

Supporting Teenage Young Offender Fathers in Custody and in Resettlement



Young people in custody

Young men in custody are 5 to 6 times more likely to have a child young that young men in the general population

At least 25% of young offenders have witnessed domestic violence while growing up.

63% of prisoners sons go on to offend themselves.

No clear reduction in number of young fathers in custody despite reduction in teenage pregnancy nationally

Over the past decade the welcome reduction of the number of young people in custody and problems within the youth custody estate has had implications for fatherhood work: more challenging to run operationally within custody setting and young people have more challenges and difficulties.

History of Fatherhood Programme at Oakhill STC

Started in November 2010

Developed by Nurse Kate Bulman at Oakhill STC,
with support from Milton Keynes Brook (Sexual
Health Advice Service for under 25's)

Sessions co-delivered with young men's out-reach
worker from Brook, Hayden Tennant

Nurse running the programme won FPA/Brook
award 'Sexual Health Professional of the Year' in
March 2013, Also YJB Effective Practice Award in
2013.

Fatherhood Programme, Oakhill STC between 2011-2016.

Group work sessions

- Set up from a nurse within healthcare dept (then NHS).
- Supported by outreach worker from national charity Brook.
- The three areas that the course focuses on are parenting, relationships and oneself.
- Use of peer educators or 'expert's by experience' (young mothers and fathers) an integral part of programme.
- Electronic baby overnight.
- Fatherhood course provides education and a space to discuss, share and reflect.

Introduction to the needs of a child and factors influencing the capacity of parents to meet these needs

Learning outcomes

Young people learn to facts about conception, pregnancy and birth, how this effects the mother and the needs of baby in the womb.

Young people to develop an enhanced understanding of the physical and emotional needs of babies .

Young people understand what is meant by parenting capacity (provision of basic care, ensuring safety, providing emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance and boundaries and stability).

Young people to consider the immediate and long term benefits to a child of having a positively involved mother, father, and wider family.

Practical skills needed to care for a baby

Learning outcomes

With the use of a plastic doll young people practice holding and carrying a baby safely.

With the use of a plastic doll young people learn how to change a baby's nappy
Learn the benefits of breastfeeding and how to make up a bottle of milk safely.

With the use of a plastic doll and a baby bath, young people learn how to bath a baby.

Young people learn how to care for a cyber baby (requires feeding, nappy changing and gentle rocking). Care for cyber baby over night.

The reality of being a parent from the perspective of a young mother

Learning outcomes

To consider what makes relationships work/not work.

Interview a single teenage mother about her experiences of being a parent and her relationship with her child's father.

Reflect on the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour and understand that reflecting on and controlling first thoughts can have a positive effect on relationships.

Reality of being a parent from the perspective of a young father

Learning Outcomes

Interview a young father about his experiences of being a parent and his relationship with his child's mother.

Internal versus external locus of control: Safe sex and contraception

Learning outcomes

Discuss notion of internal versus external locus of control over one's life and importance of developing an internal locus of control.

Discuss how contraception works to help one control one's fertility by preventing pregnancy and one's risk of contracting STI's

Look at several forms of contraception and take part in a condom demonstration.

Strengths of the Fatherhood Programme

Young fathers commonly reflect that the course has given them a new sense of purpose and identity in life, an understanding of the importance of having a non-abusive, supportive and respectful relationship with their child's mother, and the confidence to develop their skills as a parent

(Neale and Davies, 2015;). Risk, Resource, Redemption? The Parenting and Custodial Experiences of Young Offender Fathers

Helped to foster stronger fathering identities.

Helped young men to gain practical child-care skills, to think about a child's emotional needs, and to understand the mothers' experiences'

provided a time to discuss challenges and to explore behavioural and relationship difficulties *(Eva Redman 2016) Exploring the post-custody experiences of young men who have received support surrounding fatherhood while in custody in a secure training centre.*

Awards given by Brook and FPA, YJB and recognition by Butler Trust between 2013 and 2014

Limitations of the fatherhood programme

The effects of such interventions may be short lived: there is no quick fix to turning round the lives of highly vulnerable young fathers or surmounting the considerable barriers that they may face. Specialist support that can be sustained over time is needed to address their complex needs (Bulman and Neale 2017)

- Lack of family support/family conflict. Arrival of a baby can intensify conflict.
- Relationship abuse
- Lack of support from professional services – needs of 16-18 year old care leavers often not met
- Lack of education and skills
- Mental health difficulties

Resettlement Pilot Projects. Two small grants.

Youth Justice Board Effective Practice Award Grant 2013. In 2014, Kate worked with the Young Dads Collective to offer mentoring support and follow up to three (was two for a sustained period) young fathers who had participated in fatherhood programme and left custody.

- Building upon this and the Leeds University Following Young Fathers Study The 'Responding to Young Fathers in a Different Way' project

Commenced in May 2016 continued for 10 months: Identified and recruited five (one was one of those above) young fathers who had engaged with the fatherhood programme in custody and tracked and support them as they made the transition to the community. Kate liaised with community professionals within and outside custody and visited young fathers, advocated for and supported them. YDC mentors whom they had met in custody also provided support.

YDC Resettlement Support

Kate : Flexible role part time support and advocacy, liaising with professionals.

YDC Support: Sensitive support and guidance. Evidence that the YDC members being fathers and having had some similar adverse childhood experiences to the young father beneficiaries has helped the latter to 'imagine future selves', and to feel more hopeful about positive change processes in their own lives. Research done by 'Beyond Youth custody' lessons from youth in custody resettlement report' highlights this as a role that peer ambassadors (or peer mentors/experts by experience) can play.

Positive relationships with both Kate and YDC members

What's needed going forward

- Specific named parenting support worker.
- Through the gate support
- Family Mediation
- Intervention around relationships/relationship abuse
- Supportive relationship with worker/s
- Advocacy
- *Professional support for young offender fathers is likely to be most effective where it is tailored to the needs of fathers, or prospective fathers, delivered as early as possible in their offending and parenthood journeys, and sustained over time through custody and into re-settlement (Neale and Ladlow, 2015).*

Going Forward continued

For targeted support to be offered to young all vulnerable young fathers: a similar level of support to the Family Nurse Partnership, but designed for young fathers – to work in tandem with the FNP. The support should include a focus in improving relationships and preventing abuse.

Example of existing good practice

Brinsford YOI

<http://www.safeground.org.uk/programmes-services/father-figures-brinsford-pilot-parenting-programme/>

Invisible Walls Project, Parc Prison, Wales

- <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=3tWp3e44oQE>