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LIVING IT

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND JUSTICE

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What Criminal Justice Social Workers Do

The view from Moray

Jane Kelly

MORAY COUNCIL'S social work with young people in trouble with the justice system remains split between the Youth Justice (under 16) and Criminal Justice teams (16 plus). However there has been a high degree of overlap across both teams in recent years which has been further enhanced by the adoption of the Whole System Approach (WSA) and the formation of a Justice Services department under one service manager following restructuring.

There is an issue with young people who have been supervised through the Children's Hearings and whose supervision stops at 16, even if they have outstanding offences. However, it is possible in an 'adult' criminal justice social work report to highlight to a Sheriff the possibility of remitting the case so that it can be dealt with by the Hearings system.

Enabling young people to remain in the community by offering alternatives to secure care and custody is not only cost effective but contributes to better outcomes. For example, Stephen and Christopher were separately charged with sexually motivated offences. Individual support and supervision packages were designed by Youth Justice colleagues and delivered in partnership with a range of Council colleagues and third sector agencies. Both young people were fully supported during all Court appearances and support and guidance was offered to their respective families or carers. There isn't space to detail all that was done, but for example, both continued to receive an education and accommodation was made available as necessary. Detailed assessments were undertaken, individualised programmes of work offered and risk management processes followed in order to reduce the risks posed.

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It is also not uncommon for young people coming into the adult criminal justice system to have experienced difficulties with their mental health. Accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services locally can be difficult as young people often do not meet the criteria for referral as they do not have

a recognised condition. Whilst this is an issue to be addressed, we welcome new initiatives such as the 'Phoenix Project', a local resource for younger adults who have mental health difficulties.

For example, Kirsty was a looked after young person who was taken off statutory supervision at the age of 16 despite having pending Court appearances. Her mental health and related behaviour deteriorated and she was remanded in custody. The Criminal Justice Social Work Report highlighted the availability of remittal to the Children's Hearing System and successfully presented the case for a structured deferred sentence whereby we were able to build a team of appropriate professionals around Kirsty upon her return to the community. This included supported accommodation, a psychiatric service and an Activity Agreement organised via our 'Opportunities for All' service. Although Kirsty is not yet ready to work or manage her own tenancy she is fully engaged in working towards positive destinations in all aspects of her life.

Young people who commit very serious offences will invariably be dealt with by the adult criminal justice system. Stacey, aged 15 was sentenced to 16 months detention for such an offence. Already on compulsory supervision through the Hearings system, their advice was made available to the Sheriff and alternatives to custody highlighted within reports. A community disposal was not pursued by the Court and Stacey was placed in secure accommodation under s. 208 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995. She was also made subject to a period of post release supervision.

The team working with Stacey maintained contact throughout her time in secure care. As the supervision order was running in parallel with her sentence we were able to maintain her secure placement beyond the sentence expiry date in order to enable her to sit her exams and to address the issues which would impact upon a successful return to the community. Stacey is now in her own tenancy and is attending college having passed all her exams.

We aim to offer a similar service to young people in custody by developing release plans in partnership with SPS and partner agencies such as Shine (<http://www.shinementoring.org/>) (for young women) and New Routes Out of Prison (for young men). We can offer a substance misuse and/or social work support service as well as having access to mainstream substance misuse services through Turning Point's 'Studio 8' service. (<http://www.turningpointscotland.com/what-we-do/substance-misuse/studio-8/>).

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UK Justice Policy Review:

Volume 2

6 May 2011 to 5 May 2012

UK Justice Policy Review:

Volume 3

6 May 2012 to 5 May 2013

By Richard Garside, Arianna Silvestri
and Helen Mills

UK Justice Policy Review:

Volume 1

6 May 2010 to 5 May 2011

By Richard Garside and Helen Mills

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Each review focuses on the key criminal justice institutions of policing, the courts and access to justice, and prison and probation, as well as changes to the welfare system. The publications are free to download and the online versions include links to all the original data and the references used in the review.

UK Justice Policy Review: Volume 1 (May 2010 to May 2011), *UK Justice Policy Review: Volume 2* (May 2011 to May 2012) and *UK Justice Policy Review: Volume 3* (May 2012 to 5 May 2013) are now online and available to download from: www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/project/uk-justice-policy-review