services where outcomes are not achieved. Through our work as a Beacon authority for reducing re-offending we are committed to sharing with others ‘what works’ in reducing re-offending and the lessons we have learnt along the way. We will do this through supporting a range of national and local events and publishing information to a wide audience.

Further information

To purchase one of our offending behaviour resources please click below for an information sheet and order form [click here](#)

To view a copy of our offending behaviour resources directory and matrix please contact us from the details below.

For further information regarding this case study please, the Sunderland 2008-2009 Beacon for Reducing Re-offending or the work of Sunderland YOS please visit our website, e-mail us or contact us at the postal address below. Please direct any enquiries to Kelly Davison-Pullan, Policy and Performance Manager, Sunderland Youth Offending Service.

Sunderland YOS Website:- www.sunderland.gov.uk/yos

Sunderland YOS Reducing Re-offending Beacon 2008-2009 webpage:
www.sunderland.gov.uk/yos/project11.asp

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