



“She’s a Legend” The Role of Significant Adults in the Lives of Children and Young People in Contact with the Criminal Justice System

House Keeping

Dr Alison Montgomery

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Welcome and Introduction

Mairéad McCafferty
Chief Executive – NICCY



Reflections from 'Significant Adults'

Ronan McGinley

Service Manager - Opportunity Youth



Opportunity Youth is Northern Ireland's leading provider of support services to young people, adult offenders and families in the community.



Opportunity Youth work in 3 main areas:

- **Health**
- **Youth justice**
- **Employability and the economy**



- **Opportunity Youth worked with almost 20,000 people last year**
- **Primary provider of drug and alcohol services to young people in NI**
- **Largest provider of drug & alcohol treatment services to adults in NI – AD:EPT**



Engaging young people and vulnerable adults pre-contact with the criminal justice system.



Engaging young people and vulnerable adults involved in the criminal justice system.



Engaging young people and vulnerable adults post contact with the criminal justice system.



Interventions used by Opportunity Youth





**Helping those we work with
make the most of life's
opportunities and be the best
they can be.**



Reflections from 'Significant Adults'

Billy Clarke

Senior Practitioner - Choose 2 Change, NIACRO



A programme supporting young people aged between 15 and 18 years old, who are involved with the youth justice system, to undertake education, training or employment.



Agencies we engage with:

- Dept of Justice
- PBNI
- Juvenile Justice Centre
- Careers Service
- Training Organisations
- Colleges
- Community Groups



Barriers:

- Early School leaver / Poor Literacy
- Offending background / In Custody
- Family or Relationship issues
- Negative Peers
- Mental Health Issues
- Drugs / Alcohol Misuse
- Low self esteem and self confidence
- Community behavioural issues
- Housing problems and Homelessness

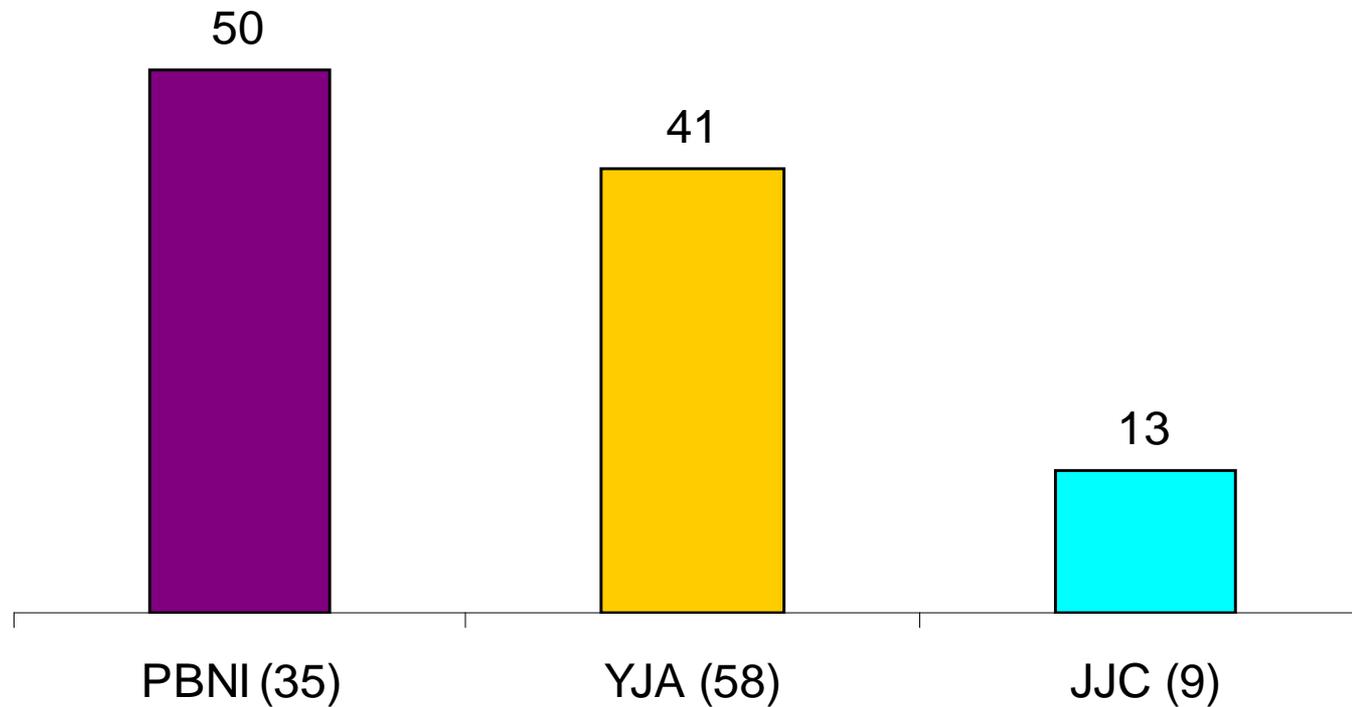


Our Programme

- Needs Based Assessment
- Individual Support
- Careers Information and Guidance
- Increasing Employability Skills
- Personal Pathway Plan
- Provide Support, Advice, Guidance
- Benefits Advice
- Mentoring Opportunities



Hours worked with per client 2010 - 2011

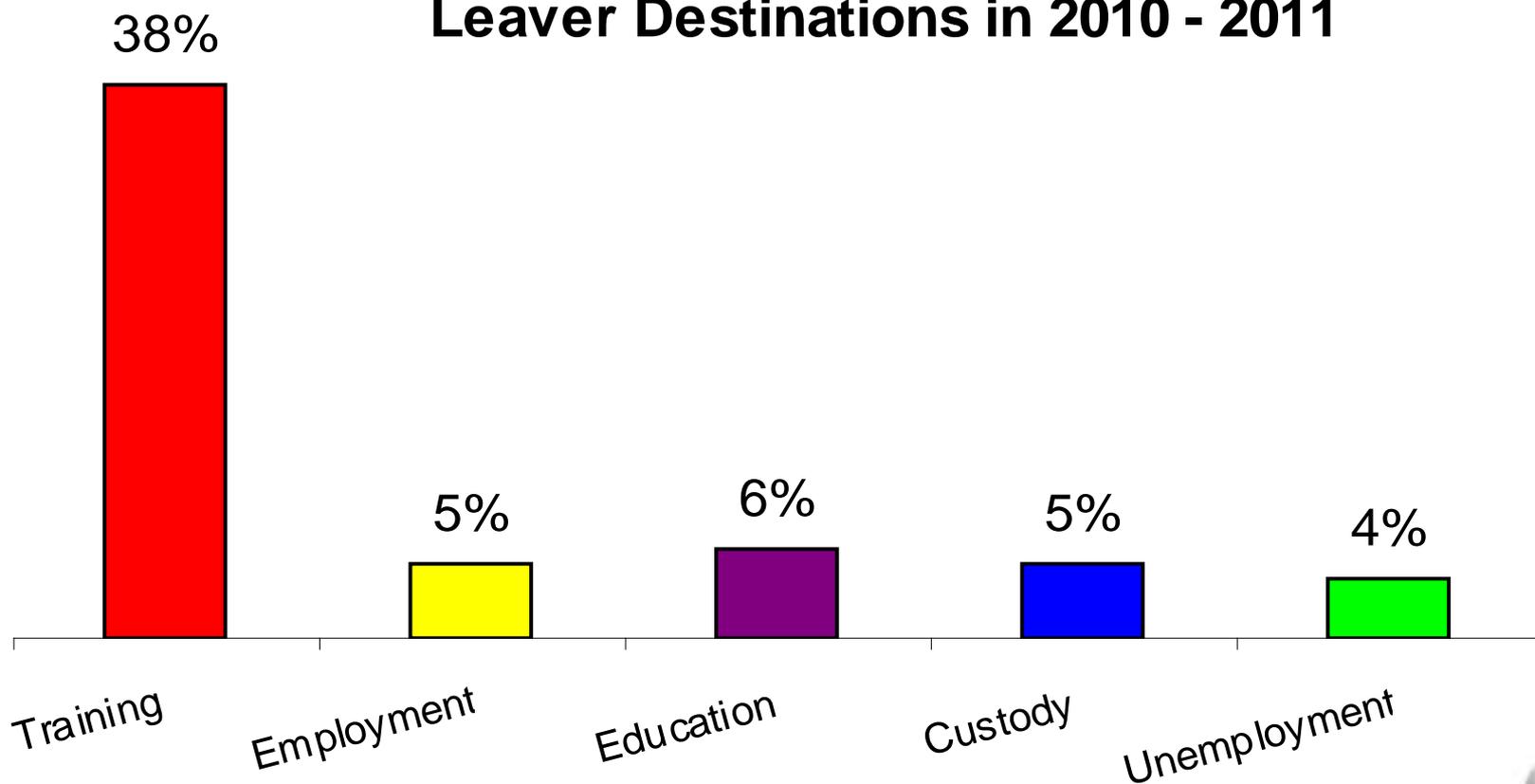


- **Farrington et al: (1986)**

“the rate of offending during periods of unemployment was 3 times greater than during periods of employment”



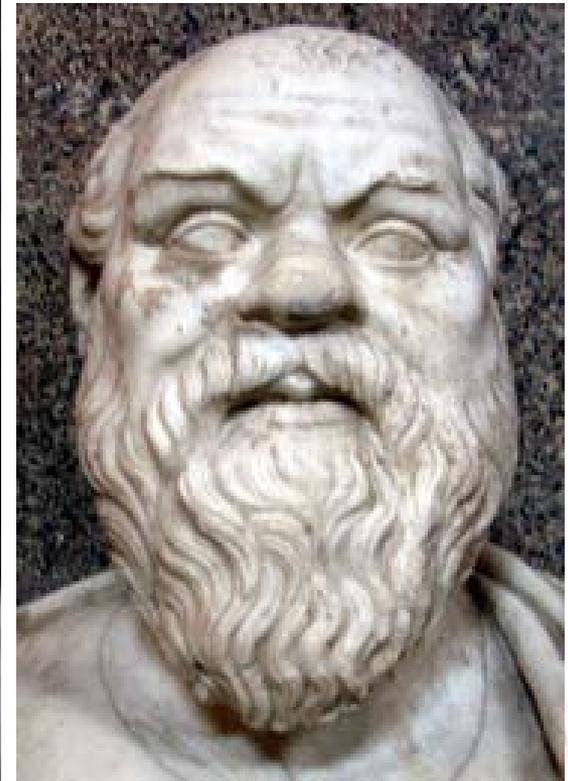
Leaver Destinations in 2010 - 2011



Who said it -

"The young people of today love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority and disrespect for their elders. They no longer get up when old people enter the room, they contradict their parents and tyrannise their teachers".





Reflections from 'Significant Adults'

Lorraine Thompson

Training and Development Co-ordinator

include
YOUTH



“Nobody wants to feel like a victim”.

“After all the things we’ve done for you, you owe us big time!”



“Help living just – how to live by yourself, how to look after yourself”

“You can't tell what sort of support you're going to need when you get out, it can change every day.”



“It shouldn't be set for a designated time, you should choose it. [On a court order], they choose when they want to be done with you.”

“[My foster parent] still sees me and that's important. She is the only person who has always been there for me and hasn't left me.”



"When I got out of jail it was hard to stop crime, I found it really hard to change. It's sitting in front of you and the temptation is really strong. When you get out of jail you need to learn to say no."

"You can go out and say, "I've changed, no more crime for me." then something happens and you get in trouble again"

"It's about will power, you need will power to stay away from crime. Crime's like a habit, it becomes normal, you just do it because you're used to doing it. Like smoking - sometimes I don't even want to have a smoke, but I'll make a roll up [cigarette] and smoke it anyway - it's a habit and crime's just the same."



“It’s about different ways of thinking about life.”

“Staying away from the wrong crowd. I’ll need to not hang about with ones who want me to do things with them again, one’s who are still doing stuff [crime].”



“...you hear people saying, “Up the hoods!”, and at the end of the day, that’s what I am, I’m a hood – it’s just what I do. I don’t do it for adrenalin, it’s not for money, it’s not for entertainment, it’s just what I DO”

“Some of us are brought up this way, we’re moulded to it since we were a kid, to what’s going on, to crime.”

“They’re institutionalised, they're used to it, used to the routine and there’s nothing for them outside of here [YOC] – jail doesn’t work for those people.”

“How do you know if young people DO understand what is right and what is wrong, how can you tell that for each person?”



“We were told: “Why would your ma’s want you?! Look at you – you’re a menace to society. We don't want you and your families don't either.”

“I’ve been moved about all my life, different care homes, different areas – the longest time I’ve lived anywhere is [in custody]. I don’t belong to any community.”

“When you're in care you’re downgraded and you feel abandoned, like nobody’s there for you. It’s like if you went into a posh restaurant in clothes that aren’t suited and people look down on you – that’s the way people treat you when you go into a care home.”



“When I was 13 or 14 I ran about with an older crowd, I started to do burglaries to prove myself, so people would think I was a big man, so I did stuff they did to blend in with the crowd. Then as I got older I got a reputation, I did things to live up to my reputation and I ended up in this * hole, in jail.”***

“Some young people who think of themselves as criminals, it’s down to a lack of confidence – people with low self-esteem think of themselves as criminals.”

“Some young people might think that other people think they're better than them and that gives them a lack of confidence. Some young people need their confidence built up for them – so talk to them.”



“You need things to do with your time that are interesting and exciting, AND things that will help you in later life”

“Tech [further education college] and work placements – things that will help you be able to earn money, not JUST courses where you get your head melted like courses to try and stop you doing crime do and drugs courses – they wreck your head just.”

“To help you stay off drugs you need to keep busy – you need LOADS to do.”



“It’s like a defence mechanism – whenever I can't stop myself from willing myself on to go and do something [an offence], thinking about things you’ve said strengthens my resolve.”

“Everyone has a conscience, and when you go to do something, what could happen goes round your head, I think about what you’ve said and it accentuates your conscience.”

“A role model gives them perspective, something to look towards when they grow up.”

“Someone who’s positive thinking. Not someone who’s getting up in the morning thinking negative thoughts, but thinking about the good things about the day.”



“Don't pester them about crime this and crime that. And listen to the young person; listen to what they have to say first, before you ask questions.”

“If you try and do both it's useless – you need to do it one at a time.”

“Don't be letting them think you're only there because it's an order.”

“They put a lot into their jobs, they do over and above what they're meant to do – that makes young people say, “They care about us.” and that's why young people come to Give and Take.”



“Harsh punishment doesn't help anybody. If you treat a young person with anger they're going to come back twice as bad. If you corner a rat against a wall it's going to come at you and it'll either die itself or it'll cut you to pieces.”

“You get out and you do more crime after you've been in jail.”

“The reason I stopped [offending] was because when I was in the JJC I got help that I needed - I got discipline and a structure, I got an education.”



“Don't be scared of the man who has everything, but be scared of the person who has nothing to lose.”

(Young Voices December 2012)



Research Presentation and Key Findings

She's a legend!

Agnieszka Martynowicz

Dr Linda Moore

Dr Azrini Wahidin



- Looking at how supportive, affirming relationships with 'significant adults' can influence personal and emotional development of children and young people
- Specific context - the criminal justice system (diversion, support throughout criminal sanction, resettlement); rights-focused
- 20 children and young people interviewed, alongside 22 adults (project workers, volunteers, foster parents)



- A variety of adults outside the context of the immediate family who *have a significant influence on a child or young person and who in turn can rely on their support* (Chen, et al, 2003)
- Extended family members, teachers, project workers and volunteers, church representatives, employers, older friends, sports coaches



- Important to children and young people as they showed them respect, provided emotional support, provided practical support
- Relationships contributing to:
 - Increased self-esteem, confidence and sense of well-being
 - Improved outcomes (including educational) and opportunities
 - Supported desistance.



- The principle of the best interest of the child (Art 3 UN CRC)
- The right to be heard (Art 12)
- The right to life and development (Art 6)
- The right to identity (Art 8)
- The right to education (Arts 28 and 29)
- The right to play and leisure (Art 31)
- The rights of children in conflict with the law (Art 37 and 40).



The Youth Justice Review (2011):

- The need to focus on early intervention and prevention strategies
- Strengthening families and communities;
- The need to move away from the focus on 'offending behaviour';
- Improving resettlement post-contact with the criminal justice system.

The Prison Review (2011):

- End to custody for children in Hydebank Wood;
- Move away from security focus;
- 'key workers' for young prisoners;
- Hydebank Wood transforming into a 'secure college'.



- Social disadvantage
- Alienation and/or exclusion from education
- Lack of employment prospects
- Family breakdown/care experience
- Experiences of violence and abuse
- Drug and alcohol use
- Mental health difficulties
- Issues specific to NI – conflict with the police and threat of paramilitary violence



'[w]henever I would drink I'm just completely different all together' (Young person 1)

'Just a lot of anger and violence and running with older people then 'cos I was running about with older people [...] I was doing things a lot younger than, you know, anybody else, like was doing [...] drink, drugs, whatever' (Young person 9)



'I wasn't involved in any youth clubs, I wasn't involved in any organisations, I was just basically unemployed, bored, nothing to do, drinking about the streets, not even thinking about my consequences, not even thinking about how people are gonna look at me'
(Young person 10)



'The hostels – with what the young people say and what the volunteers then relay back – is that they're not appropriate for young people. They're putting a young person leaving the criminal justice system in an environment where adults are also vulnerable. The adults that they may be living with and sharing a hostel are very high risk. They then witness and see things that they shouldn't witness' (Adult 1)



'The paramilitaries used to have us tortured. [...] they used to chase you, used to get you and beat you with hurls [hurley sticks] and baseball bats. I suppose it was more of a thrill then. But whenever they came to the house with guns, going to shoot you and all – that's when they really scared me, you know what I mean? It was like 'what's going on – I'm only a kid' (Young person 4)



'People take it for granted, living with the family in their own home and they don't realise what they've got. But for somebody in care, it's a really important thing because they can be moved around all the time, you know, and not actually get to form a relationship with the family members they are staying with' (Young person 18)



Supporting Young People in Crisis

[...] we normally end up with the young person quite often when they are at crisis point [...] So they have parents on their back, school teachers who don't really want them at school because they are a problem and they have police officers on their back [...] we are usually the only friendly voice that they see or hear (Adult 3).



'They don't necessarily have to have a good job though, or be someone who *doesn't* do crime. It could just be someone who loves you, who's there for you, someone you feel confident speaking to – they can give you a structure for your life, guidelines, help you out when you need it' (Young person in custody)



'She's (JJC worker) a legend! She's just here to, you know, talk to you, so you don't feel, you know, alone' (Young person 1 1)

'She was very inspirational, she could see stuff in you that like, you didn't see in yourself and she made you feel like you could achieve stuff [...]' (Young person 3)



'She didn't give up, you know, even though I was pushing her away, and like, my all defences going up and I was like, this is going to be somebody else that's gonna let me down [...] She didn't give up' (Young person 9)

'Felt like throwing the head up so many times, and he just had a wee quiet word with me and he never shouted or never lost his head or he always had time for me' (Young person 3)



'They are easy going and talk to you like a person'
(Young person 16)

'[he] wasn't there and judging you nor nothing. He was just getting on with it, and he was helping you to do things' (Young person 8)



'I couldn't use the phone. I was terrified, you know, using the phone for phoning the doctors to make a doctor's appointment [...] It was like, right, you need to do this now, you need to do it, so was teaching me, really teaching me'
(Young person 9)



'When I first started [...] I had nothing [...] I didn't go to school, did nothing, just really couldn't be bothered but [the project], they sit down with you and help you do the work and do qualification by qualification and you keep building up, I've what ... 20 qualifications from it' (Young person 19)



'The rejection was there every week [because of failed job applications] it was a case of trying to keep encouraging him, one of these days it will happen. One of these days it will happen'
(Adult 10)



'He'd just bring you out for the day like going on, go bowling or go carting or something, do you know what I mean and what else, you just need to be easy going, just... Just chill out, you know what I mean?' (Young person 13)

'It was kind of like [the volunteer] was offering things that I never really, normal, I suppose normal things that I hadn't really experienced then' (Young person 18)



'Whenever I lived in the children's home, I had, I've been arrested for several things. I've been arrested for assaulting people, for burglaries, theft, for being in a stolen car [...] criminal damage, a whole range of things [...] And, you know, whenever I moved into [the foster placement] that all stopped. You know, it just shows, you know, the environment you live in, you know, how that impacts on the sort of behaviours that you have' (Young person 18)



'My old lifestyle, if I wanted to change, I had to move away from it. And to move away from my family and that was so hard, that was so, so hard to do' (Young person 9)

'I moved away from crime, crime is not the answer, if you've got a problem, you deal with it maturely' (Young person 10)



- There is a need to profile and highlight the good practice evidenced by youth and community workers supporting young people
- Organisations which support young people should be provided with sustainable, long-term statutory funding, particularly in time of austerity
- Criminal justice organisations working with children and young people should base their practice on the principle of encouraging them to participate in decision-making and promoting their self-determination



- Where relationships are developed with staff and volunteers, adults should place the rights of children and young people at the center of their practice
- Training for adults working with children and young people should reflect this emphasis on rights
- Further research should be conducted into the role of significant adults can play in supporting children and young people in accessing their rights



- There is a need to challenge negative stereotyping of children and young people, including those in conflict with the law
- NICCY should continue to research and draw attention to the structural disadvantage and discrimination faced by many children and young people in Northern Ireland and its impact on their development and their life stories, including on the potential to be drawn into the criminal justice system



It's nothing to do with young people, it's the government. The government wrecked this country for young people and young people, like me as an individual; like I feel the whole... young people have been let down (Young person 10).



Questions and Answers

**Panel - Mairéad McCafferty, Research Authors
and 'Significant Adults'**



Reflections and Concluding Comments

Mairéad McCafferty
Chief Executive – NICCY



Thank you for attending

**Copies of both reports are available
at www.niccy.org/publications**

