

Targeted youth support

Integrated support for vulnerable young people – emerging practice



Personalised support provides opportunities for young offenders

Area: Wiltshire County Council, South West England, population approximately 450,000

“Young offenders need effective pre-release support to help them into employment, education and training and this support often needs to last well after their offending orders have run out”- **Jenny Drury, Connexions personal advisor (PA), seconded full time to the Wise Up programme, May 2008**

Challenges

- Limited time before release to build trust and develop opportunities. Providing ongoing support
- Developing positive relationships with employers and between employers and offenders/ex-offenders
- Developing long-term strategies with short-term funding

Key Actions

- 2005-07 Connexions PA Jenny Drury works a day a week in the youth offending service (YOS) supporting young offenders aged 15–18 into training and employment
- 2007: Wiltshire takes on the government’s Wise Up programme, providing young offenders with information, advice, guidance and support to increase their chances of sustainable employment, education and training (EET)
- June 2007: Wise Up starts. Jenny is seconded full-time into the youth offending team (YOT) to run the programme
- Referrals from YOS case responsible officers – from a multi-agency team including probation, social services, police, health, substance misuse, Connexions and parenting – to Wise Up increase
- Jenny presents at South West region Wise Up evaluation conference – to share good practice and improve and develop communications in the region
- Wise Up and the probation service hold chamber of commerce events and business meetings to improve links with employers and promote employing young offenders
- Wise Up runs training events for Connexions, YOS staff and other relevant agencies to discuss issues including working with employers, disclosure and convictions
- June 2008: Funding awarded from YOS and Connexions to Wise Up until April 2009 (when it will be reviewed)

Key Implementation Tips

- **Support must be consistent. Work closely with other agencies. Ongoing support after YOS orders cease is necessary and very beneficial**
- **Develop specialist work with employers to increase opportunities for offenders/ex-offenders and offer ongoing support**
- **Pre-release work enables young people to focus on future plans and become positively engaged quicker after release**
- **It takes time to build trust. Adapt to individuals. It’s about taking small steps – there’s no quick fix. Focus on solutions. Often these young people have achieved a lot but can’t see it**
- **Be flexible. Young offenders need help with many things, from literacy and numeracy to setting up a bank account**
- **Employment for young offenders is key to reducing crime and re-offending. It improves the well-being of communities**
- **Be aware that entry to employment (e2e) training is still ongoing when orders are over, but these statistics aren’t recorded once the orders close**

Impact

Referrals to Wise Up from the YOT have risen from one or two to more than 50 during 2007-2008. Thirty-three of these young people have received intensive support – 22 have achieved positive outcomes (e.g. employment and further education); two have home tuition plans in place, five are actively searching for work and of four still in custody, three already have plans in place for after their release.

For example, Jenny arranged an e2e interview for one young offender for five days after his release. He started on the programme the following Monday and is now doing Level 2 literature and numeracy and has a work placement with a construction company, which should lead to a permanent job. This is to earn money for his family. He is also starting a media related evening course in September as his long-term aim is to work in the media. The remaining 17 referrals to Wise Up are still in school and have been referred on to the relevant Connexions personal advisors. Jenny hopes the new funding will enable her to produce a pre-release support pack for other agencies, engage more employer support and further publicise the programme.

To find out more, contact

Jenny Drury, jennydrury@wiltshire.gov.uk 01722 341644

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