

Vincent Mercer
&
Julie Henniker



aimproject@msn.com



Aims and Objectives

- To debate the question ‘Can RJ work with Adolescent sex offenders?’
- To identify the potential to employ restorative interventions with adolescent sex offenders and their families
- To consider the challenges that this work presents



Context Setting

- YJB Funding 2000
- Family Group Meetings Project – working with serious and persistent offenders
- The AIM project – a framework to assess and intervene with young people who sexually abuse



AIM INITIAL ASSESSMENT

- 28 day bail assessment
- Identify strengths and concerns
- Identify young persons needs
- Assess young persons capacity and motivation
- Identify the capacity of parents to support young person
- Suggest priorities for initial response



AIM OUTCOME MATRIX

High concerns Low strengths	High concerns High strengths
Low Concerns Low strengths	High Strengths Low Concerns



Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice seeks to balance the concerns of the victim and the community with the need to reintegrate the offender into society. It seeks to assist the recovery of the victim and enable all parties with a stake in the justice process to participate fruitfully in it.

Restorative Justice Consortium



Restorative Justice

- **RESPONSIBILITY** The need to hold young people accountable for their behaviour and to encourage more responsible behaviour in the future
- **RESTORATION** Exploring possibilities of making amends to victims or communities
- **RE-INTEGRATION** providing support, assistance and guidance to help young people grow along positive pathways



Principles of restorative justice

- Voluntary
- Impartial and neutral delivery
- Respects confidentiality
- Consultative
- Focus upon re-integration (offender-victim-offender)
- Recognises past but focused on future
- Works to strengths of individuals and families
- Flexible in meeting individual needs
- Offers choices
- Provides safe spaces



RETRIBUTIVE VS. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

- Adversarial in nature
- State takes primary role
- Emphasis upon rights
- Legal representation
- Due process and proportionality
- Punitive/external control
- Conflict resolution
- Focus on people harmed by offence
- Emphasis on personal responsibility
- Repair the harm done
- Rehabilitation and Re-integration
- Focus on internal control



Main models of Face to face work with young people and victims

- Restorative Conferencing
- Referral Orders
- Victim Offender Mediation
- Family group Conferencing



Specific Mediation Issues

- **Power imbalance**
- **Family Secrecy**
- **Conflicting roles**
- **Embarrassment**
- **Labels/ Sex offender registration/schedule1 offences**
- **Adult agendas**
- **Previous experience of abuse**
- **When is the right time for victims/offenders?**



Changing lenses on adolescent sex offenders

- They are not 'junior paedophile's' in the making
- Recidivism rate low post conviction; 7 - 14%
- A significant number will have been 'victims' of abuse, loss, trauma themselves
- Over assessment of risk as problematic as under assessment
- 'Research indicates that the characteristics of young male sexual abusers may not be hugely different from those of other troubled and troubling young people
- Family involvement is crucial as partners not just sources of information



What do we know about victims of adolescent sexual abusers

- The overwhelming majority of their victims are either young children or peers – known to them
- 38.3% victims were blood relatives
- 6% stranger abuse
- 4.5% adults
- 91% aged 3-16 years
- 63% younger than 9 years
- Twice as many female as male victims
- (Ryan et al 1996 / Taylor 2002 – replicated over 402 alleged incidents)



Families matter.....

- A significant percentage of victims are members of the immediate or extended family
- Parents can often wear '2 hats'
- A process to 'normalise' parents distress and anxiety is crucial to the recovery process



Consequences of not working with families

- Family left isolated
- Resentment of and resistance to agencies
- Minimising and denial of the problem
- Compounding the crisis; rejection
- Constricted assessment and planning
- Lack of focus on vulnerable siblings and/or other victims
- Increased risk of treatment drop out / recidivism
- Corroded therapeutic gains



RJ Assessment

- Layered on top of AIM Initial Assessment
- Extends the AIM Assessment to include restorative considerations in respect of;
1. Parents /carers
 2. Victims
 3. Young Person
 4. Non- abused siblings



Sample of Areas addressed

- Readiness to participate
- Support Mechanisms
- Nature of relationship between victim and offender
- Knowledge of incident
- Degree to which responsibility is placed upon the offender
- Acceptance of responsibility
- Acceptance of new family rules
- Expectations
- Position regarding victims disclosure