

Child First Collaboration Exemplars

The following exemplars of collaboration in practice were collected during this study, and are being shared with you as an example of good collaboration practice.

Staff Recruitment

Example 1:

Boy, age 15, YJS2

This example is of involving a child in strategic collaboration practice in the staff recruitment process. The boy wanted to be a police officer (his brush with the law had not dissuaded him!), so he and his Engagement Officer considered a police officer job description and compared it to a Restorative Justice Officer role (as there was a current vacancy in the YJS team). The Engagement Officer suggested he got involved in the recruitment process and he agreed. Together they highlighted what he thought were the most important aspects of the Restorative Justice Officer role.

The child then wrote some open questions that he considered important for the role, which were used by the interview panel. The child was unable to attend the interviews himself because of school commitments as it was during GCSE exam time. Below are the three questions (with follow up questions) that were included, and why he thought they were good questions to ask. He thought all of the questions should be 'open' questions so the applicant could give a detailed response instead of 'yes and no' answers.

1. "How would your friends describe you? To see if they said 'trustworthy', it was a main skill they should have and this question would be easier for them to answer.
2. Have you got experiences of individuals who have experience of offending and anti-social behaviour? If they say 'yes' - can you give an example? – because they should have previous experience.
3. Do you have experience of computer recording systems? If yes, how long for and where did you use it? – because they have to record stuff on a computer about meetings"

They were unable to recruit the right person for the role, but the interview panel fed back that they thought the questions were interesting and would help them make the right selection in future.

For more information contact:

Professor Stephen Case: s.case@lboro.ac.uk

Dr Kathy Hampson: kah47@aber.ac.uk

Example 2:

Girl, age 17, YJS2

This is an example of good practice for children in **collaborating in strategic practice development**, and interlinks with our research themes of **collaboration objectives** - prioritising children's aspirations and **effective collaboration** because it highlights a positive successful outcome for her as well as tying in with the sub-theme of **caring professionals**.

This girl wanted to be involved in the recruitment process for the YJS team social workers. She felt that this should be because of her aspiration to become a social worker: *"... it should be based around the child, so like for me Health and Social Care is my goal, so they (YJS) organised for me to be on the interview panel for social workers. All the stuff I want to do in the future which made me then want to engage in it because I enjoy it... doing stuff you're interested in".*

Being involved in the recruitment panel enabled her to realise that caring practitioners and building positive relationships matched her own expectations of recruiting suitable candidates. This links back to the 'professionals who care' sub-theme highlighted earlier under 'effective collaboration'. In the following extract, the girl recounted what happened and how she was pleasantly surprised about the candidate's response to her question:

"I got to ask about a question and my question was 'How would you deal with it, if you turned up to see a child and they were angry and frustrated? What would you do?' And she answered really well, she was like 'stay calm, get to know what's wrong, building relationships'. It was nice to see those sorts of questions being asked instead of can you do this and that, they actually care about what happens to children so that were a lot better than I thought."

Development: This practice could be developed further to ensure that all youth justice recruitment involve a collaboration with justice-involved children including writing job specifications, interview questions and participating on recruitment and selection panels. This would improve strategic collaboration practice and ensure that professionals are recruited on the basis of what *children* feel is important.

Additionally, all interventions and support for children should be based on children's self-expressed goals and interests, and children participating in activities such as the have the opportunity to learn more about the pathways, knowledge and skills to achieve their aspirations.

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Developing effective interventions and looking forward

Example 3

Girl, age 17, YJS2

This example relates to developing Referral Order restorative practice. The girl wanted to apologise to police officers (to whom she had been offensive during her arrest, as she had been under the influence of alcohol at the time), however the police involved refused to participate. She revealed previous negative experiences and wanted to understand their roles and decision-making processes more. In the following extract she recalled what happened:

"I said I'd go to every single officer and apologise either to their face or written ... because I wanted to do it as it would make me feel better too. And they were like 'no I don't want any involvement in it.'. I thought even if they didn't want to see me, I could have at least done a written apology ... I thought they could've at least given me the chance to apologise because you're making out I'm a really horrible child ... I wanted to get a better relationship with the police ... have more of an understanding of why certain rules are in place and why the police do things the way they do."

The child explained that her worker proffered the alternative of informally meeting the YJS seconded police officers so she could ask questions about their role. She explained what happened:

"[youth justice worker] arranged for me to have a meeting with two YJS police officers, they weren't in uniform or anything. So I could ask them any questions ... I ended up speaking to them for about 2 hours ... that were really good for me like cos I realised the police, well they were OK, just normal people, well some of them anyway... [youth justice worker] thought it would be helpful for me ... it wasn't like let's just do this to tick a box, she did it for me."

This illustrates a negative response from police, which could have perpetuated the child's negative opinion of them, but for an innovative alternative or proxy approach. It helped the child better understand policing and enabled her to move forward.

Development: This is an area for police service development, as it does not reflect their new child-friendly policing aim which seeks to improve communication and interactions with children (National Strategy for Policing CYP, 2015). Youth justice practitioners may also learn from this example of good practice, utilising the partnership structure of the service and their networks with other agencies in developing interventions with children to meet their needs, goals and interests.

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Example 4

Boy, Age 17, YJS3

At one of the YJS fieldwork sites, several children were involved in an art project exploring the dangers of weapons, coinciding with the 'Knife Angel' sculpture tour (British Ironwork Centre) which is part of the National Youth Anti-Violence Education Programme. The 'Knife Angel' was created out of seized blades in the community and designed to raise awareness of how violence and aggressive behaviour impacts communities, educating and encouraging children to renounce violence as a means to solve problems, and acting as a memorial for those lives lost to knifecrime. Children visited the sculpture and contributed, as part of their 'pay back' hours, to an art exhibition. Many thought this was an alternative creative way of learning as it was interesting and enjoyable, as described in the following quote:

"it were alright, it were less boring, it was quite fun to do ... It's a good way of getting a message across as most kids won't listen to just words, so doing something like art or somethings that's more fun helps more, something more interesting that they can learn from."

Development: The Knife Angel sculpture has been hosted in many locations but is still touring the UK so there are further opportunities for children to see the sculpture and engage in a range of learning activities about the dangers of knives and may offer a more interesting way for children to participate in positive activities. More information about the Knife Angel and where it is can be found here: [The Knife Angel Tour Schedule | The British Ironwork Centre](#)



Photograph by Lee Mansfield (Website: <https://leemansfield.co.uk/>, Instagram: @LeeMansfield)

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Implementing constructive activities in custody - Duke of Edinburgh and Resettlement

Example 5

Boy, age 18, YOI1, boy, age 17 YOI2 and other participants

Children in both participating YOIs spoke about opportunities to do the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E) and how this contributed to Release on Temporary License (ROTL), facilitating rehabilitation by helping them to prepare for release. The scheme helped children to discover new talents, facilitate motivation, learn about responsibility and gain a sense of achievement. This enabled them to learn new employability skills to look forwards to a positive future of fulfilled ambition. Children enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in the D of E and spoke about inventive ways of achieving the different elements whilst in custody, including volunteering jobs around the YOI (ground work, assisting during family visit days), learning new skills (food safety, expeditions/team-building which included camping within the YOI grounds and outside once on ROTL) and physical activity (joint sports challenges).

"You have to do something for each of those topics and then an expedition, so we cycled the length of the countries, 600 odd miles between four of us on exercise bikes and we camped out overnight on the grass land, it was good to be fair... the voluntary work was around the grounds, like hedge cutting and litter picking stuff like that. Skills was my food safety. So I've finished my Bronze ... it were brilliant." (Boy, age 18, YOI1)

Development: This scheme has been made available in YOIs across England and Wales to provide marginalised children (who have experienced few opportunities and faced barriers to participation) with a chance to make positive life changes prior to release. However, more funding is needed to ensure more children are able to participate. Custodial settings also need to ensure that the scheme is inclusive in reality as it claims to be, making it accessible to *all* children in their establishments.



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