



Engaging Young People who Offend

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Background

What are the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*?

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) has identified effective practice as a key element in developing and improving youth justice services. We are committed to identifying and promoting effective practice across the whole of the youth justice system to ensure that work with young people is as effective as possible, and based on research evidence and promising practice.

The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* (the ‘*what to do*’) describe the features of effective interventions, using the best evidence available. They are intended to be used as the primary tool by youth justice services for evidence-based self-assessment and quality assurance, providing the benchmark for effective practice.

These guidance notes are derived from the evidence presented in the corresponding source document available on the YJB website. The source documents have gathered the latest international evidence in accordance with the YJB’s research standards and identify what is proven to be effective practice, or where robust evidence is not available, what is emerging as promising practice in the field. The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are summaries condensing the evidence from the source documents into key messages for practice.

The following *Key Elements of Effective Practice* titles and the accompanying source documents are available from the YJB website (www.yjb.gov.uk):

- *Accommodation*
- *Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision*
- *Education, Training and Employment*
- *Engaging Young People who Offend*
- *Mental Health*
- *Offending Behaviour Programmes*
- *Parenting*
- *Restorative Justice*
- *Substance Misuse*
- *Young People who Sexually Abuse*

Since the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* were originally published in 2002/03, two new titles have been added to take into account the most recent research evidence and policy or legislative developments in these areas of intervention. The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* will continue to be updated in the future, in line with the YJB’s effective practice strategy, as additional research becomes available.

These updated *Key Elements of Effective Practice* have been produced with the intention of them being complemented by the *Case Management Guidance* for youth offending teams (the ‘*how to*’), and the revised *National Standards for Youth Justice Services* (the ‘*must do*’), due for publication in 2009. Together, the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*, standards and guidance will provide holistic guidance for youth justice services.

Who are the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* for?

The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are simple manuals that can be used by anyone working in the community and the secure estate with young people who offend. They describe the features of effective youth justice services and interventions, allowing delivery to be shaped by need and local context. They are intended to support consistent practice across youth justice services.

They do not provide specialists such as teachers, health care professionals or police officers in mainstream services with descriptions of how to work, nor do they detail the processes needed to deliver a service.

The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* have been structured to provide guidance to three main audiences:

- those involved in delivery, e.g. youth offending team (YOT) practitioners and prison officers
- those involved in operational and first-line management
- strategic managers in their role as service managers and partnership brokers.

How should the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* be used?

The key indicators of quality have been identified from each of the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* as particular elements to put in place to promote effective practice and the delivery of good quality services. Anyone working in the community and secure estate with young people who offend should note that these indicators are not a comprehensive list of quality issues and they are not an end in themselves. They are designed for use within a wider framework of evaluation of service practice and performance, and they will enable a wider and continuous process of evaluation to take place.

It is important that the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are not used in isolation. The key messages for practitioners, operational managers, and strategic managers and their partners are derived from the corresponding source document; the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* should therefore be used in conjunction with their source document to ensure full understanding of the key elements of effective practice. This is not to say the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* on their own are not useful for the intended audience and purpose, but rather that the audience will have a better understanding of the evidence behind the guidance summaries if they are read and understood alongside the source documents.

Information is cross-referenced from the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* summaries to the source documents, and relevant page numbers of the corresponding source document are identified in brackets in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*.

Using the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* in YOTs

Youth justice services are responsible for owning performance improvement and self-assessment and planning. Self-assessment against the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* has previously been a mandatory requirement of YOTs, however, from 2008/09, YOTs will be free to use the revised *Key Elements of Effective Practice* and accompanying self-assessment toolkit in line with their local priorities. The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are intended to be used as evidence-based self-assessment tools to help identify improvement priorities and actions. The resulting action plan should enable YOT managers to monitor progress in the delivery of the priorities for the YOT.

Using the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* in the secure estate

Managers and practitioners within the secure estate should consider the guidance contained within the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* summaries when developing and reviewing their practice and approaches to working with young people. The key messages will help to inform the development of effective practice and should be helpful in achieving their desired outcomes for young people. Establishments should also consider completing self-assessments against the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* to assist in identifying priority areas for development and improvement.

Key indicators of quality

Assessment

Assessment should be holistic, taking into account all aspects of a young person's situation, with the offending behaviour clearly contextualised within the young person's experience.

Practitioners should engage young people in the assessment process using collaborative, interactive and motivational methods.

Individual needs

A range of techniques should be employed to promote individualised, active and participatory support, such as different methods of delivery tailored to individual maturity, ability and level of motivation.

Interventions that can be delivered to young people should include formal, informal, group and individual approaches, so that young people are engaged at a number of levels.

Communication

Practitioners should use empathy, warmth and genuineness to build trusting and enduring relationships with children and young people, while being clear about their role, limits and authority.

Practitioners should have the ability to be persuasive and directive without being confrontational, thereby motivating the young person towards agreed outcomes.

Service delivery

Collaboration and negotiation of agreed goals should form the cornerstone of the working relationship between the young person and the practitioner to promote engagement and compliance.

Practitioners should identify barriers to a young person's engagement with interventions and, where appropriate or possible, address these to promote compliance. Where enforcement is necessary, practitioners should continue to aim for constructive engagement with the young person.

Transition

Documents relating to a young person should be accessible to both community and custody workers.

A single case manager should be allocated, wherever possible, for the duration of a young person's contact with the agencies within the youth justice system, including across transitions between custody and the community.

Training

Practitioners should be trained in a range of engagement techniques that are person-centred, focused on empathy, and build trust and motivation.

Practitioners should be trained in a range of communication skills that will allow them to motivate and listen to young people, and to develop honest, respectful and understanding relationships.

Management

Managers should help practitioners to recognise and balance the two demands of care and control within a team context so that they are clear about their professional roles, responsibilities and the limits of flexibility or discretion.

Managers should work with both practitioners and external providers to develop and fund a range of alternative methods of engaging the young people within their locality or establishment, taking account of their diverse needs and abilities.

Service development

Criminal justice agencies involved with young people should develop collaborative working relationships with them by canvassing their views about interventions through the use of individual and group feedback methods.

Partnership agreements should be sought with voluntary bodies that have a history of successful engagement.

Monitoring and evaluation

Evaluation of engagement should be distinct from intervention outcome evaluations, but should contribute to the service's understanding of what is the most effective practice.

The observation of practice, with a focus on the quality of contacts between practitioners and young people, should be part of the team's supervision and appraisal process.

Engaging young people who offend

There is a shortage of research about effective engagement with young people. Evidence tends to focus on the content of interventions rather than the reasons why some interventions work better than others, and what makes a difference when applying interventions in practice (p.9).

Effective engagement is relevant to all areas of effective practice and this *Key Elements of Effective Practice* should be read in conjunction with the other *Key Elements of Effective Practice*, which also shed light, in their particular areas, on what needs to happen to engage young people wherever they find themselves in the youth justice system.

For the purposes of this *Key Elements of Effective Practice*, engagement embodies the techniques that are concerned with gaining young people's interest and willing participation in interventions or services intended to prevent or reduce offending (p.11). Whether young people have been required to take part in interventions as part of an order of the court, or have been referred for voluntary contact because they are deemed to be at risk of offending, their positive engagement cannot be taken for granted.

Engagement, therefore, goes beyond a young person just showing up; it includes their motivation, commitment to, and participation in, activities offered in programmes of intervention. This increases the chances of successful completion, which is an important element in achieving effective outcomes (p.11).

Engagement is not an end in itself. The skills and methods that practitioners use to engage young people, for example, empathy and youth work approaches, may form a foundation upon which interventions can construct effective outcomes.

What evidence there is consistently suggests that at the centre of effective engagement are collaborative, motivating and child-centred relationships (p.14).

The challenge for YOTs, prevention teams and secure establishments is to develop those relationships when there may be tensions between them and an ethos that emphasises individual responsibility, the swift administration of justice and the need for public confidence in the youth justice system. This challenge consists of balancing (p.19):

- risks and needs
- control and care
- punishment and treatment
- the technical requirements of formal orders and personal engagement with individual young people.

The working relationship between the young person and the practitioner is the key to achieving a productive balance between these contrasting, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives, closing the gap between supervision and surveillance (p.19).

Guidance on delivery

Assessment

The foundation of work with children and young people is assessment. In the youth justice system, assessment focuses upon the three domains of risk:

- **risk (or likelihood) of offending or reoffending**
- **vulnerability of the young person**
- **risk of serious harm that they may pose to others.**

Effective assessment should also engage young people from the outset since it is the foundation of future work. It should guide practitioners in selecting methods of intervention appropriate to the individual, and thereby enhancing the possibility of successfully having a positive impact on behaviour (p.12).

Assessment should support engagement by:

- **leading to a holistic understanding of the inter-related range of needs of young people, which is required for an understanding of both the problematic behaviour and the context in which it occurs**
- **setting a positive tone for subsequent interventions**
- **informing the design and delivery of an individually tailored programme of interventions**
- **identifying and addressing those individual needs which may hinder active participation in offence-focused interventions (pp.12–13).**

Using methods and techniques that aim to engage the young person and their parents/carer from the outset are therefore essential both to the quality of the assessment itself, and to laying the foundations for future work with the young person, which will continue to engage them (p.13).

Therefore, at the assessment stage, interviews shouldn't consist of a list of questions, but should be part of a process in which the practitioner uses techniques to engage the young person and, where appropriate, their family and carers (p.14) so that a positive working relationship can begin to develop. Open questions and motivational interviewing can be used without losing sight of the core aim of the youth justice system, which is to reduce reoffending.

By observing the manner in which the young person responds to, and engages with, the assessment process, practitioners should begin to make judgements about the types of communication or activity that are most likely to positively engage that young person in any future programme of interventions. Methods of intervention which are not appropriate to an

individual may have a negative impact on the effectiveness of those interventions (p.37). It is important, therefore, to take account of early indicators of the individual's potential response.

Assessment should also be an ongoing process. Practitioners should ensure that ongoing assessment is based upon a sustained relationship between themselves and the young person (and their parents/carer) by involving them in reviewing and appropriately rewarding progress, and highlighting areas of further or ongoing need (p.14).

Individual needs

Holistic programmes of intervention must address a range of risks and needs, and also take account of, and build upon, individual protective factors. In order to achieve positive outcomes, young people must be engaged in the intervention as designed and change-focused practice is likely to be based upon individualised, active and participatory support (p.17). Evidence suggests that the better the relationship between the practitioner and the young person, the better their engagement with this process of change.

Programmes of interventions need to be perceived as having relevance to young people's lives and utilise methods of work that will interest them (p.11). Therefore, interventions with young people need to have regard for their individuality, and the social and material reality of their lives. They should take account of the young persons' strengths and support networks, potential desistance factors, as well as areas for improvement (p.17).

Diversity

In order to build in this individual dimension, practitioners need to employ interpersonal skills which help them to take account of the diversity likely to be found among participants in interventions. They should also look beyond the immediate context of both the problem behaviour and the interventions designed to address it to the broader environment, and look for ways of supporting effective practice and sustaining future progress (pp.16–17).

Practitioners must recognise that there are important differences between individuals, such as their gender, race or other life and cultural experiences, which may influence how they respond to the services offered. Practitioners should pay attention to these differences when determining both the content and methods of interventions. Young people will, for example, differ in terms of their age and maturity. Practitioners should apply an understanding of significant developmental stages, particularly of adolescence, 'pitching' interventions at an appropriate level, deciding what can realistically be expected of an individual young person and ensuring that methods and materials are understandable (p.18).

This individualised approach will also recognise and address the fluid dynamics of the individual young person's journey from adolescence to adulthood. Practitioners should acknowledge that the transition from youth to adult is often difficult and marked by a range of behaviours that are quite common in the youth population (p.18). This does not excuse behaviour, but contextualises it and provides a platform to engage with the young person through understanding and empathy (p.25).

YOTs and secure establishments also need to balance the needs of the public with those of the young person in front of them. They will often need to be authoritative and directive. This balance between caring for and controlling the behaviour of young people can only be met if the relationship between the two parties is of sound quality (p.19).

Communication

There are two aspects of practice where communication is central:

- when sustaining a supportive and responsive relationship between the practitioner and young person
- when building partnerships to develop and deliver multi-agency interventions.

Young people subject to court orders may initially feel reluctant to engage with practitioners because their involvement with the YOT or secure establishment is not voluntary. Likewise, children referred to preventative services because of their negative behaviour may not readily see a distinction between compulsion and voluntarism, especially where they see adults making decisions about them. They may feel coerced into a process which they perceive has no obvious benefits for them.

Supportive and responsive relationships

The practitioner will need to be both persuasive and directive in their interactions with the young person (p.25). The practitioner should be clear in explaining what is and what is not negotiable in their relationship with the young person, being particularly clear about the part that both young person and practitioner are expected to play, for example, the nature of the 'ground rules' covering the clients' attendance for scheduled appointments or sessions (p.26).

On this basis, the practitioner can begin to develop a strong, trusting, respectful relationship with the young person and be in a better position to manage the dual role of enforcer and helper. This is important for developing the young person's motivation for change (p.29). This working relationship will be sustained by the communication skills employed and demonstrated by the practitioner, which should include empathy, authenticity, concern for the individual and trustworthiness.

The practitioner's ability to communicate to the young person empathy, genuineness and warmth are crucial to establishing a strong working relationship. Empathy involves drawing out, acknowledging and understanding the young person's perspective, and doing this with genuine interest and concern (p.23). To achieve empathy, practitioners are likely to use techniques such as asking open questions, reinforcing positives, and demonstrating an understanding and genuine listening by reflecting back the meaning of what has been said (p.29).

Developing empathy is not about 'getting on a level' with a young person; it is a professional skill and practitioners should avoid unnecessary personal disclosure when trying to promote it. Empathy is also not the same as sympathy, tolerance or approval (p.27). Accurate empathy demonstrates that the young person's concerns are taken seriously and creates a climate in

which they are able to discuss and reveal problems or difficulties and successes or failures, on the basis of which a realistic plan of action is created (p.24). Empathic understanding also helps the practitioner to be sensitive to differences among young people and to ensure that their interventions are relevant and responsive to those differences.

Practitioners need to avoid responding to young people solely on the basis of their problems (p.21) and should use empathic skills to gain a holistic understanding of the child's life experience and access to their perspective. The practitioner should not presume to know how the child must feel in this particular situation. They should find out and learn from the child and others who know the child well (p.23).

Building partnerships

In order to ensure engagement with young people across a variety of interventions, practitioners will need to be able to communicate with people from a range of backgrounds. They will need to be clear with partner professionals and agencies about referral routes, roles, responsibilities and expectations. As well as using formal protocols and service level agreements, on a day-to-day basis they should be prepared to discuss and negotiate with individual practitioners in partner agencies (p.32).

Service delivery

Interventions must be linked to assessment and be responsive to a young person's emerging, as well as ongoing, needs. It is therefore important that interventions are based on negotiation with a young person to promote engagement and compliance with the intervention, that programmes of intervention are multi-modal and holistic and that they are delivered in a way that recognises the centrality of a continuing supportive relationship to promoting change (pp.33–34).

Interpersonal and relational skills are at the centre of delivery. Dowden and Andrews¹ identify a set of Core Correctional Practices (CCPs), which emphasise aspects of service delivery that are concerned with how interventions are delivered and reinforced, as opposed to the content of what is delivered. The implications for practitioners are that they should:

- be conscious of how they use their authority, for example, being transparent and consistent in their decision-making
- recognise the value of modelling and reinforcing the behaviour they are seeking to encourage in young people
- apply a constructive problem-solving approach, which will also inform their negotiation with others on the young person's behalf in order to create a positive and purposeful relationship with the young person (p.16).

1 Dowden, C. and Andrews, D. A. (2004) *The importance of staff practice in delivering effective correctional treatment: a meta-analytic review of core correctional practice.*

Case management

In light of this, a case management approach to the support and supervision of young people who offend is appropriate. A single co-ordinator should work on a one-to-one basis with a young person over the course of a programme of interventions (p.34) to establish a collaborative working relationship, whether in a custodial or community setting. They should negotiate with the young person and other professional colleagues to establish shared and relevant objectives and to ensure appropriate services are available (p.33). This co-ordinating role is likely to lie with the YOT practitioner, but where secure establishments have keyworking or personal officer arrangements, there should be a partnership between practitioners in both settings.

Engagement and enabling compliance

There should be a balance between enforcement and flexibility (pp.18–19). The practitioner should also understand the range of influences on young people's lives and how these can get in the way of engagement. They should adopt a 'helping' attitude that explores the difficulties of completing supervision and aims to overcome obstacles (p.23).

Barriers to engagement may be physical (e.g. distance to travel, times, areas, childcare) or psychological (e.g. unwilling to change, seeing behaviour as acceptable). In relation to the physical, the practitioner should adopt a problem-solving approach in collaboration with the young person, making best use of the resources available. The psychological barriers should be addressed using motivational techniques and offence-focused interventions.

Structured and enjoyable educative activities can encourage participation, as can sports and activity-based programmes. Such approaches can provide the means by which to engage young people. However, in themselves they do not reduce offending and should generally form part of a wider programme of interventions aimed at addressing the offending behaviour (p.38).

Transition

As a young person moves between the community and custodial settings, both at the start of a sentence and as they begin the period of supervision in the community, knowledge, relationships, and multi-agency and joint working arrangements can be lost. There will also be implications for the young person as they enter a custodial setting, for example in terms of the break in contact with family and friends, when adjusting to the demands of a secure regime, and also as they return to the community when the benefits of a structured, disciplined environment are removed. Without a case manager to take an overview and manage the transitions, there are risks that the young person will become both disengaged and more vulnerable (p.43).

A co-ordinated and collaborative case-work approach is therefore required to ensure appropriate support and provision is ongoing (p.44). This will involve staff in the secure setting (e.g. keyworkers, personal officers) and their YOT colleagues being clear about their respective responsibilities and the limitations upon what they are able to do with a young person. They should use appropriate channels of communication and systematically use formal methods of sharing information, especially *Asset*.

The aim should be to provide a ‘wraparound’ service, with an emphasis on building strong ‘outside’ relationships, which should involve family members and the community from the outset (p.43). Strategies should be put in place that recognise the difficulties of, and the opportunities available in, the young person’s life outside, and these should be part of the planning from the start of the custodial sentence.

Training

All practitioners, whatever their role, should consider their contribution to engaging young people and the training they may need to support this. In their supervision and appraisal sessions, they should seek to have the quality of their relationships with young people discussed and action taken to enhance their skills.

Practitioners should also be active and open participants in training, and seek to apply the skills and knowledge learnt in practice.

Management

Practitioners should be receptive to feedback on their practice, including the detail of the skills they use to secure engagement. They should be open to having their contact with young people observed and evaluated by managers, colleagues and service recipients, including young people, their parents/carer and victims of offending.

Service development

Staff should follow any clear guidance they are given on how to deliver interventions, not just in terms of content but also the methods and techniques employed (p.48). Practitioners should seek to understand and demonstrate what interventions are successful in engaging individuals and reducing their problematic behaviour. They should make refinements to their own delivery as necessary (p.48).

Practitioners have a part to play in developing positive relationships with other service providers and they will be well-placed to find out from young people about their experience of interventions provided by partner agencies. They should feed back this operational information into their team to support the practice of colleagues and to inform the further development of services.

Monitoring and evaluation

Practitioners should contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the engagement process. They should be prepared to seek out qualitative information at an individual level, and recognise that monitoring alone does not mean the young people under their care are engaging with services and actively participating in interventions (p.50).

They should pay attention to the quality of their relationships with young people (p.22). In their review sessions they could, for example, note:

- the level of active participation and enthusiasm on the part of the young person
- the ability of the young person to apply changes in their thinking to their behaviour in the ‘real’ world
- improvements in the young person’s willingness and ability to describe their life experiences
- feedback from others about the young person’s behaviour and willingness to take account of others.

Guidance on operational management

Assessment

With individual practitioners

Managers should supervise practitioners and review *Asset* in selected, random cases. They should seek out evidence of the individual's story and identify how this links to an understanding of the offending behaviour (p.14).

They should also look for evidence of collaboration with the young person, while bearing in mind the primary aim of youth justice.

At team level

Good quality assessments keep young people engaged. Detailed discussion about different approaches to assessment should be used to identify and share good practice.

Individual needs

With individual practitioners

Engagement may require some discretion to be applied to the way practitioners work with individual young people. Managers should encourage practitioners to keep pace with the young person, balancing this against statutory obligations and the management of risk (p.17).

At team level

Contingency arrangements for activities should be in place for young people for whom the standard activities are unsuitable.

Communication

Managers at all levels should recognise the centrality of relationships, both between the service

and both its users and its partners, and between staff members themselves. They should model the core principles of effective relationships:

- using their authority fairly
- modelling good practice in their relationships with others
- adopting a problem-solving approach that is clear and transparent
- negotiating with others to ensure resources are available to staff
- communicating clearly and with openness, warmth and enthusiasm.

With individual practitioners

Managers should conduct supervision in a similar way to that expected between the practitioner and the young person, thus modelling the behaviour they require from their practitioners. This requires managers to demonstrate empathy, warmth and genuineness, while still remaining focused on day-to-day operations.

Clarity of role, limits and authority should be an ongoing subject of supervision.

At team level

Operational managers also have a role in ensuring that staff have access to, and confidence in, their work with partner agencies. In light of the realities of practice, managers will be required to discuss, negotiate and come to practical agreements with colleagues outside the YOT. They should also share knowledge about effective interventions with partner agencies as part of a process of building a shared knowledge base (p.32).

Transition

At team level

Managers should ensure protocols are in place for the smooth transition of cases from YOTs to adult services, from custody to community and vice versa. This should include the routine exchange of all recorded information and, where possible, face-to-face meetings, so that the transition is a managed process and thus the risks that the young person will become a disengaged case are reduced.

Training

With individual practitioners

Practitioners will need to have specific skills, knowledge and understanding to aid their effective engagement with young people. Appropriate skills and knowledge might include skills for communication and creating supportive relationships, developing and sustaining motivation, problem-solving approaches and techniques, and methods and requirements for multi-agency working (pp.45–46).

Engagement is relevant to all the contacts that the YOT has with young people and their parents/carer. Therefore, in addition to the training outlined above, engagement techniques should be incorporated into all levels of training for all staff who have direct contact with young people. Specialist training, for example, training in working with the parents/carer, restorative justice or reception skills, while specific in its area of interest, should still encourage a collaborative and empathic approach that is relevant to young people.

Managers should identify suitable training to enable practitioners to develop their engagement skills.

As well as formal skills-based training, staff will need:

- **knowledge about local services and resources, including guidance on how to access such services and how to negotiate on behalf of the young person**
- **guidance in the mechanics of managing caseloads and engaging with other professional partners.**

At team level

Managers should use the supervision/appraisal system to collate information on training needs, source or commission training events and allocate places.

Resources that provide detailed information on local provision should be developed, and these must be maintained and kept up-to-date.

Management

With individual practitioners

Wherever possible, cases should be allocated to allow one person to support and supervise a young person across and within a range of interventions in a case manager role, in order to sustain engagement (p.41).

Clear guidance on working within national standards, protecting the young person and the public, and allowing time and discretion in managing cases should be agreed through team consultation. Practitioners should be clear when enforcement is necessary.

Managers could lead in the development of team approaches to formal rewards and sanctions, and be involved in positive compliance and engagement.

Managers should:

- use, or where necessary, develop guidance (for example, the Behaviour Management Code of Practice within secure establishments) that explores and seeks to reconcile the two demands of care and control within a team context, so that practitioners can better define their roles and their practice
- take a leading role in developing partnerships with other agencies and professionals to ensure that a range of services and alternative methods of engaging young people are available, having regard for the core aim of reducing offending
- encourage staff to employ a collaborative and purposeful approach to every contact with children and young people
- provide staff with clear guidance on how to deliver interventions as designed and access additional resources where necessary (p.48).

Supervision

Managers must provide practitioners with feedback on their practice, including detail of the skills they use to secure engagement and the quality of their relationships with young people, and employ and model similar skills in their own supervision of staff.

The supervision process should focus upon evidence beyond the more general assertions found in intervention literature (p.47). They should look for evidence of collaboration and negotiation in practice beyond the signature of the child on the document. They should also look for ongoing assessment and review aimed at tracking, acknowledging and reinforcing progress made by individuals (p.41).

The practical implications of this might, for example, suggest the value of the direct observation of practice so that engagement techniques can be recognised and built upon. It will also be important to find ways of canvassing the views of individual young people about their supervisor, the interventions undertaken and the services provided by the YOT.

Supervision should be conducted in a way that is honest, open, respectful and trusting, reflecting the qualities of effective engagement between practitioner and young person.

Service development

Programmes of support that engage young people are individually tailored and based upon effective interventions. These should be developed in light of individual assessments and the use of aggregate data so that the service of the YOT is shaped by the needs of the young people in its local area (p.48).

At a practical level, any gaps in provision should be identified by the operational manager and the practitioner. Gaps in resources can be reviewed at a strategic level to ensure that individual differences are accounted for.

Monitoring and evaluation

Asset and assessment data should be collated from the multiple assessments completed in a team or establishment to explore the needs of, and best engagement methods for, different groups of young people in the local area or establishment. To provide the best range of services, managers should pay attention to ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as any issues associated with gender.

Services and programmes delivered should be monitored through the supervision and management process in order to review their effectiveness and make refinements as necessary (p.48).

Guidance on strategic management and partnership working

Communication

Policies, procedures and protocols should be communicated to staff and partner agencies with clarity and accuracy.

Transition

Strategic managers (heads of service, governors and directors) should work together to put in place partnership agreements and protocols, which will form the basis of ‘wraparound’ services that involve a range of practitioners from different professional settings working in a co-ordinated network to meet the multiple needs of young people (pp.43–44).

Training

Strategic managers need to ensure funds are available for training, either commissioning events for whole staff teams or sending nominated individuals on specific courses. They also have particular responsibility for ensuring that managers themselves have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide both leadership and effective supervision of practice.

Training should be available to partner agencies, especially where joint working is at the centre of provision due to the nature of the offence or young person’s need.

Service development

Strategic managers should avoid commissioning services that encourage inflexible ‘blanket’ approaches to young people or are delivered in isolation from other interventions. They should seek to develop, with both practitioners and external providers, a varied programme of high quality interventions that engage a range of partners with a relationship for change as the driving mechanism (p.48).

Strategic managers should ensure that offence-focused interventions are delivered alongside complementary services that address the range of interrelated needs often experienced by young people (p.13). They also need to provide guidance on the balance between social control and helping young people, clearly stating where discretion is acceptable and how accountability is managed (p.18).

In their workforce planning they should, wherever possible, seek to develop a staff group with a range of skills and backgrounds, who have good relationship-building skills and are knowledgeable about the local community or establishment population and the resources available there to support young people (p.41).

Strategic managers can lead on the negotiation and development of protocols with partner agencies, developing formal agreements, practices and procedures. The outcomes of such negotiation should be communicated clearly to staff, and roles, responsibilities and expectations should be clarified.

They also need to ensure that practitioners have the time for proper engagement, the resources to ensure this, for example, appropriate surroundings, and the skills to gather information in a way that promotes a positive relationship with the young person.

Monitoring and evaluation

In order to increase the knowledge base about the impact of interventions on different groups of offenders, wherever possible, evaluations should attempt to incorporate the young person's perspective and data about the level of their participation.

Managers at both the operational and strategic level need to use aggregate data from assessments to develop a profile of the range of needs experienced by young people coming into the youth justice system in their area. Work is then required to develop positive relationships with providers of services and resources that build on positive outcomes achieved when young people are effectively supported, and therefore engaged, within interventions.

It is important that managers give practitioners data, but also the time and space to reflect on their effectiveness in securing positive outcomes, and create forums that enable the development of future procedures and processes (p.50).

The full report on which this summary is based
is available on the Youth Justice Board website.

Further copies of this summary can be obtained from:

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