

REDUCING THE RISK OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGING IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR – WRITTEN SUBMISSION

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CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN HILLINGDON

Hillingdon Tuition Centre is Hillingdon Borough's only pupil referral unit. It provides provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded, are at risk of exclusion, or cannot attend school due to medical reasons. A number of pupils are known to the Youth Offending Service and have been involved in criminal activity or anti-social behaviour.

WORK UNDERTAKEN AND GAPS IN SERVICE

The Centre is holistic in its approach and provides a therapeutic as well as academic programme to its pupils. The main aim is to ensure that pupils leave with a good package of results, reflective of their ability, and are able to hold down a job, run a household and maintain relationships. Where parameters permit, HTC tries as much as possible to provide a personalised programme to its pupils.

There is a lot of focus on strategies to avoid criminal activity and anti-social behaviours as well as a focus on the consequences of partaking behaviours. Pupils are often reminded on how to make the right choice. This is not just something that is covered in lessons but is a part of the whole school day. Good, moral behaviour is constantly modelled for pupils. The basic message is that it is ok to be yourself but essential to know the difference between right and wrong.

A lot of work is undertaken to understand the pupil and their needs and provide this information to all stakeholders. This ensures that targets and ambitions are shared by all. There is a great emphasis on the work that we do with parents and they are communicated with on a daily basis as well as having access to parenting classes. HTC utilises a mentoring method as opposed to a traditional form tutor group which is found in mainstream schools. This provides each pupil with a mentor that works closely with the pupil and maintains daily contact with the parents. This has been particularly successful as absolute knowledge of the pupil and their family situation is guaranteed. It also means that any incidences inside or outside of school can be dealt with quickly and by someone who knows the pupil well. The maintenance of an open relationship is paramount to HTC's success.

There are of course gaps which if addressed could strengthen the work that HTC does with its pupils. Schools are not privy to Merlin reports but if we had this information sooner matters could be addressed and dealt with a lot quicker. HTC strives to keep its communication channels open with all stakeholders, ensuring that information is regularly shared with social workers, key workers and Youth Offending workers so it seems

incomprehensible that Merlin reports are not shared until it is often too late or a situation has got worse.

There are considerable gaps in the approaches to young people's mental health. It is often the case with pupils at HTC that they have a social maladaptation to abnormal emotional stresses and a few are seriously emotionally disturbed. As a result they often partake in risk taking behaviours that lead to criminal activity and anti-social behaviours; they suffer the consequences and their mental health difficulties are exacerbated and so a spiral of self-destruction or repeat offenses occurs.

It has become increasingly difficult to make referrals to CAMHS and as a result a lot of mental health difficulties in young people are going unaddressed. It is hoped that with the SEND reform and the emphasis on social, emotional and mental health as opposed to behaviour this may very change. However, it is doubtful if this is going to be anytime soon.

Globally, there appears to be a lot of wheels set in motion once criminal activity or anti-social behaviour has taken place. It is felt that more preventative work is needed particularly with regards to young people's activities in the evenings and weekends. HTC has recognised the good work that takes place in the Borough's Young People's Centre and the overlap in terms of the message delivered to young people but more opportunities need to be provided.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Many pupils within HTC have completed their Youth Offending Orders with the support of HTC without reoffending. Pupils reintegrated back to mainstream school seldom return to HTC and therefore avoid permanent exclusion or a second permanent exclusion.

The majority of pupils leave the centre with a good package of results that have allowed them to join further education, employment or training. NEET figures for the centre, year on year, have been very low. Again, there is a lot of work undertaken with the pupils to ensure that they are able to successfully move on.