

Sunderland Youth Offending Service

Quarterly Newsletter: Issue 3 / March 2004

Welcome to the 3rd edition of the YOS newsletter...

...for staff, colleagues and service users, to keep you in touch with what is happening in the Service. Your contributions to future newsletters would be very welcome. Details of how to contact us are on the back page. We hope you enjoy this edition.

In this edition we:

- Report on our recent successful magistrates training event.
- Listen to feedback from young people who attended the Mentoring event.
- Offer views from a parent and young person in relation to 'What Works?'
- Report on our Viewpoint research.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP – MAGISTRATES TRAINING EVENT

A magistrates training event was held for magistrates of the Sunderland and Houghton-le-Spring courts in October 2003. Over 30 magistrates attended the day, with managers and practitioners from the Youth Offending Service. The event gave the Youth Offending Service further opportunity to develop a better understanding amongst magistrates of the pre-court Reprimand and Final Warning process as well as the ASSET assessment tool used by the service. The interactive style of the event was enjoyed by magistrates and allowed them to 'have a go', at the assessment tool, developing their understanding and thinking around assessment. Magistrate Carol

Robson said the day was a very useful exercise *"it makes you aware of all of the information you need in order to make decisions"*, she said *"We have to ask more questions. We really need to know if drugs are involved, what support parents are giving etc"*. Peter Rowbottom, Justices' Clerk at Houghton-le-Spring and Sunderland magistrates court feels the events are especially important for the magistrates and the YOT staff to build up a rapport, he said *'this event has helped magistrates in their awareness of YOT issues and also with engagement in the court room'*.



Community Payback – Repairing the costs of crime to communities

The Community Payback scheme has had a successful year in 2003. End of year performance figures, produced in December 2003, show an exceptional performance with the scheme achieving massive increases in the numbers of young people repairing the costs of their crime. Figures for young people involved in reparative activities have soared from 10% at the end of 2002 to 85% of programmes with a restorative element at the end of 2003. This has been achieved through innovative schemes and the hard work of the Reparation Team. Feedback from community members involved has been extremely positive. Brian Welsh Church Warden involved in the St Matthew's Church scheme, New Silksworth in which young offenders restored an overgrown church graveyard said *'It has been many years since the churchyard looks as good as it does at the moment... we at St Matthew's hope that our relationship with Sunderland Youth Offending Service will be an ongoing project'*. Well done to all involved.



RJ Worker Alan Turnbull and a young person on Reparation clear brambles from the Churchyard at St Matthews Church

Youth Offending Service Children Fund Mentoring Project

Mentoring Social Event, Newcastle Life Science Centre, Tuesday 28 October 2003

The Children Fund Mentoring Project is part of the Youth Offending Service preventative programme and works with young people under the age of criminal responsibility (10 years). A Partnership scheme with Sunderland Children Fund, the scheme aims to prevent children becoming involved in offending and anti-social behaviour by providing a positive adult role model through whom they can explore issues that place them at risk.



children's fund



science centre

where there's always something



In October 2003 the project decided to hold a review to consult young service users about improvements in service delivery. Two of the young people suggested that the only way we could improve the service would be to hold an event where they would have the opportunity to meet up with other young people and their mentors. To make sure it would be fun as well, we decided to use the Life Science Centre in Newcastle so that the young people would have the chance to enjoy themselves as a group. We started by asking the young people what they thought a mentor was. The young people were then asked to “make” their ideal mentor by drawing a life size picture and decorating it.

The mentor young people drew in the picture on the right is called “Betty”. Betty has a big smile on her face because she is so cheerful. She also

has “Happy” written on her t-shirt, as mentors need to be happy people. Betty also has a big heart because she is kind and thoughtful. Inside Betty’s head is a whole list of different activities that she has thought of doing with a young person. This is her thought box.

The group on the right called the mentor they drew “Mary”. Mary has her hands up in the air because she is full of energy and enthusiasm. Mary also has a big beaming smile to show that she is very happy and kind.



The group decided that Mary needed to have lots of money so that she could take them to lots of places. To show this in the picture she was given lots of gold jewellery!

Ministerial Invitation

Judith Hay (YOS Manager) and Alan Donnelly (ISSP Programme Manager) were asked to a Downing Street reception hosted by the Prime Minister and Mrs Blair on the evening of 28th January 2004. Attendees included the Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, Mrs Blair and 200 guests drawn from Youth Justice, the Secure Estate, Probation and partner organisations.

The invitation was an acknowledgement of the quality service delivered to young people and their families, and should be taken as a massive compliment to all the team. Well done!



WHAT WORKS?

In the last edition we looked at case examples of 'what works' from the practitioners perspective. In this edition we look at 'what works' from the perspectives of young people and their parents/carers.

Views from a Parent, written in her own words in a letter to Pamela Anderson, Substance Misuse Worker, Youth Offending



As promised I would like to write a few words of thanks and appreciation for all your efforts in helping my son see the light, so to speak.

It has been a hard few years, there are few words to describe what caring parents go through when they have a child that is angry with the world and more so with themselves for not only letting themselves down but the ones that they love as well. It was very hard to be supportive and loving.

The only way I could describe my son's behaviour was evil, I make no excuses for this and have to accept what happened because he was unhappy and did not know how to handle his anger. It has took a couple of custodial sentences to put him into reality, but this I believe was not the reason for his turn around, but his counselling and encouragement to put things right was his way.

I believe 1 of these encouragements was a DJ course he went on, paid by the Princes Trust, it was one of his biggest stepping stones to start believing in himself and that not all of him was bad. This course gave his esteem a great boost and gave him the courage to leave the drugs and theft behind him. Leading on from that he is now doing another course called 'In to Work', this will give him skills that will help him obtain work in the future, God willing.

There are a lot of kids out there that are still angry just like my son. It is hard to help these kids and this is where parents need help. I was fortunate to have a loving supportive husband, and I am aware that this is not always the case with some children. As a parent it isn't always easy to ask for help when things are going wrong, and I've got to say that a lot of doors were shut in my face when I did plead for help.

I heard a lady on the radio a few days ago talking about parents being at fault for their behaviour. She was obviously not speaking from experience because she has not spoken to parents of these kids, she just hung, drew and quartered, and this is a reason for parents not seeking help because of this stigma of you should be able to cope because you are the parent.

I found the YOT and other agencies very helpful after the event. We need to put more things in place before we get as far as custody.

I hope that I have not gone on too much and hope that a small voice from a mere parent will at least be listened to and considered when decisions are made regarding these children.

With Best Regards...

Views from a young person, written in her own words to Marie Form, Mentoring Coordinator, Sunderland Youth Offending Service.



Last year while at school, I was bullied every day.

My Mam and Dad went to school about it, but nothing was done. One day I went to the park with my friends and while I was there, a couple of older girls came up to us and started picking on us. Then all of a sudden one of them punched me in the face. Some of my friends ran round to get my mam and dad. I went to hospital and my mam and dad phoned the police. The girl who hit me was prosecuted. I was so scared I wouldn't go out side. Mam and dad took me out of school and started teaching me at home, it was then I heard about the mentoring program.

My mam got in touch with Jane and she came out to see us and she told us how it worked and that she would match me up with a mentor. It only took a couple of weeks and they matched me up with Joanne, at first I was nervous but when Joanne came to see me she was really nice. About 2 week into the program Jane took us to the Science Life Center in Newcastle, I was gutted that Joanne couldn't come because she had to work, but when I got there I had a chance to meet other mentors and children in the same situation as me.

Now once a week I go out with Joanne. At first we went to the Wacky Warehouse for some thing to eat, now each week we go some were different. I like talking to Joanne because I feel happy talking to her about things and if I have a problem she helps me. I hope I keep going out with Joanne in the future and at Christmas we exchanged gifts.

Age 12 years old

Getting to know young people's views – Interactive game style!

Getting user feedback on service provision can be difficult when working in a criminal justice organisation where service users are young people compelled by law to comply with our services. In order to achieve just that Sunderland Youth Offending service has been using Viewpoint. This is an interactive multi-media system for eliciting feedback from young people. It aims to solicit the views of young people through an interactive questionnaire designed to encourage participation by engaging the attention of young people using a 'computer game' setting. Non-threatening, it gives young people, including those with limited literacy and numeracy abilities, the opportunity to feedback on their experience of supervision by the Youth Offending Service independently of their YOS supervisor.



The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive! 80% of those questioned said supervision made them think about how their offending affected both their family and victims. 23% said they didn't know what they were trying to achieve with supervision and 94% of young people said that supervisors listened to what they said and knew when they were trying.

Further information about the research is available from Brian Robson, Information Analyst, and Youth Offending Service.

Getting to Know... John Pearson

Name: John Pearson
Role/Official Title: Youth Offending Service Officer, Bail & Remand Team
(also Shop Steward & Health & Safety representative for Unison)
Place of Work: Sunderland YOS, 145 High Street



Background: Initially trained as PE teacher and worked in outdoor centres for 5-6 years, including the provision of outdoor activities for young people on Intermediate Treatment Orders. Through this and the contacts I made I got the job in relation to the supervision of Intermediate Treatment Orders. Overall I've worked in the field of youth justice for 17 years.

In one paragraph, how would you describe your role? My main responsibilities are to write Pre Sentence Reports, be on an overnight rota for young people who are arrested and held overnight and do court duty as Court Duty Officer.

What do you enjoy most about your job? Enjoy writing PSR's, visiting YP's – speaking to schools and collating information. Every case different, finished package, out comes. Compliments in court. Good PSR does make a difference.

What would you like to achieve in the future (either personally or within the job)? Just want to be happy. Personal happiness is my biggest goal.

Contacting the Youth Offending Service:

For further information you can contact the Youth Offending Service at:

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For all newsletter enquiries, please contact the Research, Policy and Information Team on 0191 566 3048

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