

Just Briefs

A Briefing Paper from the Youth Justice Trust

Evaluation Summary

Greater Manchester Keeping Young People Engaged Project 2004-2007

Background

The Youth Justice Trust has spent the past 4 years evaluating the KYPE Project - a partnership between Greater Manchester Residuary Body; local Connexions services; Greater Manchester Youth Offending Teams/Services and Hindley and Lancaster Farms Young Offenders Institutions. The project is funded by the Youth Justice Board and in 2006/07 received additional ESF support through the Ecube partnership.

The purpose of the project is to increase the number of children and young people under criminal supervision into education, training or employment (ETE) placements. It operates in 2 ways:

Firstly, by the provision of a learning mentor in each local authority area of Greater Manchester (with 3 in the city of Manchester to reflect its size) who works alongside colleagues in the Youth Offending Team/Service and Connexions to provide time and support to assist children and young people into ETE placements. This is a mix of practical and caring activities, including understanding what previously went wrong with school attendance and working out ways to overcome barriers which are in the control of the child in the future; helping the young person put together a CV; advising on how to handle the disclosure of previous convictions; talking to other colleagues about suitable placements or finding/sourcing these; encouraging young people to apply for training/jobs; ensuring that they get to job interviews and encouraging the young people to believe more fully in themselves.

The second aspect to the project is providing advice, information and guidance to children and young people who are held in the 2 major prisons for young people from Greater Manchester, Hindley and Lancaster Farms Young Offender Institutions. The 4 Personal Advisers who work for the KYPE project in prisons (3 in Hindley and 1 in Lancaster Farms) are employed by the local Connexions services. Besides working with all young people received from courts in Greater Manchester directly, the staff liaise with the learning mentors, Connexions staff and YOT/YOS staff in the community so that continuity of service can be achieved.

The project serves all areas of Greater Manchester, which is comprised of 2 cities and 8 metropolitan areas. The population of Greater Manchester is put at over 2.5 million, with a little over 270,000 young people in the 'youth' population i.e. aged between the ages of 10 and 17. It is mainly with young people of this age that the project works.

In 2006, the court 'throughput' for the youth offending teams/services of Greater Manchester, ie those taken to court, was 8,415 individuals. Of these, many received disposals and sentences which would entail supervision by the YOT/YOS.

The project in context

In some ways, the project is misnamed given that most schoolchildren under YOT/YOS supervision are not on school roll, or are on roll but do not attend or have significant infrequencies in attendance. Similarly, most young people under YOT/YOS supervision are not in training or employment. In consequence, most of the work undertaken by KYPE staff is trying to get young people engaged and working with them on barriers to school, training or employment placement.

Indications of the size or scale of the work comes from a survey conducted in Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire of over 1,000 children and young people under YOT supervision where 82% of YOT clients were assessed as needing medium or intensive support from Connexions services, compared to 9% in the general youth population.¹

At a number of prisons across England, the number of young people received who had completed a school career (including special needs) were assessed as less than one in ten.²

Education, training and employment provide important components for the prevention of youth crime and the reduction of further offending. For instance, a feeling on the part of the child that they have failed at school increases the likelihood of their involvement with the criminal justice system by 90%.³ Once under supervision, the factor which provides the greatest level of protection in general against a reoccurrence of crime is the finding of suitable and appropriate employment.⁴

A growing body of literature points to the dangers of taking an overly mechanistic response to these indicators. For instance, research commissioned by the Youth Justice Board into ETE issues for YOTs revealed important differences between what was recorded and reported to the Youth Justice Board for performance purposes and the levels of activity which individual young people were engaged in on the days on which researchers looked to verify activities.⁵

Furthermore, young people who have been assisted by the KYPE project highlighted the importance of relationships and other invisible but important concepts such as self-belief, confidence and personal growth. These are often overlooked when assessing young people's journeys.

¹ The finding is published in "On The Case: a survey of over 1,000 children and young people under YOT supervision in West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester" and is available from the Youth Justice Trust. See www.youth-justice-trust.org.uk

² "The Learning Alliance National e2e Offender Pilot" evaluated by the Youth Justice Trust . Final Report 2004.

³ See "Risk & Protective Factors Associated with Youth Crime" researched for the Youth Justice Board by Communities that Care 2002

⁴ "What do we learn from over 400 research studies on the effectiveness of treatment with juvenile delinquents" M.Lipsey, 1995

⁵ "Barriers to Employment" Youth Justice Board 2006

Numbers of young people working with KYPE

Over the 3 years of its operation, KYPE has worked with 1,417 young people, placing 1,277 into ETE. This indicates that 90% of young people worked with have been placed in to ETE. However, some of them may have been placed more than once, i.e. where they have received a custodial sentence or for other reason have dropped out of ETE. This means that the actual percentage placed into ETE may be lower, but nonetheless, given the barriers faced by young offenders in accessing provision, these achievements are significant.

	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	Totals
Education	155	137	168	460
Training	164	197	201	562
Employment	76	83	96	255
Total Placements	395	417*	465*	1277

*These figures are for new entrants to KYPE. In each year there are a number of young people on existing caseloads (266 over the 3 years). These have been separated in order to avoid issues around double counting.

It is worth noting that whilst most young people report that their first choice would be a job, only 20% were placed into employment, reflecting both the difficulty in finding and establishing links with employers who are prepared to take on young offenders and the fact that these young people often do not yet have the required skills.

Themes emerging from the evaluation

The evaluation focussed on 3 distinct areas:

- 1 Establishing the project – baseline data and initial themes
- 2 What young people feel about the project
- 3 Partnership attitudes

Some of the themes found include:

The value of the relationship and advocacy

Research has shown that contact with a significant caring adult outside of the family can have considerable impact on young people, success being largely characterised by friendship and mutual respect. Mentors in these studies stress “factors such as the need for honesty and trust; agreement over boundaries; patience and the ability to listen and not to judge.”⁶

Other research has examined young people’s views around which features of project/agency approach they found helpful. The vast majority suggest 6 key factors:

- To talk and listen to the young person
- To build a trusting and genuine relationship with the young person
- To encourage and praise rather than blame them
- To focus on the future rather than the past
- To take into account background problems
- To offer practical help with addressing problems such as homelessness, unemployment and drug abuse (Barry 2005)⁷

⁶ Porteous, D *Mentoring in Youth Justice*, in The RHP Companion to Youth Justice (2005) Dorset RHP

⁷ Barry, M (2005) “A Curriculum by any other name...”. NYA Youth & Policy (86) pp. 19-32

Building trusting relationships with young people, particularly those with multiple levels of need can and does form the mainstay of KYPE work. One-to-one intensive support is key, as is the flexibility and perseverance needed to work with chaotic young people. Further to this is the consideration of past as well as present problems and the acknowledgement of possible previous negative experiences of professional agencies, ie the very services set up to help them.

This theme presented without direct line of questioning and ran throughout all the interviews with young people, partners and learning mentors:

"They seem to take more interest in what the LMs do with young people and in what they are there for. They see it differently from the reparation they do with ISSP and DTO workers, it's more "for the future not constantly looking at the past". (learning mentor)

"I was seeing someone from Connexions for about 18 months, she didn't tell me about Job Seekers Allowance, didn't do nothing. Then I met B, she's just a star. She took me to Didsbury Launch Pad (which would have been 3 buses otherwise)... she's the only one that's really helped and got me everything she said she would. I didn't even have a CV till B sat with me and we did it." (young person)

Importance of Partners working together and understanding role of worker

Partners in this context are staff from Connexions who manage and provide personal advice to children in trouble; from youth offending teams or services (YOT/S) covering a range of roles such as prevention, restorative practices, intensive supervision and surveillance and resettlement or from other partners who operate within the YOT/S such as education staff. Additional insights were gained from interviews with Connexions staff who manage and provide services to children in trouble within the young offender institutions of Hindley and Lancaster Farms. Finally, 10 of the 12 Learning Mentors were re-interviewed in order to gauge the views and understandings of the same issues and how these may have changed from a more direct service delivery position over the course of the project. The majority of the learning mentors had been with the project since its inception.

Initially, due to the openness of the project and the numbers of agencies with similar aims, there was potential for misunderstanding and confusion of roles. However, where time has been taken by the relevant agencies to discuss and agree complementary working relationships, this has resulted in a strength. This process has been noted in evaluation of other projects, where the more successful partnerships were the ones where time and effort was spent in explaining the Connexions mission and in allaying the fears of potential partners. In this sense, partnership was a "practical accomplishment" to be worked at if it were to be sustained, rather than simply taken for granted (Coles,2007).

Unrealistic targets and barriers to provision

A large number of respondents from all disciplines interviewed noted that for this group of young people, full-time engagement in existing provision and the existing targets (90% of YOT clients to be in ETE placements) were unrealistic. The motivation to attend and the ability to take part in what is required and sustain the place are not factors that are necessarily already there. Young people need social and emotional support to be ETE ready. Sending them forward for a placement without this preparatory input could easily result in the withdrawal (either self-withdrawal or enforced) from a placement and the construction of a further emotional barrier.

All public service agencies involved with ETE are subject to performance measures and targets and unfortunately in the case of schools, providers, YOI and YOT, these are seen to militate against each other.

Whilst ideally targets are set with the intention to better measure good practice and have beneficial impact on the relevant group, when applied crudely and without consideration of the environment, the exercise can be single, self-serving and have originally unintended and damaging consequences.

Other research, (Yates and Payne, 2007) has highlighted the point that "alongside a concern for recognising the broad, holistic needs of young people, there persists a focus on hard "performance indicators" especially targets for reducing the number of NEET young people", perhaps suggesting that whilst these two factors may not be mutually exclusive, they are not supportive of each other either; "strong pressures to meet hard performance targets are apt to undermine the processes of participative engagement, flexibility and work on softer outcomes through which work with young people most productively functions". (p.37)

What next?

Focus group discussion with YOT and Connexions practitioners and Managers has raised ideas for what is needed to develop this area of work:

- Provision which meets the needs of children and young people who also offend, and provision which is more routinely available
- Much more flexibility around timetables, learning styles and specifically much more workshop-style learning. Flexibility around criteria for funding and performance targets which reflect the needs of children and young people who have also offended and more creativity and stimulation in style, content and expectation
- Cash and resources to help create courses in the absence of these arriving centrally or regionally, as well as cash to help with day-to-day concerns
- A decent or realistic training and employment allowance, simple to administer, which helps convey the message that training is valued, that employment is valued, and that a young person undertaking these activities is valued
- A sheltered work environment, where young people can be brought on at their own pace, with support to help bridge the transition from workshop to employment
- Some means of lowering the academic bar, which has been raised on apprenticeships such as construction, which takes account of skills and attributes which are not measured in GCSE grades A to C

- Staff who are employed to help find and encourage employers to come forward with work experience placements i.e. possibly on a trial basis for both parties over an agreed set period, with time to support young people through a trial, from which permanent jobs might follow
- Training for teachers in how to engage children with behaviours which are challenging, alongside appropriate support within the school or classroom environment, such as more one to one support
- More KYPE mentors

Conclusion

KYPE has been demonstrated to be flexible, responsive and having the ability to offer intensive one-to-one work. Partners are clear what the project offers as a general aim and how that translates in practice locally. They are keen to explore the means to maintain and further the resource.

KYPE'S development so far over the last 3 years in providing holistic support to children and young people through partnerships and multi-disciplinary teams holds relevant lessons for integrated services in the dismantling of professional barriers and building an effective whole-service approach towards achieving their goals.

For more information about KYPE please call Greater Manchester Residuary Body on 0161 227 7000

For more information about this report please call Judith Foster at the Youth Justice Trust on 0161 233 6800



4th Floor, Cheetwood House
Manchester
M1 1FZ

www.youth-justice-trust.org.uk