

Literature review of reducing barriers and reoffending in juvenile offenders



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This assignment will be a literature review of reducing barriers and re-offending in juvenile offenders at Wetherby secure college of learning through education and training, and to draw out any key themes that have been highlighted from published research. It has for a long time been accepted that there is a long standing connection of both public and professional opinions, the link between those juvenile offenders who commit crime to barriers and education, training and skills.

This literature review will draw on books, published research, home office and government journals and agencies such as the YJB, OLASS- offender learning and skills service. This bibliographic information was selected using home office, government and agency resources and also using databases such as Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC).

The government has a duty to punish those as a deterrent who commit crime, but also has a duty to address the reason why these young juvenile offenders fall into a vicious circle of committing crime. The review will look at how the government intend to raise offender skills and get more offenders into work and stop repeat offending. Research has Identified a key falling of the criminal justice system that over half off all offences are committed by ex- offenders, Barbary (2007) and out of all offenders that were released from custody in 2004 over sixty five per cent went on to re-offend, Home Office (2007). This being a massive cost to the government and to the tax payer by ex-offenders estimated to be around £11 billion per year Social Exclusion Unit (2002).

The interest I have in this area is that I have been working with young offenders on and off for the last twenty two years and for the last ten years in a teaching capacity. Over this period of time I have dealt with these young people with a whole range of learning and educational difficulties, and we need to look at, and to stop the huge number of them re-offending and coming back into custody. And that is to equip them with the right skills so at least they have a better chance of progressing through life.

For my research I would like to take a sample of offenders who have improved their education whilst in custody and to follow them on release to see if it has had an impact on stopping them re-offending.

The back ground to this review starts with the youth justice board, the YJB were introduced to oversee the provision of all 15-18 year olds in custody serving detention training orders. This agency brought a renewed focus as their role spans both custody and the community to monitor key services to prevent re-offending under the crime and disorder act 1998.

Review of Literature

Evaluation of Literature suggests custodial institutions are attempting to meet the needs of the young juvenile offenders who are beset with multiple disadvantages. In terms of education and training, the young people's immediate antecedents are mainly characterised by lack of access and/or nonparticipation and long-standing deficits in literacy and numeracy.

The YJB commissioned Ecotec consulting to undertake an audit of the provisions of education and training within the juvenile estate. The YJB could then use this as a base to measure any success that arose.

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The outcome of this audit gave an eye opening evidence based snapshot of a system failing to provide juvenile offenders with their entitlement to a good education. The audits evidence revealed a picture of a disconnected, inadequate and an impoverished service ECOTEC (2001).

There were three main areas where education appears to be significant in creating a likelihood of offending:

- The impact of custodial interventions;
- Educational under-achievement, particularly with respect to literacy and numeracy;
- Permanent exclusion and non-attendance at school.

A re-occurring thread of research done on young people in custody is that a majority have low levels of educational or training qualifications, with significant literacy and numeracy deficits in particular. The Social Exclusion Unit Bridging the Gap report noted that 80 per cent of young offenders in custody had no qualifications, and that over two-thirds of young offenders sent to custody were at NVQ Level 1 or below for reading, writing and numeracy YJB (2006). A survey carried out by INCLUDE for the YJB's Basic Skills Initiative (2000) of the basic skills needs of young people with whom Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are working revealed reading ages averaging six years behind chronological ages.

Evidence from other researchers were in agreement with ECOTEC consulting, findings revealed similar key factors that are closely associated with

offending by young people:

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- * detachment from education
- * low attainment (especially in literacy and numeracy skills)
- * influence of the school (including lack of a clear school ethos, poor discipline)
- * experience of custody and local authority care, which are associated with detachment from education and low attainment,

Blythe, Haywood, Stevenson (2004).

Research over the last decade has suggested that young people who do not succeed at GCSE level are less likely to move onto further education between the ages of 16 and 18, this evidence in itself, is the most important indicator of unemployment at age 21 (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). Work carried out by Croll and Moses (2003) supports the view that ‘early exits from the education system are typically associated with limited career prospects and other restricted life chances’. This is also viewed by the researchers mentioned earlier, that the earlier young people remove themselves or are removed by exclusion or suspension from education in their early teens are likely to go on to become young offenders.

Evidence from the literature suggests that, to curb the dis-engagement of the young offenders from learning before they get into the criminal justice system was:

For schools to respond quickly to non- attendance/ involve the parents with support/ and to arrange full time programmes for students who have become detached from education

To have individualised learning plans for students with difficulties

And to promote a good school ethos and staff- student relationships.

All the literature review so far is in agreement with what is happening and what needs to be done to help young people overcome these barriers and promote education to the dis-effected youth I see on a day to day basis in my work environment.

The four main risk factors for the onset and continuation of offending occur within the remit of ' education, training and employment', these are, detachment from education, low attainment in literacy and numeracy, influence of the schools and receiving a custodial sentence or placed into care. Research evidence also suggests that engagement in education and training is most probably the single most important protective factor in reducing offending and reoffending (YJB, 2002; Berridge et al, 2001; Lipsey, 1995; Farrington, 1996).

“ What is less clear from all of this evidence is the direction of the relationship between cause and effect with these particular risk factors. Does low attainment make the young person more likely to absent him or herself, or are those who absent themselves more likely to be low attainers? Does being excluded from school lead people into offending, or are actual or potential offenders more likely to be excluded?” (YJB 2006).

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Some literature argues that, it is unclear whether these young people being out of school for long periods of time and associating with an older delinquent cohort fall into crime (Berridge et al, 2001; Farrington, 2001) or the increase exposure to drug taking, or is it when the young people drop out from education, it's the delay in re-attachment back to mainstream education that is driving them into engaging in offending behaviour (Parsons, 2000). But the literature does suggest that being exposed to one or all the risk factors mentioned increases the risk of offending behaviour (YJB, 2006).

If we look more closely at the high risk factors of causes of offending in young people and possible resolutions.

Detachment

The YJB funded education programmes has shown direct correlation in numeracy and literacy attainment and in low rates of offending (YJB, 2003). Post sixteen education, training and skills interventions were a big predictor in getting employment. An Audit Commission Report (1999), reported that on any one day that there are four hundred thousand children, five per cent of the eight million children that should be in school that or not. The Audit Commission Report (Audit Commission, 2004) recognised that the extent of 'out of school' population was unknown and recommended that LEAs should undertake a census of young people not in school, including authorised and unauthorised absences and those not on a school roll.

The Tomlinson Report (DfES, 2004) observed that:

“ Disengagement peaks during Key Stage 4 and is manifest in absenteeism, exclusion and bad behaviour. Some of the causes of disengagement are <https://assignbuster.com/literature-review-of-reducing-barriers-and-reoffending-in-juvenile-offenders/>

cultural, social and economic and not easily addressed through changes to curriculum and qualifications.”

While recognising that the causes of disengagement may be complex, the Tomlinson Report proposals had the stated aim of raising participation and tackling the educational causes of disengagement through:

- * offering a choice of relevant programmes and activities that allow young people to pursue their interests and aspirations
- * sign posting progression routes within a diploma framework and making it easier for learners to follow a route of their choice
- * ensuring that all young people developed the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to access the curriculum
- * enabling young people to build confidence by gaining credit for small steps of achievement.

There are four additional messages from the current literature.

- * It is much clearer about what to do than the detail on how to do it

Reattaching young people to education and training is far harder than preventing

detachment in the first place

- * There is limited evidence available of the transfer of learning between different

environments such as custody to the community

* Delays and poor communication between the education and youth justice systems

are a major constraint (YJB 2006).

Conclusions

The literature review supports the importance placed by the YJB on education and training to reduce recidivism among young people who offend. The emerging research evidence provides broad guidance for principles of effective educational interventions. Several types of intervention have been evaluated as demonstrating a high degree of effectiveness in reducing important risk factors. The evidence also indicates that early and sustained intervention on the crucial matters of attainment and attachment have a higher chance of success than trying to equip older teenagers who have become completely detached from mainstream learning with literacy and numeracy skills.