

# Comments

## Feedback from Users and professionals

Refocus' work has always been strongly rooted in the experience of our service users and we have paid particular attention to detailed evaluation of our work. This outlines some of outcomes of our evaluations.

In 2007, we asked 40 young people that attended a **Refocus Prison Life Workshop held in Glen Parva, Leicester**; if they would reconsider their behaviour following the workshop.



80% of young people felt that they didn't want to get in trouble or go to prisons after this one prison visit. Two young people didn't want to shop lift or thieve again. Others felt that they would think twice about the choices they make.

### **Workshops in schools, youth clubs, exclusion programmes**

In 2007 we asked 52 young people what they thought about the workshops Refocus presented in schools, exclusion programmes and youth clubs.

## Do you think the workshops was helpful?



- All of the 52 attendees felt that the session was helpful and some felt it helped very much.
- A few young people felt it had made them think about their lives to the extent that they question what they wanted to do in their life.

### ***Feedback from service users on a prison visit, September 2008***

9 service users, male and aged 14 – 16 from a white British background were on the verge of criminal activity visited a prison. This visit was evaluated in detail, as follows:

Did you think the visit was helpful?

- *7/9 said yes*
- *2/9 said no*

How has the visit helped you?

- *It never helps me*
- *Not to go in there*
- *Made me realize that I don't want to go to prison*
- *After seeing it I don't want to go there*
- *It made me realize what prison is like*
- *Not sure*
- *It didn't cus we didn't talk 2 people*
- *It didn't*
- *It wasn't helpful at all*

What was the most interesting part of the visit?

- *Seeing people who go there*
- *The talk*
- *Seeing the cells scared me*
- *Seeing the in mates*
- *B block and the inmates*
- *Talking to the inmates*
- *In the B block*
- *The gangsters*
- *Nothing and the members of staff was very rude*

How did it make you feel going to the prison?

- *Do not want to go there*
- *Do not want to go there*
- *scared*
- *a little bit small*
- *quite interested*
- *Good*
- *Bad because I felt sorry for everyone*
- *Bored*
- *No comment*

What positive changes would you make having been to the prison?

- *Not sure*
- *Not sure*
- *The ways I behave with me mates*
- *Don't end up in prison*
- *Not sure*
- *Don't commit crime*
- *None*
- *Nothing*
- *For me to think it is positive*

Has the visit helped or encouraged you to turn away from crime?

- *6/9 said yes*
- *2/9 said no*
- *1/9 no comment*

Do you know any other friends that would benefit from this visit? Please tick

- *2/7 said Yes*
- *3/9 said No*
- *4/9 said Not sure*

Any other comments

- *Good idea*
- *If you do the crime you do the time*
- *I would come back if I had the chance*
- *It was a waste of the day*

*In 2008 160 sessions were delivered in schools, youth clubs, and pupil referral units, to community projects, faith groups, threshold projects, outreach, and objects and on a one to one through mentoring.*

## **Comments about the Refocus workshops**

### **A typical session**

**“These young people chose to come to a workshop in their lunch break for one hour”.**

Evaluation of the Lunch Time session at a School in Sevenoaks.

### **Contents of session & context**

To enable young men to look at their lifestyles and make positive changes where necessary. The young people were challenged about crime and its consequences.

The young men who attended the session all took part in active listening, asking positive questions sharing some of their own experiences and showed respect for the speaker and Youth Workers present. They learnt about what happens to people who commit crime, break the law and face the consequences of their actions. They were told about Prison lifestyle and the true stories of some people who had been in Prison.

### Response & Attitudes

Young people were keen to listen open and honest about what they shared. They were surprised in what they heard and often shocked which took away their fantasies about Prison life. They were keen to learn about the law, consequences and actions of those who break it. Some were challenged by what they heard and hope to discuss things further with their Youth Workers

### Quality of Youth Work Practice

The Youth Workers gave young people an opportunity to hear someone's Testimony about their time in Prison. They learnt about a life of crime and its consequences. Information and leaflets were provided on related issues so young people could read and reflect on what they had learnt. Workers offered further support to young people to follow-up discussions on this topic.

### Further Action

To further challenge young people about what they heard and give them further opportunity to discuss the issues.

### Drug and alcohol intervention programmes

*"I have known this organisation for 13 months and they have provided a valuable and popular service to the drug and alcohol intervention programmes."*

*"Refocus' ability to work alongside young people in an appropriate professional manner is outstanding and an opportunity that young people should experience more." (Kent)*



### Feedback form

Refocus talk– half a day workshop

Feedback from Connexions PA's

**Lead PA;** I was really pleased with the talk and felt the young people got a lot out of it. I thought the stories and personal memories, which were shared were quite shocking and upsetting but having a real person in front of the group talking about their issues really made it hit home. The group of young people weren't offenders so in some respect the talk was perhaps too intense for them, but this was down to the way we (Connexions) had had to organise the course (booking speakers first before engaging young people onto it) rather than the facilitator. I was particularly pleased with the ease at which Lennox spoke to the young people and engaged with them over the coffee break, all had lots of questions for him, which was good to see. I will defiantly recommend Refocus to other PA's running projects.

**PA:** I thought the session was really good; I liked the fact that Lennox was happy to talk about his own stories and talk about issues, which were obviously quite painful memories in the past. He had a good rapport with the young people and this made it easy for them to talk to him and ask questions. I think it would have been good if the group could have got involved in some more interactive work with Lennox.

## **Prison Visits**

In 2008 Refocus took 80 young people from exclusion projects all over Kent and Bexley on a prison itinerary with 3 different prisons around the country. Youth services were finding that young people they were not engaging with services and yet they were happy to get up at 4am in the morning to attend the prison visit. The attendance and attention span through our workshops has been very high.

## **Prison visit Case Studies**

One particular young person who was involved in a gang and was using drugs, felt that some of his crimes he didn't mind doing until he visited Glen Parva prison now he feels he wants to come right away from crime altogether.

Another young person who was excluded from school at the time, he was visited by Refocus for a workshop around prison and crime and later on he visited Chelmsford prison. Six months later as a result of Refocus and other professionals, he is now back at school and making serious plans about his career. He will also be part for the service user forum we are developing.

A 15 year old young person had severe alcohol problems after Refocus mentored him and supported him; he eventually broke away from a gang and has stopped drinking after a prison visit.

Refocus worked with three families and supported the parents and the young person who have now been reunited when the young person decided to come off drugs.

## **Prison**

In 2008 we took 4 excluded young people to a prison visit and shared real life consequences and experiences of crime. As a result of this the youth service that initially requested our service have contacted us to say out of the 4, youth 2 have gone back to school, one has broken away from the street culture and one has gone to college.

# Young people's comments after a prison visit:

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*"Realised how you can get bullied in prison"*

*"Wouldn't want to go to prison"*

*"Think twice about offending"*

*"Need to stay away from crime"*

*"It felt uncomfortable"*

*"Made me feel scared,  
intimidated"*

*"I want to stop getting in trouble  
with the police"*

*"Going to prison made me feel like  
scum"*

*"The visit made me feel like I  
wouldn't do prison"*

*"I am never wearing a pink T  
shirt again"*

*"I didn't know what was  
going to happen"*

*"I will think twice""Didn't  
like the food"*

*"I will try and not do"*

## **Ethos**

Refocus believes the Young people need to experience prison in a way that they feel the reality of the visit. This is so that they can get in touch with how it would feel to go to one them for a crime. We believe that they need to see what it is like for offenders in prison and what it is like for them when they leave as well.

## Case study of outreach

Refocus Project, together with Bexley youth services and a football coach from Charlton Athletic, we worked with 20 young people who amounted to 14 boys and 6 girls. Some of the young people were black, mixed race and white English and Irish.

The young boys played football for most of the 2 hours and the girls talked to the youth workers in the youth-bus. During a hot-chocolate break from football there was a discussion in the youth-bus about sexually transmitted diseases and the main topic was Chlamydia and the different ways people can catch it and its effects. The young people seemed to enjoy the talk and dictated the conversation their self and asked many questions.

Later in the evening I was doing the DJ'ing, we have a ghetto-blaster and it was playing R'nB tunes near the guys playing football. Two young people were hanging out with me and the music and were asking me more questions about Chlamydia and how to be safe and questions about crime and guns. The young people said I talked a lot of sense and were quite happy with all we discussed. One guy wanted to have a gun for his own protection and I shared with him about the dangers and the law around guns and he had second thoughts when he saw how bad the consequences could be for him, however it's very sad to see the increasing number of young people who feel that they are not safe enough in their own communities and the weird thing is; these young people want to join gangs because they don't feel safe, but who is making them feel unsafe? The answer is .....The same gangs they want to join. (If you can't beat them join them ay)

Finally it was a great night and our worker worked very well with the young people as usual and received very positive feed-back.

Project manager

## Synopsis of Issues discussed on an outreach project:-

Alcohol,  
Cannabis,  
Racism  
Bullying,  
Guns,  
Sexually transmitted diseases,  
day trips out and want to go on a prison visit.