

Girls in the Criminal Justice System

Derby YOS Girls' Group Overview

Girls Group: 'This Girl Can.'

Overview

In England and Wales, girls comprise around 20% of the caseload of youth offending services. We know that girls tend to commit less serious offences than boys, and their offending is often a response to emotional well-being and issues concerning relationships with parents, partners and friends. Girls tend to have high levels of welfare needs and are vulnerable to the actions of others. There is also significant concern about the prevalence of child sexual exploitation where vulnerable girls are more likely to become victims.

In ensuring that the needs of girls are appropriately identified and addressed, Derby City Youth Offending Service have developed an 8-week Girls Group in partnership with other professionals from Health, Psychology Services, drug and alcohol services, Connexions, Remedi, Safe and Sound and the Police Service. The content of the programme has been carefully considered and influenced by research and HMIP inspection findings. We have also included the voice of the child from speaking with young girls currently open to the service to help us achieve the right fit. The programme has been designed to cover the most relevant topics as listed below and offers a positive empowering space for each topic to be explored. The programmes development has been heavily based on a recovery model and a 'child first, offender second approach.'

- Role Models, identity and self esteem
- Sexual Health and healthy relationships
- The influence of drugs and alcohol
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Girls Gangs and County Lines
- CEASE programme
- Equality and Diversity
- Careers – take control of your future
- Restoration victim awareness and putting things right

On-going development of this agenda includes staff training to ensure assessments of likelihood of reoffending and risk of harm take into account the impact of gender, that health practitioners are sufficiently involved and exit strategies ensure that girls have access to appropriate ongoing support when their involvement with the Youth Offending Service ends.

A performance framework has been implemented to measure the effectiveness of the programme and to evidence improvements in the emotional mental health of girls and the impact this intervention has on their quality of life and future aspirations.

Professionals involved in programme delivery

Karen Chilton – Agenda Lead Service Manager Derby City Youth Offending Service (YOS)

Melanie Lord - YOS Parenting Officer

Gemma Dexter- Clinical Psychologist

Tara Simmons – Support Families Team

Noeleen Turner – Sessional worker Careers advice

Beth Barker - Police Officer

Shannon Merwick- Remedi Reparation Supervisor

Abby Moralee – Remedi CEASE programme

Cindy Stranding – Breakout Drug and Alcohol Services

Shelia Isles- Safe and Sound Services Derby City.

The Girls group has expanded and now offers access to girls across Children’s social care with a ‘Looked After (LAC) status. This includes girls in local authority and private residential homes, those in foster placements and those in semi-independent accommodation. This programme also feeds into the City’s Concordat arrangements for Looked After Children.

The Girls Group has received recognition from the Criminal Justice Board, The Police and Crime Commissioner Office and the Youth Justice Board. The Girls Group has been praised as ‘Best Practice.’

As the Girls Group continues so will further developments to enhance our offer, these include

- inviting further partners from multi professional organisations to facilitate a session on a specific topic
- To expand into senior schools to reach all females in the City where this is possible
- To access funding streams to offer self defence classes and programmes. Voice of the Child has recognised this as a priority area.
- Joined up working with Women’s Work to develop seamless transitions from youth to adult services.

Ongoing developments October 2021

Derby City Youth Offending Service have joined up with Women's Work to offer additional resources to young women in the criminal justice system. This programme is in its infancy and the content will be influenced by direct service user feedback, which is currently being collected.

Women's Work are piloting a new trauma informed provision aimed at supporting young females aged 16 to 18. The focus of the support is aimed at raising awareness and providing information based around the effects of sexual and domestic abuse for this age group. This will be a rolling six-week programme covering themed topics, for example: consent, peer pressure, understanding the impacts of cohesive controlling behaviours to name a few. We will also work towards joining up delivery of the NVR and Freedom programmes.

Current identified gaps in the service delivery are:

- Gender specific sexual health clinic and advice
- Access to self-defence, breaking free / staying safe training for women and girls.

These are being addressed and will be determined by available budgets from both Women's work and the Youth Offending Service.