

Targeted youth support

Integrated support for vulnerable young people – emerging practice



Combating substance misuse through multi-agency working

Area: East Sussex, County Council, two Borough Councils and three District Councils, South East England, population approximately 500,000

“Our multi-agency approach has evolved over the years. Hard work, high engagement and patience have been the foundations on which we have built an organisation that is now working towards an integrated and targeted approach centred around the vulnerable young person” - **Mark Menning, Practice Manager, November 2007**

Challenges

- Lack of multi-agency coordination creating confusion re responsibilities and gaps in service delivery
- Need for a multi-agency approach to address new problems re substance misuse
- Engage schools to combat substance misuse - under 16's
- Need to address problems in rural areas service delivery
- Procrastination - no perceived crisis driving actions

Key Actions

- Highlighted aspects of behaviour in which vulnerable young people needed help and showed agencies how to meet this need
- Specialist multi-disciplinary team recruited to 'surround' vulnerable young people, Integrated Children's Services led 'Under 19s Substance Misuse Service'
- Developed screening and referral pathways to all agencies working with vulnerable young people, e.g. Education Welfare Service, Youth Offending Team (YOT)
- Introduced immediate assessment of referred vulnerable young person to formulate an informed holistic case plan
- Front line case workers co-located in children's services e.g. Youth Support Team, YOTs, Youth Access Centres, Pupil Referral Unit's, schools
- Worked on-site, e.g. in schools, to support young people
- Introduced rural service for vulnerable young people
- Established activity monitoring to track progress and used IT system to collect data and evidence outcomes
- Raised funding from partner agencies by demonstrating long-term benefits of investing in the project via robust performance monitoring

Key Implementation Tips

- Get workers from different expertise areas to co-operate and facilitate each others work
- Present the evidence around the projected outcomes at the start in order to create multi-agency buy in
- Trust the other services and create a feeling of team work to ensure everyone moves in the same direction
- Demonstrate how working together can make a difference and improve outcomes to create a feeling of confidence
- Have patience - acknowledge the fact that things take time to change
- Where possible get agencies to demonstrate their commitment through pooled resources/funding

Impact

As a result of the agencies aligning around the needs of vulnerable young people, facilitating intervention and clarifying referral paths, more young people are now getting the treatment they need for substance misuse. Numbers have increased from 130 in 2003/04 to an estimated 421 in 2006/07. Working with the immediate assessment of the vulnerable young person at an early stage has enabled multiple risk factors such as mental health, sexual exploitation and homelessness to also be detected and worked with.

The partner agencies feel that their efforts are achieving results and this has inspired the continued development of the work, as has the introduction of consistent activity tracking to enable live time progress tracking. The initial imbalance between urban and rural areas has now been redressed thus widening the net of the vulnerable young people helped. Sustainability too should not be an issue. Since its inception in 2001, the long-term commitment of the partners involved has over time created the sustainability needed to ensure ongoing success.

To find out more, contact

Mark Menning, Practice Manager; East Sussex CC; 01323 841470; mark.menning@eastsussex.gov.uk

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