

Throughcare: Mental health in the secure estate

<p>Context: the mental health of young offenders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The high incidence of mental health problems in the secure estate is well documented¹.• The proportion of young people in custody identified as having mental health problems can be as high as 86%².• Young offenders have experienced an above average number of stressful events in their lives, with 20% of young offenders experiencing five or more stressful events e.g. death of close family member, physical and sexual abuse³• Research has also found that the mental health needs of young offenders are often not identified and are neglected while they are in custody⁴• The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2002 highlighted concerns about the high level of suicide and self harm in young offender institutions.	<p>The rights of young offenders with mental health needs</p> <p>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p> <p><i>'[State Parties] shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery of a child victim of abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment'</i>⁵</p> <p>United Nations Rules For the Protection of Juvenile Deprived of their Liberty</p> <p><i>'Every Juvenile shall receive adequate medical care both preventative and remedial, including dental, ophthalmological and mental health care'</i>⁶</p> <p><i>'The medical services provided to juvenile should seek to detect and should treat any physical or mental illness, substance abuse or other condition which may hinder the integration of the juvenile into society'</i>⁷</p>
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¹ Kroll et al, 1999, Mc Manus et al (1984), Williams and Hollis (1999), Nichol et al (2000), Lader, Singleton and Meltzer (2000).

² Nichol et al (2000)

³ Lader et al (2000)

⁴ Nichols et al (2000)

⁵ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989), Article 39.

⁶ UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, (1990), H.49.

⁷ UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, (1990), H.51.

New Directions, Aberdeenshire

What does the service do?

The service works with young people (Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire) aged between 12 and 18 who have persistent/ serious offending behaviours, with the aim of reducing their offending behaviour and diverting them from secure accommodation and/or custody. This is achieved by undertaking comprehensive assessments using ASSET and providing intensive interventions utilising cognitive behavioural programmes to challenge negative attitudes and beliefs, which are guided by SMART action plans.

Although the project depends on a dedicated, qualified staff team and its partners, the outcome successes belong entirely to the young people that work with the project. They work with New Directions on a voluntary basis, agree to commit to a minimum of twice weekly meetings and work with their project worker for an average of 14 months. This is a demanding schedule for teenagers who are usually involved with several other services, have complex needs and often unstable and unpredictable lives.

Throughout their programmes young people will face up to the consequences of the offending behaviours, including the impact on victims, make hard decisions about their lifestyles, their peers and attitudes. They will often be asked to repair fractious relationships with their families and face replacing their negative reputations within their communities with more respectable behaviours.

Partnership working

The project's work with young people depends on a multi-agency approach. Their main partners are from the Local Authority social work teams; Children and Families and the Youth Justice Fieldwork team in the city. Without this multi-agency approach, many of the social and welfare needs of the young people working with the project would go unmet.

Outcomes

A service outcomes evaluation was undertaken during 2007, which reported the following outcomes:

- 82% of the young people who completed their work with New Directions reduced/ceased their offending behaviours.
This group reduced their numbers of offending incidents by 71%.
- 88% of young people were diverted from secure placement or a custodial sentence.
- In addition to these primary outcomes, the young people and their families who worked with the service reported increases in self-confidence, better relationships with family and friends, increased awareness of risky situations, more opportunities to access other services and participation in local activities.

How is the service an example of rights based and participative practice?

- The young people are treated as individuals and receive a service appropriate to their individual need.
- The young people have contact with someone from the outside youth justice framework.
- Young people are asked for feedback on the service they receive.

Other Work

Wetherby YOI have recently opened Keppel Unit for particularly vulnerable young men e.g. those who are self harming. It is too soon to have evaluated the effectiveness of this unit.