



Youth Justice
Agency

Connections

Youth Justice Agency Newsletter

Issue 25 / September 2017



Staying
onside

Nuts about
reparation

Celebrating
our volunteers

Welcome from the Chief Executive



Welcome to this latest edition of our **Connections magazine.**

Engaging with communities is an important part of our work, and this edition provides an opportunity to highlight some of the diverse range of partnership relationships that exist and the successful outcomes they have delivered for our young people over recent months.

Volunteers are crucial in helping our staff deliver services to young people and victims, and our annual celebratory reception, as outlined on pages 11-14, enables us to show our appreciation for the valuable work that they do on our behalf. I am extremely grateful to all our volunteers, and found it fascinating to learn of the experiences of Kevin and Meaghan, joint winners of our 'Ross McCartney Volunteer of the Year Award 2017' in seeing things from their perspective.

Looking ahead, we are currently gearing up for an exciting phase which will see a number of high profile developments which we believe will enhance the life opportunities and experiences of the young people with whom we work.

We will drive forward the implementation of a wide-ranging programme flowing from the Scoping Study on the youth justice system, in partnership with our key partners. Key aims will be, where possible, keeping children out of the system by providing early intervention and support; developing community alternatives; maximising exit points and diversionary disposals; and increased usage of restorative disposals.

We will also shortly complete the formal transfer of education to the Education Authority, thus firmly establishing our Education Centre at Woodlands as an EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) facility which will offer the best education possible to our young people in custody.

There is a shared desire to widen our focus beyond a justice approach when dealing with young people who offend – to one which has the welfare needs of the child at its centre. To this end, we will progress our well-established positive and productive engagement with colleagues in the Department of Health, looking together at ways of providing the most effective service which can address the needs of young people.

In taking forward this work programme, we acknowledge the importance of measuring the effectiveness of what we do, particularly in the current financial climate, and we are actively working with colleagues across a range of sectors to identify appropriate ways of demonstrating that we are delivering real value for money.

As Chief Executive, I look forward to leading the Agency as it delivers this challenging programme of work.

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Supporting Parents

Our Parents Support Group plays an extremely important role within the Youth Justice Agency and we are privileged to have been provided with a testimonial from the parents of one young person involved with the Agency. Their words highlight the transformational work being facilitated by the Parents Support Group. They were among sixteen parents who attended a recent Parents Support Group celebration event. Along with the other parents, they were presented with certificates of appreciation to acknowledge their contribution to the group and their commitment to their young people. They also received certificates in Overdose Response Training, Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for parents, Duke of Edinburgh Award and 'Safe Talk.' As a group they have shared some of their experiences of being part of the Parent Support Group, and how this has impacted on their family and helped them to manage and support their young person.

M: "I was definitely not keen on going to the group but my Youth Conference worker sold the idea to me. The fact that a driver came to the house to collect me at the start really encouraged me to go. We went on a residential with other parents and it was at the residential that I realised my partner was trying to cope with everything and that she couldn't continue to manage on her own with all that was going on. Before this, I just sat and drank and she had to do everything. I let myself go and just drank all day – that was my way of coping."

L: "I felt I had to hide what was going on from M. I was trying to keep the pressure off him and deal with it myself."

M: "I locked myself in the house and withdrew from everything. I thought people were talking about us and I felt ashamed. Through the group I came to see that I was not on my own. Now I wonder why I felt so guilty and ashamed in the first place. When we went on the residential we got to know other parents better. It helped getting a break from all the stressful

things that were happening but the workshops helped us start to think about what was going on and how we could make things better. It brought us closer together as a family. As a family we work together now. My kids love to see me going to the group and they have seen a change in me. They have seen how I've changed my life - before I let the kids do what they wanted but now we talk and do things together. My sons and I work together on motorbikes and build stuff together now."

L: "The group has helped my confidence especially when it came to explaining to other agencies like the police and probation about our son's difficulties. The TCI (Therapeutic Crisis Intervention) for Parents has been the most help. Before when the police came to the house I couldn't let M answer the door as he got really angry and always fought with the police and often my son wasn't the only one getting charged! Now M opens the door to the police and speaks calmly which would have never happened before. I found the sessions from ASCERT on drugs and self-harm really helpful not just at home but in work too."



Pictured at the “Five Steps to Wellbeing” conference are L-R Judith Harrower (YJA); Jackie Downey (YJA); Alison Armstrong (Regional Prevention Services Manager, ASCERT); Dr John Kelly (Fingerprint Learning); and Andrew Bailie (YJA)

I display my “Safe Talk” certificate in work and people have come to me and I feel more confident now in dealing with these situations. The drug information sessions don’t just give us information on the drugs our young people may be abusing but help us know how they can affect them.”

L: “The TCI for parents would be the top of my list. It really helps you manage really difficult situations instead of making things worse. Once, when things were very bad, I just hugged my son and held him. This would have never happened before. I really can see how I’ve changed. In the group we did overdose response training with the Red Cross and this can really make you feel more confident dealing with certain situations. The sessions from ASERT on drugs and self-harm were very useful. Going to the group actually helps your mental health; the group has given me my confidence back. Before, I did nothing, but now I go out into my back yard and have built sheds with my kids. We have animals and the whole family are doing stuff. The group has helped me see that there is

light at the end of the tunnel. Through the group we now know where to go for help, not just for the young person but also for ourselves. I think my kids can see how I’ve changed and now my son is encouraged to make changes himself.”

The Parents Support Group have also recently hosted a conference for Parents – “Five Steps to Wellbeing,” a collaboration between the Youth Justice Agency and ASCERT supported by the South Eastern and Western Drug and Alcohol Coordination Teams. Keynote speaker Dr John Kelly of “Fingerprint Learning” spoke about parents as educators and the importance continuing to learn and having healthy social connections.

The Parents Support Group meets weekly at the Youth Justice Agency Headquarters in Belfast and is open to any parent/carer/significant adult that has a young person involved with the Agency.

The Reader

A new personal development programme is establishing itself in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre. The project is led by Elizabeth Dass, from the organisation - The Reader.

The intervention involves meeting weekly in either a group setting or one to one and reading great literature aloud at the service user's pace. Shared Reading has the very nice side effect of improving the group member's literacy, but that is not strictly what it is all about.

**The tag line for shared reading is:
"Connect, Realise, Change"**

The facilitator works hard to build up as much safety as possible in the group and over time thoughts and experiences are shared, personal and social connections are made. It assists members to build up skills for positive social interaction, listening to each other, self-awareness and increased confidence.



There is no pressure for anyone to read aloud or even to speak because simply listening to great literature and to other group members can be a powerful stimulant. Without any pressure, people often decide to read or to share their thoughts. Despite the obvious obstacles of asking hard to reach groups of people to sit down with us and read, The Reader has found that members really enjoy the sessions. A lot of members report being much calmer after sessions, with long term effects including improved mental health.

The project is now well established in Woodlands, Hydebank College, and in Maghaberry and Magilligan prisons.

Charity Partnership

Each year, our staff select a charity partner to benefit from corporate fundraising opportunities taken forward on behalf of the Agency.

Our arrangement with the NI Children's Hospice as our 2016-17 official charity partner came to an end at the end of March with the handover of donations totalling £1,150.96 – these represented the proceeds from a number of charitable events over the preceding months ranging from a sponsored walk, coffee mornings, a Christmas Jumper day, and a spring clean donation day. We were honoured to attend a recent open day at the Hospice and learn how all the funds raised were being put to good use. We wish the NI Children's Hospice well for the future.

Action Cancer has been appointed as our new charity partner for 2017-18 and planning is well underway for a series of fundraising events in the Autumn.



**Northern
Ireland
Children's
Hospice**

Children's Hospital benefits from Reparation Art Group mural

A Reparation Art Group, comprising of young people engaging in the services of the Youth Justice Agency in the North Belfast area, completed a mural which was presented to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children for placement in their new, state of the art, MRI Unit.

The Art Group was set up by the Youth Justice Agency to provide a reparation opportunity for those children who may have difficulty fully engaging in community-based placements. This is sometimes due to their high risk and their challenging behaviour.

Over the course of the 18 months of the project, 19 young people took part, completing a range of crafts and art pieces. Some of the children were involved in designing and creating the "Underwater Treasure" mural which was gifted to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children for placement in their new, state of the art, MRI Unit which has an overall "Fish" theme. The Underwater Mural is a 7x7 foot acrylic on canvas mounted on a wooden frame.

Patricia Muldoon, Assistant Director with the Youth Justice Agency, commented "We are very proud of all the hard work that each of the children have put into this project and they are absolutely delighted that it was donated to such a worthy cause."



Pictured in front of the mural in the MRI Unit at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children are L-R: Sean O Conaire, Imaging Services Manager; Patricia Muldoon & Mary Aughey, Youth Justice Agency; and Carmel McArdle, Paediatric Radiographer



One punch, one glance - no harm done?

One Punch, One Glance two powerful videos

The Youth Justice Agency, in conjunction with The Playhouse, Derry, has launched two short educational films warning young people about the impact of crime.

'One Punch' deals with how just one moment of anger could change a life forever. The film tells the story of a jealous teenager Ryan, who has lost his girlfriend to his charming friend, Frankie. The story spirals out of control when Frankie, who can't handle anymore name calling, punches Ryan after a few drinks. The story ends with Frankie in prison regretting his mistakes. The film was written by local film maker Colm S Herron and featured a strong cast of local actors, with much of the filming taking place inside Magilligan Prison.

The second film, One Glance, written by Max Beer, deals with road safety, and in particular the impact of careless driving caused by everyday driver distractions, and contains some really strong and powerful crash aftermath sequences. The production crew worked alongside the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue



A selfie shows participants and audience members at the launch of the 'One Punch' and 'One Glance' DVDs at The Playhouse.

Service and the PSNI to create as authentic scenes as possible.

Both films were directed by Chris Byrne of Pillarpix Media and were produced by the Playhouse Street Talk project, in partnership with the Youth Justice Agency. The films were funded via the Early Intervention Transformation Programme and are part of a larger project at The Playhouse which encourages young people to explore their attitudes and experiences of the police.

Both films are currently available to watch on The Playhouse's Channel on YouTube.



Launching the 'No Harm Done?' DVD are (L-R) the Youth Justice Agency's Ben Rayot; main actor Peter Heenan; Patricia Muldoon, Youth Justice Agency; Writer and Producer Laurence Doherty; Belfast PCSP Chair Cllr Matt Garrett; and Policing Board Vice Chair Debbie Watters.

'No harm done?'

This is a short innovative film aimed at educating young people on the impact peer pressure can have on the choices they make and the often unintended consequences of their actions and behaviours.

Funded by the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP), this DVD was produced by the Youth Justice Agency and Extra Family Productions with assistance from the PSNI. The film uses an opportunistic but realistic house burglary scenario to demonstrate how, for some teenagers, peer pressure may result in a series of events with unintended consequences. In such situations, young people may make uninformed and unsafe choices which in turn can have a dramatic impact upon their lives and futures.

'No harm done?' contains a wealth of discussion points relevant to young people such as peer pressure, risk taking behaviours, choice and consequences, victim empathy, impact of the crime on their future and increasing understanding of the youth justice system in Northern Ireland. It is thought-provoking and encourages opportunities for discussion amongst young people to increase their capacity to consider some of the issues they are facing and their impacts, not only to themselves, but also to others such as victims, peers, family and the community as a whole.

Contribution of Community Partners to Woodlands Grows

Youth Justice Agency staff provide key services for young people both during and after custody. In Woodlands, staff work to support and develop young people alongside their Youth Justice Services colleagues who work closely with children in their own communities.

Young people in custody are also benefitting from a wide variety of community providers contributing to their education and personal development. Some partners are providing pastoral care services and others are advocating for young people and empowering them in key meetings about their care and the services they receive.

Young Enterprise, Include Youth and Bytes are helping young people develop skills relevant to employability, from IT to business planning, interview skills to applying for training courses beyond custody and complementing the role of Youth Justice Services.

Other partners such as Start 360's Adjust programme help young people as they make the transition from custody back into their communities. Medium to long term development programmes, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, are embedded into the culture of

Woodlands with staff supporting children as they progress towards their award. The Prince's Trust too features in pre and post release planning.

Statutory partners have also provided innovative services. Brain training sessions have been held for staff and children. Originating in Hydebank College this programme helps people achieve goals by enabling them to see "how they are smart as opposed to how smart they are". The Pastoral Care service now in place in Woodlands provides opportunities for one to one support as well as joint celebrations such as the Centre's annual Carol Service. Woodlands also welcomes sports clubs into the Centre, with a number of community groups providing teams for our young people to pit themselves against. These events have proved to be very successful and remain an important aspect of the Centre's community outreach programme.

We continue to seek out new and innovative engagement with community partners to benefit the children in our care. Should you have any ideas or proposals please contact the Youth Justice Agency.



Joint winners of this year's Ross McCartney Volunteer Award, Meaghan Cassidy and Kevin Thompson, are pictured after receiving their award from Mr & Mrs McCartney. Looking on are David Brown, YJA Independent Board Member and Declan McGeown, Chief Executive



Celebrating our Volunteers

The Youth Justice Agency held an evening reception in June to celebrate the valuable work that volunteers perform on our behalf.

Around 50 volunteers, staff and key stakeholders gathered in Alexander House, Londonderry to acknowledge the dedication of our volunteers, who work alongside staff in an entirely voluntary capacity, in supporting young people in local communities to make amends for the harm caused by their offending behaviour.

Independent Board member David Brown presented certificates of appreciation to our existing and newly trained volunteers.

Highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Ross McCartney Volunteer Award 2017 to our overall Volunteer of the Year. This annual award was developed in response to the contribution of Ross McCartney, a volunteer with the Youth Justice Agency who died in May 2010, aged 24, as a result of cancer. In partnership with his family, we have undertaken to sponsor an annual award for presentation to a volunteer who espouses the same outstanding qualities and virtues that Ross demonstrated during his time with the Agency.

Joint winners of this year's Ross McCartney Volunteer Award were Meaghan Cassidy (Belfast Area Team) and Kevin Thompson (Western Area Team) who were selected by an evaluation panel from a total of nine nominations received from staff, parents and service users. They were presented with their award by Mr & Mrs McCartney, Ross' parents.

A Volunteer's experience: **Meaghan Cassidy**

Meaghan Cassidy, joint winner of the Youth Justice Agency's Volunteer of the Year Award 2017, has been a volunteer with the Agency's Belfast Area Team for over two years. During that time she has been involved in a diverse range of activities and finds this experience most rewarding.

Meaghan has agreed to discuss her role as a volunteer with the Youth Justice Agency....

After studying criminology in university, Meaghan wanted to gain more experience in this field and her uncle, former Belfast Lord Mayor Arder Carson, suggested that the Youth Justice Agency would be an ideal opportunity, especially given her knowledge of Restorative Justice processes.

Keen to explore the possibility of becoming a Social Worker, Meaghan was delighted to develop skills and knowledge working with children and their families who are involved in the Youth Justice system. She outlined how "being a teenager today is so hard and how young people can make poor decisions".

Meaghan feels that being close in age to the young people that she engages with is an advantage in her role as it can act as a catalyst in creating constructive relationships. She also firmly believes that being a good listener is a key skill, supplemented by being responsible, understanding, reliable and non-judgemental.

Describing some of her experiences, Meaghan spoke of the value of sustained relationships for young people involved in the criminal justice system and the motivation required to be successful in establishing and maintaining



Joint winner Meaghan Cassidy celebrates with colleagues from our Belfast Area Team

these links. Meaghan has also developed increased communication skills and has realised the importance of being patient, as well as developing knowledge in a wide range of new areas.

Meaghan really enjoys the role, meeting a range of people and playing an important supportive role in someone else's life. Meaghan believes she is making a difference in her role and would encourage others to volunteer with the Youth Justice Agency.



Our YJA volunteer co-ordinators were also acknowledged at the reception

A Volunteer's experience: **Kevin Thompson**

Joint winner of the Youth Justice Agency's Volunteer of the Year Award 2017, Kevin Thompson, who resides in Burt, Co Donegal, has been a volunteer with the Agency's Western Area Team based in Foyle for the past four years. During that time he has been involved in a diverse range of activities and finds this experience most rewarding.

Here he tells his story of volunteering with the Youth Justice Agency...



Joint winner Kevin Thompson celebrates with colleagues from our Western Area Team

Kevin's Story

Kevin is one of those volunteers who initially learned about the scheme from his wife who had previously carried out a similar role for the Youth Justice Agency. Kevin always enjoyed working with young people but felt he wanted to do more in relation to diverting children away from the behaviours which were leading to them coming into conflict with the law.

'Although I had little knowledge of the Agency, I did see the useful work they were carrying out in my area and I thought I could use my own life experiences to give kids a chance at staying out of trouble and at the same time learn new stuff myself, as I am presently studying Youth Work at university.'

'I had little schooling myself and have Dyslexia but I felt that my own achievements may encourage local kids to try to better themselves, break the routine and social shackles they find themselves bound up in when living in impoverished communities.'

After undergoing initial training with the Youth Justice Agency, Kevin found himself working with kids whose lives seemed to be spiralling out of control, with no positive futures to aim towards.

'Initially it was difficult to engage the young people in conversation – they would just grunt replies but slowly I gained their trust and through diversionary activities, they began to open up to me and speak about their hopes and fears, scared kids hiding behind an aggressive mask. I let them do the talking if they wanted, not pushing or forcing them but being available as someone they could trust and rely on. You had to talk to the kids in their own language, use slang and the language of the streets, use any means to get the positive messages through to them and assure them that they could have a bright future.'



Newly trained volunteers Shauna Cornyn, Pascal McLaughlin, and Charlotte Linstrom receive their certificates from David Brown, YJA Independent Board Member and Declan McGeown, YJA Chief Executive

Celebrating our Volunteers



Key participants at our volunteer reception: Back row (L-R) David Brown, YJA Independent Board Member; Jane Gribben, Volunteer Now; Mr McCartney; Margaret McGeehan, former YJA volunteer; Declan McGeown, YJA Chief Executive. Front Row: Kevin Thompson; Mrs McCartney; Meaghan Cassidy.

One young person in particular highlights the success which volunteers can bring to the process. Kevin says:-

'I had one young man who wouldn't even go into a restaurant, he had no self-esteem and felt that his anti-social behaviours had alienated him from society. I worked with him for nearly two years, developing his confidence and signposting him to the agencies he needed to work with to get his life back on track. That young man is now in Australia, doing great and is both working and continuing to undertake training courses, a real success story. Last year he spoke at the Ross McCartney Volunteer awards, which was really emotional for me as I saw how far he had come.'

Kevin feels that working as a volunteer with the Youth Justice Agency has helped him grow in confidence, learn new skills and gave him the desire to undertake his Youth Work studies.

'My volunteering showed me what direction I wanted to take my own career and the training I received, especially in lone working, restorative justice and working with families will stand me in good stead, no matter which path I finally take. It is also really rewarding work, you don't make an impact in every young person's life but you do help some, which makes it all worthwhile.'

**The Youth Justice Agency recruits volunteers through all our area offices.
Anyone who is interested is asked to contact their local area team.**

You can find their contact details on our website

www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/youth-justice/services-delivered-within-community-setting



Staying Onside

(L-R) Paul Doran (PBNI), ACC Steve Martin (PSNI), Patrick Nelson (IFA Chief Executive), Phil Wragg (then Director General NIPS) and Patricia Muldoon (Assistant Director, YJA) are pictured during the launch at the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park.

Offenders in Northern Ireland are getting the chance to turn their lives around through the development of a programme by the Irish FA and agencies involved in the Reducing Offending in Partnership (ROP).

ROP is a Northern Ireland-wide approach to the management of priority or prolific offenders and young people at risk of offending, by the Police, Probation Service, Youth Justice Agency and Prison Service. This innovative intervention aims to reduce re-offending and reduce the number of victims of crime.

The 'Stay Onside' Programme, which was launched at an event held in the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park, initially includes pilot programmes undertaken in the custodial facilities at Woodlands and Hydebank College and two programmes within the community (Belfast and Ballymena) aimed at the Catch & Control and the Prevent & Deter Strands of the ROP. Following evaluation, it is hoped that funding and resources can be secured for a wider roll out of the programme.

Speaking at the launch, Deputy Director of Probation and Chair of the ROP Steering Group, Paul Doran stated:

“Through this programme young people who have offended will learn skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, how to deal with anger issues, and victim empathy. Many of those who have offended have very few positive relationships in their life and it is hoped that through this programme they will encounter positive role models who can motivate and inspire them but also challenge their attitudes and help them move away from a life of crime.”

PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Stephen Martin added: *“The role of the police service is to help keep people safe by policing with the community. We know that to build a safe and secure society we need to work with a range of partners and have the support of the wider community. This initiative is a great example of policing with the community which has the potential to make a real impact in reducing re-offending. This new programme will be evaluated so that we fully understand the outcomes and can evidence the impact. I want to pay tribute to the leadership of the IFA for their commitment in helping to design this programme which will benefit people throughout NI.”*

Irish FA President David Martin said: *“The Irish FA is committed to football for all and believes that our sport makes a positive impact on the community in Northern Ireland. I am delighted that the association is helping to pioneer this innovative programme and I look forward to seeing the meaningful impact it has in the coming months and years.”*



Young firefighters complete LIFE programme

“His future is there and he now knows it is obtainable”

This headline statement was made by one mother speaking enthusiastically at her son’s graduation from the “Life scheme”.

Some fourteen young people aged 13-17 took part in the 167th Life scheme hosted by Lurgan Fire Station. LIFE stands for Local Intervention through Fire Education, a scheme in which young people are immersed in the working life of firefighters for five days. Graduates are rewarded with a portfolio, a record of their progress, application and development through their week at the station. This is assessed and presented by their adult mentors - fulltime officers with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

Participants, all from the local area, were selected or referred from various schools, youth and community groups, and the Youth Justice Agency. The trainees were expected to complete a series of physically demanding challenges within the controlled environment of the station, tasks similar to those

faced in the community by their trainers. These exercises aim to develop teamwork, discipline, and leadership, promote self-esteem, self-belief and citizenship. Some of the young people participating were previously involved in anti-social behaviour while, in contrast, the course encouraged them to look for the positives in themselves and what they can offer to their community.

Graduation is a chance to involve friends and family in a celebration of the young person’s achievement, and to reflect on how the experience has impacted on their thinking and potentially future behaviour. In speaking to participants there was an overwhelming sense of having achieved “something special” that needed to be and had been earned. One young man said that it had been the best thing he had ever done and felt proud of himself for the first time. Another used the sporting metaphor describing his week as “game changer”, as he now knew that he wanted to return to school and get some qualifications. Parents were equally positive. One described how her son, legendary for sleeping until the late afternoon, had been up, showered and dressed in anticipation of his pick up at 7.00am each morning of the scheme.



There was a further consensus amongst everyone involved that there was a need for more of such programmes. One young person commented that it made him understand how difficult it was to do such a job but, in working together as a team and with hard work, they could make it look easy. Parents, absorbing the positivity felt by the young participants, remarked “this is the right way to spend money. Look at how much they valued their experience”.

As for the firefighters themselves, they were equally proud of their investment in the scheme, both in their roles as firefighters and as social educators.

They heaped praise upon the young participants for the way each had conducted themselves throughout the week. As assessors, they also provided individuals with a progress report in the form of a portfolio, to be carried forward with them as a bench mark for their potential and capacity to achieve in later life.

Finally, everyone watching the ceremony could only admire the professionalism with which each element of the demonstration was carried out. It appeared to be flawless and, watching through the heavy rain, it was hard to distinguish between trainer and trainee.



Young people visit RADAR project

Six young people from the Youth Justice Agency's Western Area Team recently attended the RADAR (Risk Avoidance and Danger Awareness Resource) project in Belfast. The trip was organised in partnership with Youth Diversion Officers from Strand Road PSNI station in Derry~Londonderry.

RADAR is a life sized, interactive safety and life skills education centre, located in the Sydenham Harbour Estate in Belfast. It is a unique and innovative centre with a full sized street scene, a house, bus, train, fire station, court room, prison cell, shop, boat and more.

The young people who attended were specifically chosen due to their involvement in driving offences. All of the young people were on court orders or youth conference plans and as such there was a statutory requirement for them to address this type of risk taking behaviour as part of their work with the Youth Justice Agency.

The young people had the opportunity to explore significant risks that they face on a daily basis. Each tour was divided into interactive workshops where the young people were led through everyday choices. The RADAR staff facilitated discussions and activities that explored consequences to help the young people make better informed choices. The tour lasted for 2 hours and contained various workshops.

One of the workshops involved the use of a driving simulator. The young people took turns at driving a 'car' while being distracted or experiencing a similar effect to being under the influence of alcohol. A similar effect was also simulated by the boys taking turns to wear 'beer goggles'.



The boys also undertook an exercise about making decisions, choices and also the effects of negative peer influences.

The young people reported that they found the project useful, informative and that they enjoyed the experiential aspect of the learning that came with it, as opposed to being 'sat down and talked to'. The Youth Justice Agency staff and PSNI also concurred, reporting that they were aware that some of the young people, in normal circumstances, would become restless and find it hard to concentrate for the length of time they were there, however, the interactive exercises kept all the young people engaged throughout the day.



'Cuss the World' – YJA Staff: Michael Heaney, Ben Rayot, Neil Smyth, Volunteer Meaghan Cassidy and Patricia Muldoon are pictured with some of the cast



Spanner in the Works

The Youth Justice Agency has been working in collaboration with the Spanner in the Works Theatre Company on the production of two plays aimed at educating young people on the dangers associated with domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse.

Both plays were developed as projects using Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) funding under the Delivering Social Change Programme and have been performed to a number of schools and youth clubs throughout Northern Ireland.

The main aim of "Mind Games" was to educate young people and parents/carers on healthy or unhealthy relationships and domestic violence (both physical and domestic) and the associated support services available. It was performed at the Black Box and Lyric Theatre to young people and their parents who had been identified by Youth Justice Agency staff as being at risk of becoming involved in domestic violence. A separate showing was also held at Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre for the young people resident there.

"Cuss the World", set in a run-down park in Belfast, follows the lives of five young teenagers whose lives are growing increasingly out of control. Meet Jane, whose brother Peter is doing time for drug-dealing and death driving; then there's David and Thomas



'Mind Games' - Youth Justice Agency staff are pictured with some of the cast from the 'Mind Games' play following a performance in the Black Box

who spend time trying to avoid their violent father; next is Amy, whose 15 year old sister is pregnant and who looks like following in her footsteps; and finally Anna, whose current hobbies include getting drunk and selling prescription drugs. Along the way, we also get to meet two mothers, who share their thoughts about bringing up troubled teenagers.

'Cuss the World' will resonate with anyone trying to understand or come to terms with the realities of serious issues facing this generation's young people, and with anyone who no longer doubts that drugs is an issue that cuts across class, gender, age, rural and urban communities.

Both plays were well received by their young audiences throughout Northern Ireland.



Acknowledging our Reparation Providers

Reparation Providers who work with the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) Southern Area team are pictured with their certificates of appreciation

The Youth Justice Agency held a reception to thank reparation providers in the Craigavon, Banbridge, Armagh and Newry areas and to acknowledge the valuable work undertaken by these partner organisations in supporting young people through the provision of reparation placements.

The event, which took place during Restorative Justice Week and was hosted by Portadown Football Club, a current Agency reparation provider, provided an opportunity for guests in attendance to hear at first hand the experiences of some of those involved in reparation – from a community perspective and an Agency perspective.

Reparation work encourages young people to make genuine efforts to make amends for their offending behaviour while also helping to restore broken relationships within the community. This is done by encouraging the young people to engage meaningfully in the placements and to support them to undertake the reparative activities as part of their statutory orders.

All of the partner organisations in attendance were presented with certificates of appreciation to acknowledge the valuable support they provide to young people.

Michael Heaney, Assistant Director of the Agency's Southern Area Team said:

“Our reparation providers deliver a valuable service within the community and I would take this opportunity to pay tribute to each and every one of them for their support and commitment in working with our young people throughout the year. We are extremely grateful for their assistance.”

Jordan Ritchie, Community Relations Liaison Officer of Portadown Football Club said:

“As a representative from Portadown Football Club I would like to thank the Youth Justice Agency for organising the reception and for the other partner groups who were in attendance. We are very grateful for the service and support we received to help reconcile and understand young people. The reception was an excellent event and it was great to hear success stories from around the community. We look forward to working with the Youth Justice Agency in the future”

The Youth Justice Agency is always on the lookout for new reparation placement opportunities and any prospective providers can contact us for further information – via e-mail to info@yjani.gov.uk

NUTS ABOUT REPARATION!



by Andrew MacQuarrie

Two young people from the Youth Justice Agency's Northern Area Team have taken part in a UK wide nature survey project coordinated here by the Ulster Wildlife Trust.

We met with about thirty community volunteers at the Ballygally Community Hall late one evening in March.

Ulster Wildlife Trust staff gave a presentation on the preservation of the red squirrel population around the UK and the threats by the grey squirrel. They explained that a new discovery has been made that where pine martens are found in a forest the red squirrel continues to thrive and the grey squirrel declines.

We left the meeting armed and trained up with the use of a motion sensitive camera, squirrel feeder, cable ties, sunflower seeds and cleaning equipment.

We were tasked with placing the camera and feeder in two locations at Shillanvogy Wood, Larne and Woodburn Forest, Carrickfergus and asked to monitor

the camera footage at two week intervals ideally hoping to picture red squirrel, grey squirrel or pine marten although obviously the boys were hoping for a photo of a grizzly bear!

Over the twelve week period of the project we were able to confirm that the camera was working and although we got photos of a fox, jays and other birds, no squirrels were located at our sites.

The young people completed 16 hours reparation activity, our findings will contribute to the broader UK wide 2017 survey and along with some fresh air, education, Barrista take away coffees from local garages and a bit of craic, the project was well worth it.

Ulster Wildlife Trust staff thanked the young people for their contribution and have stated that although they know more exciting photos were being sought, confirmation of positive camera function and no sightings of squirrels at either site is beneficial information for future planning around the conservation and promotion of the red squirrel and its potential introduction into new habitat.

Check out the Ulster Wildlife Trust website as a range of similar reparation projects may be available in your area.

www.ulsterwildlife.org

Reflections from a placement student with the Youth Justice Agency

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by Aoife Doherty



When I first discovered that my placement was going to be in the Youth Justice Agency (YJA), I panicked, as I had no experience of working with young people in a professional setting before. I also felt lucky as I realised that the YJA was very much a sought after placement. My Practice Teacher had come to do a talk on Youth Justice in my university last year, so I did have some idea what I was letting myself in for!

On my first day, I was very nervous, however when I met the team members, they were all so friendly and welcoming. I got a rundown as to how the Agency operated and for the first two weeks I had an induction into the work done at the YJA. As this was a new experience for me, it was hard to take it all in at once, however by the end of the two week induction, I found that it wasn't just working with young people that I had to skill up on but also how to make a good cup of tea!

Soon after my placement commenced, my Practice Teacher allocated a case to me. He felt that I needed to experience working with a Looked after Child. He explained that it would be challenging but it would be extremely beneficial for me in the future to supplement my experience. I agreed with him, however being so inexperienced, I was not looking forward to it. He explained that the young person was a 12 year old male who was a resident in a Children's Home, who had committed a number of offences within the Home and had been referred for a youth conference to deal with these offences. Though I felt a bit anxious, I just kept telling myself it would be ok, as it was an important learning experience for me, that is, I would really benefit from it.

I had spent time planning my first session with this young person hoping it would go well. However when it took place, he refused to do any work, he did not engage and sat playing on his phone the whole time. As the weeks progressed, he still sat, counting down the minutes until the session ended, while playing games on his phone. On one occasion, I drew a picture of a magic wand and asked him if he could make a wish, what it would be, he replied saying "I would use the wish to make you disappear!" To me it seemed hopeless to get him to engage, I just wanted to give up.

In supervision I relayed my concerns to my Practice Teacher. We talked about the possibility that I was trying to get him to do the work too quickly, that he had lived in a Children's Home for a long time and that it takes time for young people in such circumstances to build trust with their workers. We talked about using negotiating skills. That is, if he came in and did some work for a couple of weeks, that we could possibility go out and do a positive activity in the third week or

go out for something to eat together which would help to build up our relationship. He seemed to like this idea and so would put his phone away.

Another thing that I found helpful was attending training in restorative practice with Bonita Holland in the YJA office in North Belfast a couple of weeks previously. Bonita gave useful tips for engaging hard to reach young people. I decided to put some of this learning into practice and try to be more creative in sessions with him.

Slowly but surely, working with him became easier. Looking back at the beginning of the placement, I really struggled to engage this young person however surprisingly, through building on my communication skills and taking time to figure out what works, things changed. I have built up a great relationship with this young person and now when doing sessions with him, they are fun because we have established a good working relationship and he appears to find the sessions a lot more interesting.

Overall my placement at the YJA has been an amazing experience, each day I believe my confidence has grown while I have gained new professional skills. I never imagined that I would get placed with such a wonderful team and Practice Teacher. They were all so supportive, guiding me in every way that they could and regardless of how busy they were, they always made time for me.

Social Media



Did you know the Youth Justice Agency has a Twitter and a YouTube account?

Please follow us on Twitter to learn more about the exciting and innovative work the Agency is taking forward.

Our YouTube Channel is also available for viewing video clips about the services the Agency delivers to young people, their families and carers, to victims and to the community in general. It contains individual chapters from our YJA DVD that explain what we do and how you can benefit from our services. Other educational DVDs available within the channel include "No Harm Done?", "One Punch Can Kill" and "Without Consent it is Rape", all produced in conjunction with the PSNI.



Visit the Youth Justice Agency NI YouTube channel for more details.

Contact us

The Youth Justice Agency welcomes articles for inclusion in future editions of this magazine. These should relate to young people and youth justice, and should be in the region of 300 words. Contributions should be addressed to the Connections Editorial Team, Youth Justice Agency, 41 Waring Street, Belfast BT1 2DY.

The Editorial Team is keen to ensure the widest circulation and readership of the magazine. Please let us know of any individuals or organisations to add to our circulation list, and notify us of any changes in your own contact details.

We would also welcome feedback on any articles published, or on any aspect of our magazine.

You can also contact the Editorial Team via:

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Or find out more about the Youth Justice Agency at:
www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/youth-justice



Youth Justice Agency