

# MST Case Study - Michael



## The Family

Michael was referred to MST by the Youth Offending Team (YOT) when he was 15 years old. At this time he was subject to a Referral Order for stabbing a young woman and there were concerns about his antisocial behaviour in the community (loitering and unruly behaviour) which was placing his family's housing tenancy at risk. There were also concerns regarding aggression at home and at school. Michael's parents reported that he was having regular physical fights with his 17 year old brother (who was also known to the YOT). There had also been a number of aggressive incidents at school ranging from throwing furniture to assaulting students and members of staff between November 2012 and April 2013, which had resulted in three school exclusions. At the start of the work with MST, Michael was not in any form of education.

## The Work

MST worked with Michael's family between June and November 2013. Our treatment goals were to reduce Michael's aggression at home and in the community, achieve school success by ensuring he was in full time education, and preventing further offending in the community along with supporting the successful completion of his YOT order. His parents worked really hard, meeting with me 3 times a week to focus in turn on each of these goals. The work was not easy and at the beginning Michael's father had some pretty firm ideas about his role as the authority figure in the household. I made clear that I was certainly not here to tell him what to do! I helped the family understand that MST agreed with placing control over the child's behaviour back in the hands of their parents and we talked about the similarities and differences in raising adolescents in London compared to their own experiences of being parented at a different time, in a different country. My job was to help them find a parenting approach that was effective in managing Michael's behaviour and which they felt comfortable with. At times, they found it hard to try different techniques and strategies and I encouraged them to think about what went well and what they could do differently. I also worked to encourage Michael's mother to take a more active role in parenting and help both parents think about how this could be done in way that each felt supported by the other.

*MST THERAPIST, Rosie Stratford is a Social Worker with training in Family Therapy. She joined the Tri-borough MST service in January 2013. Rosie's Supervisor, Dr Jai Shree Adhyaru is a Counselling Psychologist and leads the MST service. Below they describe the work with Michael's family.*

I worked to change family dynamics within the home so that there was less conflict between the parents, between the siblings and between the parents and children which significantly reduced the aggression within the home. The parents were also supported in devising and implementing rules and boundaries around Michael's coming home time and reducing the opportunities for him with anti-social peers. Work with the family also focused on finding an appropriate college course for Michael and improving the home-education placement link so that they could be very much involved in their son's education and progress, without reliance on my input. Michael's parents supported him for returning to education and also worked with me to think about potential setbacks and how they would deal with these. For example, Michael had a lot of cognitions linked to needing knives to protect himself and tended to be very impulsive. The family and I put together a safety plan to reduce his access to knives and to check for them on his person on a regular basis. Michael was also brought into sessions so his cognitions about personal safety could be challenged by engaging him in role-play and helping him to consider alternative responses. His parents were provided with strategies to increase Michael's problem solving skills and help him to devise ways to de-escalate his behaviour and make safer choices in the future.

## The Outcome

By the end of MST's involvement the family and involved professionals were in agreement that all of the goals had been met. Michael successfully completed his YOT order with no further arrests. Aggressive incidents had significantly reduced within the home with no reports of aggression in the community. Michael had a full time place on an ICT course within a mainstream college which he was attending and was also acting a mentor for younger children at college. As a result of the improvements the family's tenancy was no longer at risk and the parents reported a happier, calmer home environment.

## Feedback from Michael's father

What was most helpful about the MST service?

*Every area of what my family needed are met.*

What was least helpful about the MST service?

*Absolutely no least.*

Any further comments?

*Nothing, they are fantastic I don't even want Rosie to go!*