

Throughcare: Tackling bullying

<p>Context: Bullying in the secure estate</p> <p>Several YOI inspection reports highlight that more could be done to challenge bullying in YOI's¹</p> <p>In a research survey on young people's experiences of prison it was found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41% of young people had experienced verbal bullying whilst in custody; • 24% of young people had had an act of physical violence perpetrated against them whilst in custody. • 36% of young people said that they felt unsafe at some time while in custody² <p>The UNCRC 2002 Report highlighted concerns about bullying in the secure estate;</p> <p><i>'The committee is also extremely concerned about the conditions that children experience in detention.....noting the very poor staff-child ratio, high levels of violence, bullying, self harm'</i></p>	<p>Young people's right to protection from harm within the secure estate:</p> <p>United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty</p> <p><i>'The juvenile justice system should uphold the rights and safety and promote the physical and mental well being of juveniles. Imprisonment should be used as a last resort.'</i>³</p> <p>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</p> <p><i>'State Parties recognize the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth...'</i></p>
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¹ HM Inspectorate of Prisons

² HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2004). Juveniles in Custody 2002 -2003

³ UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, 1990 I.1

Wetherby YOI

Wetherby Young Offenders Institution houses up to 360 remanded or sentenced young men.

Wetherby YOI aims to address the needs of all vulnerable young people in their care. Young people may be vulnerable even if they are carrying out the bullying, a victim of bullying or violence. In many cases a young person who engages in bullying behaviour is also a victim of such behaviour. In order to deal with instances of bullying within the unit Wetherby have come up with an effective recording system which directly informs those who may need to take action.

What does the project do?

All incidents of violence and intimidation of all intensity levels are recorded on a central log. Though the data is inputted into a simple spreadsheet, its central nature ensures that all incidents are recorded and seen as part of a whole issue rather than dealt with on an incident-by-incident basis.

Once a staff member is aware that an incident has taken place they must then record the young person's name and the details of the incident on the log. The spreadsheet is calibrated so that each individual's risk factor is weighted on both the severity and the frequency of the events.

Those individual's whose overall score reaches 10 or more are automatically highlighted and discussed and reviewed at a weekly meeting.

Key members of staff from all areas of the unit attend the meeting. The meeting is chaired by the key social worker. This multi-disciplinary approach ensures that all members of staff working with the young person are aware of the problems they may be facing. This additional knowledge allows them to work more effectively with the young person and the strategies taken therefore have a more lasting impact on their behaviour.

Likewise the new and more complete information relating to the young person may lead to staff suggesting alternative methods of tackling a young persons behaviour, for example, recommending CAMHS assessment.

Once the case has been discussed and reviewed, a briefing summarising the points made and decisions taken are circulated around the unit for reference by staff interacting with the affected young person or persons.

Additionally the spreadsheet form which the recording procedure takes means that further analysis can take place, for example, where the incidents took place, the ethnicity of those involved, the age of those involved, and the ratios of bullies to victims. Looking at this data, in an easy to access graph format, in this way means that further measures can be taken to lower the levels of incidents taking place. If, for example, 25% more incidents take place in area A than area B then the unit will then look at the distribution of staff between these two areas. Likewise recording the ethnicity of those involved enables staff to keep on top of racial tensions that could be building up and

stamp out any racism present in the unit, thereby protecting the rights of ethnic minorities.

Outcomes

- Instances of bullying within Wetherby YOI have fallen;
- Staff value the chance to assess a young persons needs in a multi-disciplinary way.

How is the service relevant to the juvenile secure estate?

There has been Home Office anti-bullying strategy for prisons and YOI's since 1993. All YOI's have an anti-bullying coordinator, but the majority of their workload is based on formal complaints and disciplinary procedures rather than a proactive approach to supporting young people affected by bullying.

How is the service an example of a rights based and participatory approach?

- Young people's safety is valued;
- Young people's safety has increased;
- Young people's emotional, physical and mental well-being are placed at the fore-front of tackling instances of bullying.