

Core programme

This is a six module “in-house” programme which is carried out with all offenders on an individual basis. The six modules comprise:

1. Problem solving
2. Offence analysis
3. Consequences Of Offending
4. Victim Awareness
5. Effects of crime on victims and Reparation
6. Planning to Stay out of Trouble

Problem Solving

Objective

- To introduce motivational interviewing by acknowledging some positive aspects in offender’s life.
- To introduce the concept of problem solving and how it can assist in an offence free lifestyle.
- To emphasise that future sessions will recap on the progress of problem solving strategies.

Key points

- Offenders need to be given hope and encouragement that they can change aspects of their lifestyle. Looking at how they have kept out of trouble recently emphasises that they do have some of the skills necessary to avoid offending. The officer can use this exercise as a springboard to encourage further change.
- For change to occur, problems or obstacles often need to be overcome. Sometimes these problems might seem overwhelming. The benefits of the problem solving approach need to be highlighted in terms of breaking down problems into manageable portions.
- Officers should emphasise that this approach will be ongoing through the Order, and hopefully for life. Offenders should agree tasks with their officer that need to be completed before the next session. This idea of “homework” needs to be carried on throughout the Order with the message given that effective change requires constant commitment. It’s a form of training that is replicated in other disciplines e.g sport and music.
- Objectives agreed by officers and clients should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bonded.

Offence Analysis

Objective

- To explore current offending in detail in order to take responsibility for behaviour
- To examine previous offending in order to see recurring themes

Key points

- Offending does not “just happen” - it depends upon a number of decisions and choices that we make. This module allows a detailed “walk through” the events leading up to, and including, the offence.
- Our thinking, feelings and behaviour are all connected
- By examining the principal offence in detail we are able to look at alternatives we had to choose other behaviour.
- It is important that the offence analysis concentrates on the build up to the offence. It may be necessary to go back a number of hours before the offence to ensure that the client becomes aware that thinking, feelings, behaviours and decisions contributed to the eventual crime.
- The red, amber, green light is an opportunity for the officer to discuss the perceived risks at various stages of events leading up to the offence. Differences between the officer and client will need to be explored.
- This session is about the client taking responsibility for his/her behaviour. Officers should be alert to attempts to minimise, justify or blame others for the offending behaviour.
- The officer should prompt discussion about previous offending. Are there any themes that emerge e.g. alcohol misuse, frustration, anger, the same company?
- Awareness of how we get into trouble is an important step in planning how to stay out of trouble. Forewarned is forearmed!

Consequences of Offending

Objectives

- To increase awareness about the consequences of offending for the client and for others
- To introduce the definition of a victim and the concept of victim awareness

Key points

- Recap previous session. What is progress of problem solving?
- Undertake victim awareness questionnaire. Emphasise the rest of the session will concentrate on consequences for self and others.
- To examine the gains and losses of offending for clients. Point out that gains tend to be short lived and that losses tend to be associated with people/relationships and longer term consequences. Draw out the feelings associated with losses at the time of offence, afterwards and now. Try and concentrate on negative losses.
- It is important to recognise that some offenders may have been offending for a long time and have experienced some gains through crime. This may make it more difficult for them to give up.
- To motivate clients to avoid offending and the associated losses
- Introduce the idea of victim awareness. Emphasise that offending behaviour has an impact on other people too. These are victims. A victim can be defined as someone who is hurt or injured by another's actions. This includes physical, mental and emotional suffering, plus economic loss. Officers should not assume that offenders will always share an understanding of this definition.
- Explain that the next two sessions will concentrate on victim issues. Explain that the victim questionnaire is going to be undertaken to find out more about the client's views.

Victim Awareness

Objective

- To remind offenders about the impact their behaviour has on victims.
- To look at how the offender might also be a victim and the effects of this.
- To reinforce the concept that the offender's behaviour has also had an impact on others.

Key points

- Recap previous session. What is progress of problem solving homework?
- The officer should look at the social, emotional, physical and financial costs to the offender in the role as victim.

- It is important to get offenders to connect with the conditions in their own lives before fully examining the consequences for their victims. However, it is vital that offenders do not leave a session feeling that they are solely victims and potentially using this as a justification for offending. The officer should move on to how other people have been victimised by the offender. This should be completed in the same session.
- Victims are people with real feelings, just like us. The officer should try and encourage the offender to develop empathy for the effects their behaviour has had on others.

Effects of crime on victims and Reparation

Objectives

- To fully explore the impact of the client's behaviour on others.
- To explain the role of the Restorative Justice Officer and to encourage the client to make amends for offending behaviour.

Key points

- Recap previous session
- Clients may have difficulty appreciating the full impact of their behaviour on others. This module needs to draw out the full range of people affected e.g family of the client and family of victims. It should also draw out the different types of harm suffered by specific victims such as financial, physical, emotional, social and practical. The introduction of some real case examples where victims write about or tell their experience needs to be explored in conjunction with the Restorative Justice Officer.
- Emphasise that victims rarely have a choice about what is done to them whereas offenders have made choices.
- Clients should be asked about how they now feel about the people they have hurt/ affected by their choices.
- Once clients have recognised the impact of their offending they should be encouraged to make amends. This may take several forms including a willingness to meet the victim in person to apologise, writing letters of apology, providing some form of voluntary community service or undertaking offending work that reduces the risk of further harm to victims.

- Where it is not possible for the Restorative Justice Officer to join the Probation Officer and client, the session should still go ahead and a separate session arranged with the RJO. Unless there is a manager override.

Planning to Stay out of Trouble

Objective

- For clients to use the analysis from the previous sessions to agree a comprehensive action plan with their officer to prevent offending and the associated costs with crime.

Key points

- Recap previous sessions.
- Clients will need encouragement to recognise that if they want to keep out of trouble they need to identify the risks and then do something about it. They will need to be reminded and praised about the amount of work they have already done in terms of problem solving, offence analysis and looking at how their crimes have affected both themselves and others.
- Risk will not go away. It needs to be managed. Now that the client is aware of how and why they got into trouble they can do something about it.
- Officers will need to ensure that the plan is not just an exercise in theory. Clients have to live it so it has to be realistic! Once the plan has been agreed it needs to be challenged and some risky scenarios checked out in terms of how will the client react. The “I can see it coming” worksheet is an opportunity to rehearse how the client will react.
- The development of an action plan should be a significant event for the client. They should be given copies of it and it should be reviewed in future sessions. The plan should be recorded on the file and included in the next summary.