

Request for examples of innovative practice

September 2013

Introduction

Beyond Youth Custody (BYC) is one of three England-wide learning and awareness projects funded under the Big Lottery Fund's Youth in Focus (YIF) programme, which aims to support vulnerable young people through changes in their lives. BYC exists to challenge, advance and promote better thinking and practice in resettlement services for young people making the transition from custody to the community and beyond, improving effectiveness and reducing reoffending.

It is a partnership programme being delivered by four specialist organisations:

- Nacro
- ARCS (UK)
- Centre for Social Research at the University of Salford
- Vauxhall Centre for the Study of Crime at the University of Bedfordshire

BYC brings together partners' considerable strength and experience in criminal justice, youth and adult resettlement, policy development, research and evaluation, communications and project management.

Case studies

The aim of BYC is to identify best practice in the resettlement of young people and young adults leaving custody and then use this evidence base to transform resettlement services and produce better outcomes.

A key strand of our research and evaluation work therefore involves the design and development of a set of carefully chosen case studies. **We are currently looking for projects to provide us with examples of innovative practice**, so if you have a case study from your project that you think highlights effective practice or an example of innovative practice in one of the key areas outlined later in this document, then please get in touch with us by telephone on 020 7840 7247 or email (beyondyouthcustody@nacro.org.uk) by **30 September 2013**.

You don't need to submit case studies at this stage but just get in touch to let us know you have an example and we will work with you to develop this. (Submissions will not be linked to individual projects in any published material without prior permission.)

The case studies that we are developing are of two types:

- **Practice case studies** – These focus on specific areas of practice, and are designed to help us understand effective approaches and to identify factors which can impede, or help to facilitate, good practice;
- **Individual case studies** – These focus on specific project participants and their individual pathways, and on connections between these pathways and different sets of resettlement outcomes.

The distinction between practice and individual case studies is primarily about methods of selection rather than the actual content of a case study – the best individual case studies will usually also highlight key practice issues, and a focus on particular facets of project practice will also usually involve some reference to the way in which this involves, or impacts on, individuals.

Both types of case study will also incorporate a range of different types of (quantitative and

qualitative) data, and be anchored clearly in our wider reviews of the practice and research literature.

Sampling

The selection of both types of case study will be informed by an overall interest in the effectiveness of interventions and in understanding what it is about particular interventions that can generate positive resettlement outcomes with specific groups of young people in particular contexts or circumstances.

At this stage of our work we are selecting individual case studies on the basis of findings from our analysis of YIF project data, and we will continue to add to that sample and to undertake tracking during the life of the programme.

Whilst suggestions from YIF projects about individual case studies are welcome, we are particularly interested at this stage of the work in identifying and further developing our practice case studies.

The literature review published by BYC in April 2013 highlighted some areas that are under-researched in the resettlement field, and we are therefore particularly interested in using YIF case studies to expand our knowledge of these areas which are as follows:

- **Facilitating and sustaining engagement**
- **Tailoring services to assessed individual need**
- **Responsiveness to diversity issues**
- **Focusing on a transition to adulthood**
- **Designing and delivering a joined-up service**

Further details about these areas can be found in the following section.

We will continue to select projects where issues concerning effective resettlement practice are usefully highlighted, **but we would also be very keen to hear from projects that would like to put forward case studies that they think demonstrate interesting practice in these areas.**

We are also inviting projects to put forward other ideas of innovative practice.

Key practice areas – further details

BYC is interested in a wide range of practice areas, as highlighted both in our consultation work with YIF projects to date and in our initial and ongoing reviews of the research literature.

Some of the key topic areas are set out below.

- **Facilitating and sustaining engagement**

Projects have adopted a variety of approaches to engaging, and sustaining the involvement of, young people in their work, and a sample of cases studies will focus on this range of approaches.

Feedback from some projects already suggests that the practice of teams that are most effective at engaging young people is underpinned by an understanding of what

criminologists have referred to as “processes of desistance”, and the non-linear nature of progress that is often achieved when working with young people with complex needs.

However, the way in which this understanding informs practice is highly complicated and affected by a range of factors including the characteristics and backgrounds of the young people being worked with, as well as the local context in which the practice is delivered.

We would aim to select a range of case studies to illustrate some of these complexities, and to allow us to draw contrasts in terms of key issues such as:

- the advantages and disadvantages of group work versus one-to-one work
- the way in which programme content is balanced against quality individual relationships between workers and young people
- the importance placed on matching young people both to individual workers and programme content.

• Tailoring services to assessed individual need

The literature suggests that the most effective resettlement practice is underpinned by the assessment of relevant individual need and the effective linkage of service provision to this identified need. There is also some evidence to suggest that such provision is more likely to be effective if it is holistic rather than focused on single issues.

This is not to say that these features are essential to the generation of positive outcomes as some projects are fairly universal in their approach and not always responsive to the very specific needs of particular clients. In some cases of this kind, effective projects appear to be those where the quality of worker-client relationships to some extent obviates the necessity for a close matching of service delivery to assessed need.

It will be important to examine ways in which young people’s needs are actually assessed, as well as looking at the impact of different approaches.

As part of this group of case studies, the team is particularly interested in the way in which projects tailor their approaches and interventions to identified mental health needs that young people may have.

• Responsiveness to diversity issues

These issues concern the extent to which practice is informed by an understanding of the characteristics of specific sub-groups of young people, such as young people from black and minority ethnic groups, young women and girls, and young people with particular disabilities or health issues.

Feedback from some projects resonates with other research which suggests that effective engagement with young people can be related to issues concerning diversity. It is clear that some YIF projects have developed ways of engaging with clients and delivering services to them that are strongly tailored to a consideration of these issues.

• Focusing on transition to adulthood

Our literature review highlighted a clear need for further research to understand issues concerning young people making the transition to adulthood in terms of resettlement experience and practice. Most statutory agencies and provider organisations have tended to operate with a fairly clear demarcation of their client groups in terms of age – with some focusing only on young people under 18 for example, or up to the age of 21 but not beyond

it. Although these age bands do have different legislative significance in terms of official policy, they can be quite arbitrary in terms of effective resettlement (and young people's experience of resettlement).

Some have argued that a resettlement focus which spans these age ranges will have increased scope for effectiveness, and organisations such as the Transition 2 Adulthood Alliance have been created to examine precisely these issues.

There are a number of ways in which such a focus could be realised in practice and since the BYC programme will be examining practice with young people aged 15 to 25, it would be of great value and interest to the field if our case study sample could include specific examples of practice that engage with these issues around the transition to adulthood.

- **Designing and delivering a joined-up service**

For many years now the research and practice literature has highlighted the importance of joined-up working in relation to resettlement provision for young people, and we have also been focusing on these issues in our own BYC work.

Feedback from YIF projects has already flagged up a range of different approaches that projects take to ensuring that contributions by different partners are properly co-ordinated with one another. This can include areas such as the co-location of key workers, multi-agency problem-solving groups which meet regularly to engage with practice issues relating to specific cases, or the design and implementation of over-arching policy/practice agreements that key partners sign up to.

We would aim to supplement our examination of partnership issues through the development of a set of case studies that highlight this approach.

Summary

Some of these practice areas are obviously overlapping, for example responsiveness to diversity issues can have a strong connection with the effectiveness of approaches to engagement, and tailoring services to individual need also has relevance to both engagement and diversity issues.

The list of topics is also not exhaustive, but is presented here as an initial list which has been strongly informed by the BYC's team review and consultation work. As BYC's work develops in the coming years, it may be the case that interest in particular areas of resettlement practice will change alongside shifts in policy and it may be that particular practice issues assume higher priority than they currently do.

We will continue to work closely with YIF projects to highlight case studies that provide qualitative evidence to strengthen BYC's research and evaluation.

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