

Case Study

1. Implementing Care and Risk Management (CARM) arrangements: Edinburgh City Council

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Background
Example of Good Practice
<p>In Edinburgh, to begin the process of reviewing care and risk management arrangements, the YPS Team Manager coordinated a short-life working group which first met in 2017. In identifying the most appropriate individuals to contribute to the work of the group, it was acknowledged that the assessment and management of complex risk and need displayed by children takes place at the interface of two systems - the CHS and the Adult Criminal Justice System (ACJS). While not an exhaustive list, the key contributors to discussions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A representative from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) • A representative from Police Scotland • The School Inclusion Coordinator • The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Coordinator • One of the Sex and Violent Offender Liaison Officers (SAVOLO) • The Manager of the Young People's Review Team • An experienced Children and Families Practice Team Manager <p>Unfortunately, the size of the group and the competing demands placed on the members meant that it was not possible to move forward as swiftly with the process of change as might have been hoped. Ultimately in large, complex organizations, changes tend to come after slow and steady deliberation as opposed to coming swiftly and easily. Furthermore, it was important for the work of the short-life working group to fit within a local governance structure. In this instance, the Offender Management Committee (OMC) is the body with ultimate oversight of this piece of work. In other local authorities it may be the case that the Child Protection Committee (CPC) will choose to retain overall responsibility for the operation of risk assessment and management arrangements for children and young people under the age of 18.</p> <p>The breadth of membership of the group promoted lively discussion and critical engagement with the issues. It also ensured that in the intervening period between meetings, different individuals with specialist knowledge could undertake specific pieces of work to inform and to direct the short life working group. This included work by MAPPA/SAVOLO colleagues to look more closely at the arrangements for young people charged with serious sexual offences and made subject to Sex</p>

Offender Notification Requirements (SONR). The Inclusion Coordinator also worked on a revised process for managing challenging behavior in schools to ensure that only those children whose behaviour reaches a level of high seriousness/severity are discussed at a multi-agency meeting, with the majority being managed safely and appropriately under existing school risk management arrangements.

Benefits and Impact

While in its early stages, the initial signs are positive based on anecdotal feedback from staff members about their experience using START:AV. Feedback highlights that the tool encourages a more discerning and focussed form of assessment. Practitioners are also meeting on a regular basis to share their learning about START:AV and for peer-to-peer support and guidance. Links to wider national START:AV peer learning sets may be established in due course.

Feedback from the Intervention for Vulnerable Youths (IVY) project on our recent referral to IVY highlighted the good quality of the formulation provided within the referral paperwork. The clear formulation enabled a more robust consideration of individualised risk reduction strategies during the multi-agency consultation, in contrast to spending the time trying to understand the drivers to the behaviour.

What makes this work?

One of the reasons why this review process has worked reasonably well is that it sought to include at the outset all the key stakeholders involved in working with children who present a risk of serious harm, so there was a shared understanding of both the process and the challenges faced by the different services/organisations in integrating changes.

An additional factor that has added to the success is the investment that has been made in staff training and development to ensure that staff become confident in the use of the SPJ approach, and that the provision of training and development opportunities are sustainable over time.

Challenges and Barriers

Due to Transformational Change within the Council, there has been a significant change in business practice. One aspect has been less consistency in minute takers from Business Support staff who have experience of minuting YPRMCCs, and this resource issue has been raised with senior managers.

Mental health resources for young people involved in the YPRMCC process are also stretched and arguably lacking in certain key areas. Ideally a young person whose behaviour has given cause for sufficient concern to be discussed at a YPRMCC ought to have readily available access to comprehensive mental health assessment and intervention. This remains the ideal as opposed to the reality.

The final challenge of note has arguably been one relating to change processes. Is it better to undertake a radical overhaul or to modify the status quo? How can the “Throwing the baby out with the bathwater” cliché be avoided? In Edinburgh, discussions went full circle in some respects during the change process. Initially, it had been anticipated that a revamped CARM process might involve a more pivotal role for the Young People’s Review Team and its integration within the existing IRD model. However, on further consideration, it was felt that the benefits of a new approach (e.g. closer alignment with child protection processes and more robust governance arrangements) were arguably offset by some of the potential negative consequences (e.g. risking absorption and dilution of youth justice assessment, planning and intervention expertise).

Edinburgh has been fortunate over the last decade to retain a level of youth justice knowledge, skills and expertise among practitioners which has been eroded in many other local authorities where Youth Justice Teams have become fewer in number and/or been absorbed into other parts of children’s and/or adult services. On that basis, when concerns are raised about the potential risk of serious harm posed by a child or young person, the principal point of contact in the first instance will be with one of the Team Leaders in the YPS.

How could this be improved further?

One of the improvements that could be made is to provide quality examples of CARM processes in other local authorities, details of the change process to achieving this and examples of good quality practice. This case study is a start. Edinburgh YPS are also working with CYCJ to develop some examples of good quality reports containing best practice.

The recording of information on the strengths and vulnerabilities of these children on a central system will provide Edinburgh with valuable information about both the needs of these children and an evidence base to highlight the current gaps in service provision to inform improvement planning.

What has been learnt?

In terms of learning, this local initiative has reinforced the reality that change takes time and it is not always possible to achieve by the end of a process everything that might have been desired at the start. The expression, “Don’t let the best be the enemy of the good” certainly resonates.

Further information

Borum, R., Bartel, P., & Forth, A. (2006). SAVRY: Structured assessment of violence risk in youth: Professional manual: PAR.

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Viljoen, J. L., Nicholls, T. L., Cruise, K. R., Desmarais, S. L., & Webster, C. D. (2014). *Short-term assessment of risk and treatability: Adolescent version. START:AV User Guide.*