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## Therapeutic interventions helping young people who display sexually harmful behaviour: Secure Care Centre SC040500

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### Brief description

This secure care centre delivers an intensive programme designed to work with young people who display sexually harmful behaviour. The centre believes that this is vital to providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment, where the previous sexually harmful behaviour is skilfully addressed and the potential for reoffending is reduced. The centre also supports young people through the resettlement process, working with them and their families as necessary. Each young person has a 'Goodlife Plan', which is devised at the centre and continues as an effective tool in the community. Staff recommend appropriate ongoing therapeutic and supportive work from professionals in the community.

### Overview – the provider's message

'Before we trained staff in therapeutic interventions, we had limited success in dealing with sexually harmful behaviour from young people placed at the centre. The work in this area was carried out by external agencies. Besides being expensive, the use of external providers meant that such interventions were not sufficiently integrated. Highly individualised work was being carried out with young people at the centre.

Our Interventions Team received training in [AIM 2](#) both as an assessment tool and a framework for direct work interventions to address these behaviours. After overcoming their initial apprehension, staff now feel very confident and can promote competence, healthy functioning and the growth of positive development and protective factors in young people. While the content of this work has an emotional impact on staff, the use of external clinical supervision and timely debrief sessions helps to offset this. The major benefits are increased consistency of approach and potential for impact on the ongoing work done in the community with the young person.'

*Linda James, Head of Programmes*

## The good practice in detail

A significant proportion of the sexual abuse suffered by children is perpetrated by other children. Very few residential facilities have an established therapeutic approach and programme of interventions for young people who display sexually harmful behaviour. The centre has developed an approach which goes beyond assessment to delivering effective interventions for these young people.

Before the development of the current programme of interventions, staff had been involved in the assessment of young people's needs and potential to offend. The assessment tool initially used was Assessment, Intervention and Moving On (AIM 1). This was developed by the North West consortium of professionals, including therapists, as part of an inter-agency pathway to working with young people who display sexually harmful behaviour. This was developed with the aim of increasing the consistency of approach among professionals working with young people. All young people assessed by staff were then referred to qualified external specialist workers to carry out intensive interventions.

Managers at the centre realised that staff had the skills to deliver interventions with young people displaying such behaviour and that they could develop programmes to meet individual needs. The centre has a designated interventions team and all staff in that team have been trained in the revised model of AIM 2. The model provides a clear theoretical framework for assessment and interventions with young people and has been adapted to include up-to-date research about young people who abuse others. The approach is based on four areas: sexual behaviour, development, family and environment, and is linked to the Youth Justice Board's assessment documents and the Department of Health Core Assessment Framework.

‘My social skills have really improved; I could never have sat in a group and said what I thought; now I am much more confident.’

Young people who have displayed sexually harmful behaviour described the holistic approach the centre aims to achieve. They said that attending education, being involved in group sessions and activities, and receiving health treatment, all help them deal with the issues that brought them into a secure setting. They said that they feel more confident because staff care and believe in them to do things differently in the future.

Through these comments young people reflected that it was the whole experience that made a difference for them, not just the direct work interventions with the specially trained staff.

‘Relationships with staff are good, really good. I know staff will listen if I have concerns or am confused. I am grateful that staff have let me go at my pace when doing the assessment. I needed to take it slowly dealing with some of my issues.’

All staff use the knowledge and skills gained from the AIM 2 model in their everyday care and interactions with young people. This includes education, developing skills and interests in leisure activities and in relationships with both adults and peers. The impact on young people's confidence and self-esteem is seen in the positive feedback from young people, their parents and carers and other agencies.

Young people who have displayed sexually harmful behaviour described the holistic approach the centre aims to achieve. They said that attending education,

They also commented on how difficult it was to deal directly with the behaviour that had resulted in them being in a secure setting.

‘It is a really good family atmosphere here. It is like being at home, like a real family.’

The evaluation of data at the centre indicates some recurring factors underlying sexually harmful behaviour by young people placed at the centre.

For example, of the young people involved with this programme, 75% had experienced domestic violence, 80% were assessed as having poor attachment and 80% had not received any input on sex education or sexual health.

The very detailed assessment carried out identifies all aspects of the young person’s social, emotional and cognitive development, leading to an individualised interventions plan.

Key elements of the interventions programme include:

- promoting cognitive and behavioural changes and the development of new skills and competencies
- an emphasis on positive goal attainment as opposed to a deficit model
- developing resilience in young people to help them cope with difficult situations.

As part of the process, young people are encouraged to devise a ‘good life plan’. This addresses issues in their lives that have led to sexually harmful behaviour and helps them take responsibility for future decisions and actions.

During the past three years, the centre has worked intensively with 17 young people. Of those,

- five are still resident at the centre
- eleven have returned to the community
- one was sectioned under the Mental Health Act
- two have reoffended but these were not sexually motivated offences.

Most of the young people went on to college placements, with the centre working closely with four particular colleges in the region. Staff from the colleges have welcomed young people, been helpful and supportive and open to developing training packages that are appropriate for the individual. Staff from the colleges have demonstrated a non-judgemental approach to young people who have a history of sexually harmful behaviour. The centre has worked collaboratively with the safeguarding leads in colleges to ensure that young people are safe and not stigmatised.

‘Staff help you to understand yourself and help you put your life back on track. Having good relationships with staff also helps you sort out your issues.’

The centre understands the importance of preparing young people well for resettlement or, in some cases, transfer to another secure facility. They work with each young person to ensure that whatever their individual circumstances, arrangements are in

place for their future needs. These include accommodation and support, education or training, and enrichment and leisure interests that they might have.

Staff track all young people who are discharged from the centre for the period of their licence after serving a Detention and Training Order. A wide range of evaluative data is gathered as part of the tracking process. This includes:

- compliance and cooperation
- user satisfaction (young people)
- external agency satisfaction
- staff confidence
- numbers of young people
- oversight from the external clinical supervisor
- feedback from mental health providers
- behaviour and attitudinal changes
- recidivism
- stability of follow on placement, including education or training.

‘I am planning to go out to college, I know now I can get a qualification. I am going to start attending while I am still here, which is good.’

The tracking process helps the centre to understand the impact of their work with young people and measures the actions and interventions that have the most effect. The interventions team has regular contact with young people, their families or carers and supervising officers or social workers in the community. Although this is a relatively small group of young people worked with over a three-year period, the outcomes are promising in that none of those who have left the centre have displayed further sexually harmful behaviour.

Initially these young people, who are often severely stigmatised because of their actions, have little faith or hope about how they can recover from the impact of their behaviour on their life. The comments from young people, social workers and youth offending teams all confirm that the care and interventions experienced at the centre have been instrumental in increasing aspirations and a more positive future.

## Provider background

SC040500 is a secure children’s home which is registered with Ofsted and approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure care and accommodation. It is managed by Salford City Council and is registered to provide care and education for up to 20 young people (all male). Of the 20 places available, 18 are commissioned by the Youth Justice Board for young people who are remanded to secure accommodation or sentenced by the court. Two places are for young people placed under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. The centre has, for the past three years, received an overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding. The [last interim inspection](#) reported good progress having been made in relation to the most recent recommendations.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We’d welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#). To view other good practice examples, go to: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice)