Young people in custody learning thinking skills: Experiences; Skills and Developments
Directorate of Public Sector Prisons
October 2015
AIMS

• Introduce the ‘What Works’ principles
• Introduce an overview of the JETS programme
• Discussion of responsivity when working with young people in custody in groups and CBT principles
• Introduce exercises from JETS
• Discussion of the JETS engagement strategy
• Discussion regarding the effectiveness of JETS.

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Setting the context

- HMYOI Wetherby houses young males aged between 15 and 18
- The young people have committed a range of offences
- Sentence lengths can range from 8 months to life imprisonment
- We have a long termers unit for young people with sentences of 6 years and over
- We have an enhanced unit for young people with more complex needs
What Works principles

- Historic approaches to working with young people who offend have included:

  - Reformatories with an aim of reforming than punishing (The Youthful Offenders Act 1854, Newburn, 1997)

  - The borstal system in 1908 with an aim of discipline to prevent crime (Newburn, 1997)

  - Psychological understanding of offending in the 1920’s and interventions were developed to target criminogenic need (Hollin, 2001)

  - Group therapies, psychoanalysis, token economy etc were developed.

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• Martinson (1974) looked at the effectiveness of these interventions and concluded that they yielded little effect in reducing reoffending concluding that “Nothing Works” in offender rehabilitation

• This was later disputed (McGuire and Priestley, 1985 and Gendreau and Ross 1980) leading to an investigation of what does work in offender rehabilitation

• Resulting in the ‘What Works’ literature (McGuire, 1995).
What Works principles

• McGuire (1995)
  ➢ Risk classification
  ➢ Criminogenic needs
  ➢ Responsivity
  ➢ Community base
  ➢ Treatment modality
  ➢ Programme integrity
Interventions so far...

• Reasoning and Rehabilitation
• Enhanced Thinking Skills
• Both were adult programmes and there were few studies to highlight the effectiveness of these with juvenile offenders
• Initially it was proposed that interventions designed for adults should just be carried out with juveniles. BUT meta analytical review revealed that this was not appropriate (Newburn, 1997)……………..
• Resulting in JETS.
Programme Structure

• Based upon Cognitive Behavioural Theory
• Multi-modal
• Targeted to address criminogenic needs
• Appropriate targeting/selection of medium to high risk offenders
• Focus upon resettlement
• Treatment integrity through a manualised approach
• Mentor approach
Programme Structure

• 25 sessions long
• 2-2.5 hours long per session
• Split into 2 parts; A and B which are both delivered in the same session
• Individual sessions
• Workbook
• Focus upon continuity and support outside of group room
• 6 young people on each group.
Programme Aims

How we think

And how we feel

Affects what we do

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Exercise

• Thinking about the programme aims imagine the following…..

• “You are asleep in bed at home and you become aware of a noise downstairs. It’s not a loud noise but a muffled thump”

• What is your first thought?
• What would you do?
A.B.C Model

- Activating Event
  - Something happens e.g. the bump in the night

- Belief
  - You have a belief/thought e.g. it’s the dog

- Consequences
  - You take action e.g. you go back to sleep

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JETS targets 6 treatment goals

- Interpersonal Problem Solving
  - Poor problem recognition
  - Consequential thinking
  - Alternative thinking & means ends reasoning

- Cognitive Style
  - Concrete
  - External
  - Present Orientated

- Self Control
  - Non-reflective
  - Impulsive

- Social Perspective Taking
  - Egocentric

- Values
  - Poor/inconsistent values

- Critical Reasoning
  - Thinking Errors.

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Being responsive to young people in custody

• Young people in custody often find it difficult to maintain their motivation to engage in interventions
• In addition, there are a number of distractions in a prison environment that often make it more difficult for someone to comply with interventions
• Usual experiences in a group room with 6 young people can be; competing hierarchy; resistant; angry; vulnerability; lack of concentration;
• As facilitators we have to try to manage this.
Responsivity continued

- Being enthusiastic, collaborative and motivational, whilst conveying empathy, warmth, respect and genuine interest in participants
- Managing the group dynamics and challenging behaviour in a non-confrontational way
- Being consistent in how you respond to the young person and messages that you give them
- Encouraging young people to “have a say” in the decisions that affect them and agreeing sub-goals
- Rewarding attendance and addressing non-attendance collaboratively
- Ensuring activities are enjoyable
- Modelling pro-social problem solving, and interpersonal style
- Praising participants when they demonstrate shifts in behaviour
• The importance of establishing clear and agreed ground rules from the start
• Using appropriate and helpful forms of language, e.g. inviting rather than ordering young people to do things, being assertive rather than sarcastic
• Offering positive choices rather than telling participants what to do. For example, replacing “give me that pen” with “could you either give me the pen, or put it in your pocket please”
• Dealing with difficult issues on an individual basis rather than inviting confrontation in front of peers
• The use of individual behaviour plans for particularly challenging group members e.g. those with ADHD-type behaviours
• Managing the tutor’s own emotional responses (especially anger!)
Exercise

Group Exercise

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• An important aspect of the JETS intervention is links between custody and community with a particular focus upon family and YOT

• McGuire (2002) suggests that the involvement of “family members, peers, mentors or other members of the community who may support young people’s efforts towards change” can enhance the effectiveness of programmes.
Does it work?

• In November 2015 research will be published on the effective of JETS. Preliminary findings show positive results for recidivism and clinical change

• At the 12 month follow up 54% of the JETS group had been reconvicted compared to 74% of a control group
• At the 24 month follow up 71% of the JETS group had been reconvicted compared to 90% of the control group

• There were also desired clinical changes in the areas of; aggression, locus of control and venturesomeness.
Does it work continued…

- It is not just recidivism rates that are an important consideration….clinical change is also important
- Engagement in JETS can result in…………..
  - Increased confidence and social skills,
  - Improved self-control
  - Preparation for offence specific courses
  - Improved behaviour in custody
  - Increase in pro-social attitudes
Qualitative research undertaken at HMYOI Wetherby used Thematic Analysis to examine how young offenders are motivated to complete a programme.

From the offender group, two main themes were identified: ‘JETS as a means for positive change’ with sub themes of ‘pride in accomplishment’, ‘strong positive rapport with staff’, ‘power over life decisions’ and ‘being part of a team.’ The second theme was the ‘positive extraneous elements of JETS’ with sub themes of ‘change to judicial conditions’ and ‘group boundaries and dynamics.’

The tutor group also had two main themes, ‘meeting participants needs for positive change’ with sub themes of ‘safety through boundaries’, ‘treating attendees as individuals’ and ‘support and rapport.’ The second main theme was ‘the positive byproducts of JETS’ with sub themes of: ‘custodial condition change’, ‘treats’ and ‘positive reputation of JETS.’
The End

• Thanks for your time
• Any questions
References


“Working together to transform young lives”