

Targeted youth support

Integrated support for vulnerable young people – emerging practice



Pre-release work helps engage young offenders after release

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

“Working with young offenders before they are released helps them to become positively engaged much more quickly after their release. This reduces re-offending and crime, leading to improved community well-being”- **Jenny Drury, Connexions personal advisor (PA), seconded full time to the Wise Up programme, July 2008**

Challenges

- Helping a year 11 young man in a young offenders' institution (YOI) to find training for work after his release
- Arranging for him to attend interviews when in the YOI and ensuring he is engaged immediately post release

Key Actions

- 2007: Wiltshire adopts the Wise Up programme, providing young offenders with information, advice, guidance and support to increase their chances of sustainable employment, education and training (EET)
- Jenny Drury is seconded into the youth offending team (YOT) to run the programme. She contacts 'John' in the YOI. He has a reading age of seven and a history of school non-attendance. He is on the YOI literacy programme and takes part in YOI construction-related activities
- Jenny visits John with the Detention and Training Officer (DTO) from the youth offending service (YOS) to explore future options. John has experience in horticulture and wants to pursue this. Jenny liaises with John's key worker and a YOI based Connexions worker to follow this up
- When John's sentence ends he will live with his extended family in another county. Jenny visits this family with the DTO to discuss local horticulture options for John. She also speaks to relevant agencies in the new area (with John's permission) to explore what is available
- John suffers a close family bereavement. Jenny prepares additional support for John on his release if needed
- Jenny arranges an interview for a horticulture course that suits John and for an entry to employment (e2e) course immediately after release, and helps him prepare for these
- Jenny arranges support from a Connexions PA and from the YOS case responsible officer for John in his new area
- July 2008: John interviews for e2e and is given a start date. He meets his new Connexions PA

Key Implementation Tips

- Support must be consistent and strong. Communicate often and work closely with other agencies, e.g. Connexions, YOS, resettlement and education
- Ongoing support after YOS orders cease is necessary and very beneficial
- Ensure a smooth hand over to relevant individuals and agencies after an offender is released/end of order to provide joined-up ongoing support
- Engaging young people in education, employment and training immediately after their release minimises the chances of them reoffending and maximises their chances of success
- It takes time to build trust. Adapt to individuals. It's about taking small steps – there's no quick fix. Focus on solutions. Often young offenders have a achieved a lot but can't see it
- Be flexible. Young offenders need help with many things, from literacy and numeracy to filling in application forms and setting up a bank account

Impact

Jenny's support and coaching has given John the confidence, improved self-worth and new skills needed to obtain and sustain employment immediately after his release and be a more positive member of the community. John has been accepted for the horticulture course, starting in September and says he "can't wait to get on with things". While he waits he is doing the e2e course to improve his literacy and he has now settled in his new area with his extended family. His new Connexions PA will support him until his Licence runs out, when he is likely to be referred to the PA responsible for e2e. If necessary, Connexions can support him until he is 19 years old.

Wise Up is having a significant impact in general. 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 (EET) and the rest, with Jenny's support, are currently arranging EET.

To find out more, contact

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