

¹The YOT Case Worker

The Youth Offending Team become involved with their clients following the imposition of a Referral Order by the Magistrate's Court. Prior to this the individual will have been involved in activities which necessitated Police action. It is likely that cautions will have been issued, but have been unheeded. So by the time the YOT case worker meets the client they have already been involved in some degree of anti-social behaviour.

The first step is an Asset Interview. This establishes the background of the client – educational achievement, home circumstances, medical history, peer group involvement, interests and any other issues which may have a bearing on the client's behaviour. If the offender is under 17 then the parents attend the initial stages. The aim at this stage is to set up an Action Plan which will put the offender on the path towards more acceptable behaviour.

Whilst not condoning or excusing the behaviour of the offender the case worker is looking for the reasons behind it. This could include some or all of the following – poor or inadequate parenting, medical conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder, drug or alcohol misuse, low academic achievement, low self esteem and inadvisable peer group associations.

There are a number of courses and actions which the case worker can use to assist the offender in changing their behaviour. These include sessions on Peer Pressure, Anger Management, Offending Behaviour and Victim Awareness. There is an Alcohol Group, an Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme and a Parallel Parenting group. This last intervention is important as it will be more difficult for the offender to achieve any degree of success without parental support. It cannot be assumed that this will be freely available.

In some cases the offender will not improve and further court action is taken, in particular the imposition of an ASBO. The case worker will be part of the team involved in preparing the case for the ASBO.

This is a difficult and sensitive area of work. The fact that the client is being handled by the YOT already indicates that the youngster has been through the courts for criminal or anti-social behaviour. So the case worker has to attempt to modify the offender's behaviour rather than trying to stop them starting on a path of offending. The issues are real and present rather than being of a potential and possible nature.

John Piasecki

¹ Appendix D

