

# OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SERVICES RELATED TO ADOLESCENTS

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# SERVICES TO ADOLESCENTS

## ADOLESCENT OUTREACH SERVICE

Focuses specifically on Adolescents with emotional and behavioural difficulties;

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICE

Focus on children and young persons living in out of home care - residential or foster care;

Caseload includes a number of adolescents;

## **CHILD PROTECTION SERVICE**

- Investigate and offer protective measures to children and young people who are abused and at risk of such abuse;

## **HIGH SUPPORT SERVICE**

- Offers one to one support to children and young persons under a Care Order living in out of Home Care and who have serious challenging behaviour and/or disability;

## **GENERIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

- Support to adolescents facing difficulties within their family and within the community;
- Support to the family in dealing with the behaviour presented;

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

- Psychological assessments
- Therapeutic Intervention to young people with challenging behaviour, living in out of home care, and adolescents who are victims of abuse;

## FAMILY THERAPY SERVICES

- Focus on working with the family members on the dysfunctional family dynamics and relationship difficulties;
- Intervention focuses on cases of separation; difficulties in child and parent relationship, amongst others;

# ADOLESCENT OUTREACH SERVICE

## Mission Statement

The Adolescent Outreach Service aims towards delivering a comprehensive service in a sensitive fashion in order to promote the physical, emotional, social and spiritual well being of adolescents with emotional and behavioural difficulties.



## EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES IN ADOLESCENTS BETWEEN 13-18 YEARS OF AGE

Hostility

Rebellion

Threats of Violence

Acts of violence

Theft

Destruction of property

Vandalism

Truancy

Threats of suicide

Constant swearing

Running away

Experimentation with Drugs  
and Alcohol

# PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOUR

## NEGATIVE & DISRUPTIVE ACTS

- School Drop outs
- Lack of skills, difficulty in finding employment
- Low impulse control
- Irritability
- Hyperactivity
- Defiance
- Temper tantrums
- Staying out late at night
- Truancy
- Early sexual activity
- Delinquency
- Alcohol and drug use
- Teenage Pregnancies
- Involved with the Criminal Justice System at an Early Age

## AGGRESSIVE ACTS

- Intimidation
- Bullying
- Sexual assault and rape
- Use of arms to intimidate or threaten others
- Robbery
- Assault with injury
- Attempted murder
- Cruelty to animals
- Stealing
- Shoplifting and car theft
- Drug/alcohol trafficking
- Prostitution & pimping
- Destructive behaviour towards property etc.

# INTERVENTIONS

Treat each individual as unique and focus on his/her individual needs;

Build a good relationship with service user based on trust, through formal and informal activities.

Outreach Work – Adolescents do not necessarily come to us regularly BUT we need to go to them;

Carry out home visits – one can never know what to expect;

Carry out schools visits, residential homes, hospital visits, attending ward rounds, etc.

Accompanying service users to appointments such as court hearings, hospital appointments, appointments with Probation Officers, Employment (ETC).

Preparing the adolescent prior to Court hearings and Ward rounds.

Liaising with professionals such as probation officers, school social workers, psychiatrist, psychologists, occupational therapists, guidance teachers, teachers and headmasters, advocates and magistrates.

Link adolescents with services in the community and increase their support networks. This is done by introducing them to ETC, football clubs, youth centres, Skola sport, Local councils, Evening classes, etc.

Create a link and liaise with other professionals involved – Sedqa; Probation Services; Psychologist; Juvenile Court; Education;

Carry out crisis interventions when required – mainly arising when parents do not want their children at home anymore. Involves a lot of mediation;



Find placements when the adolescent could not be contained at home or when the home situation is not adequate. Special agreements have been made with Suriet il-Bniedem / Dar Teresa Spinelli, YMCA to facilitate the admission of such adolescents;

In all this we aim at providing a structure and support network to these young people;

Working with the Family is crucial – support to the family to understand and deal with behaviour of young people;

Parents do not always co-operate and follow up on issues such as appointments and medication

Consultation and Involvement of the Family Therapy Service is crucial at this stage;

## OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE SERVICE

Referrals from the Police – First time offenders to prevent early association with the Criminal Justice System;

Regular presence at the Juvenile Court Hearing – to assist young persons on our caseloads and to assist the Magistrate in addressing emerging situations, as well as taking on new referrals from Court;

## CASE STUDIES

### 16-year old

- Abusing drugs,
- Involved in prostitution.
- Regularly reported missing.
- Parents don't want her at home.
- No residential home can be found due to drug and alcohol abuse.
- Very challenging behaviour even with police, probation officer.

## 15 year old

- Lives with parents;
- Manifested difficult behaviour at the age of 7;
- Disobedient and destructive when angry
- Mother could not cope and requested boy to be admitted into care;
- Police involved;
- Boy admitted to MCH and given medication;
- SW helped family through various interventions;
- Boy re-integrated with family and is much calmer;
- Medication reduced;
- Managed to do O levels and may continue studying;

# LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICE

We follow:      Over 350 Looked After Children  
84 are aged between 11 and 16  
7 are aged between 17 and 18

Children and Young Persons may be admitted into the Care System on a Voluntary Basis – i.e. with the consent of Parents or through a Care Order, whereby the State intervenes to protect children and remove them from their own family



# INTERVENTIONS

Monitor and support children in care and/or under a Care Order by establishing a care plan which is reviewed every 6 months;

– Care Plans look at all aspects of the child's development:

- Health
- Education
- Development
- Psychological Well Being
- Family Contact
- Future Placement

Assist in the re-integration of children back into their families if it is in their best interest;

Where re-integration with birth family is not possible, make arrangements for a long term suitable placement;

Address difficulties being experienced by looked after children and families;

Respond in a supportive manner to families where children are being looked after:

- Link families to existing services and resources;
- Assist in developing the strengths of parents;
- Support parents in developing coping skills;
- Connect families to supportive networks in the community;
- Promote contact between the child and the family, including siblings;

When the child leaves care, support should be provided to the family or young person and if required, possible referrals to other services are made

# DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY LOOKED AFTER ADOLESCENTS

Adolescents remaining in care with no alternative;

Adolescents leaving care at the age of 16:

- Are they ready for independent living?
- What alternative accommodation do they have?

Severe behavioural difficulties:

- Experimentation with drugs (Homes not equipped to deal with this problem)
- Promiscuity and prostitution;
- Aggression;
- Involvement in crimes;
- A number are admitted to YPU;

A number have no family support or a disruptive family support network;

School drop outs and absenteeism or bad behaviour at school – expulsions!

In all of this the Looked After Children Services supports the young person in building a structure:

- Involvement in activities;
- Liaison and links with other professionals;
- In liaison with Homes prepare for independent living;
- Education, Employment and Housing;
- Work with the family where possible;

However in a number of situations we can only aim for “Harm Reduction”:

- Provide them with some basic skills to protect themselves;
- Work closely with Sedqa on drug issues;
- Provide psychological support to address various traumas and rejections that have been encountered;
- Some adolescents need a more structured and controlled environment;

## HIGH SUPPORT SERVICE

Provides individualised support and care, as part of a holistic care plan, to children who are under a Care Order, thus living out of home and presenting challenging behaviour.

The High Support Services provide one-to-one support to children living out of home, who require more in-depth intervention due to the challenging behaviour which they present. The service helps by sustaining the children through a high support programme;

# DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY YOUNG PERSONS REQUIRING HSS

Unresolved feelings of rejection and separation resulting in rebellion and anger;

Mental Health Difficulties requiring regular medication; (ADHD, OCD)

Young Persons with Autistic Traits;

Overt Physical Aggression towards carers;

Aggression towards other Children;

Hyperactivity;

Truancy from Home;

All the other difficulties previously listed (prostitution; drug experimentation, truancy)

## INTERVENTIONS

Interventions focus on creating stability in the young person's placement by assisting in all their day to day needs: feeding, personal hygiene, accompanying them in any activities taking place within the Home;

Engage them in extra curricular activities so as to re-focus their challenging behaviour into something positive – dance, football etc;

Engage in behaviour modification techniques – coaching them to control their anger and aggression; use of time out;

- Teach them daily living skills – table manners, going on a bus, personal hygiene, budgeting skills;
- Prepare them for independent living;
- Introduce education on sexual behaviour and respect towards personal boundaries;
- Accompany them to therapeutic sessions, school meetings when necessary;
- Carers aim at engaging in a positive relationship with the young person which will serve as a model on which to build other trusting relationships;
- Service is part of a holistic care plan being provided to the young person.

## GENERIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Focus their interventions on working closely with the young person within his/her environment, jointly with the family, with the main aim of early intervention so as to prevent escalation of the behavioural difficulties;



## DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

School drop outs;

Truancy from Home;

Aggression towards parents and other family members;

Mischief that could develop in deviancy – too much idle time which gets them into trouble;

Difficult family situations – poverty, family breakdown, mental health problems, separation – making it difficult for young people to cope;

# INTERVENTIONS

Social Work interventions focus on the family difficulties;

Support to Parents in the difficulties they are encountering such that the life for the young people can cope better;

Support to the young person – skills training and behaviour modification techniques;

## Project Work:

- REACH (school drops outs – skills training – engaging them in employment)
- Job Clubs – jointly with ETC;
- SENT – multi-disciplinary team;
- KOOL KIDZ - new project aimed at young carers;
- Pre-Adolescent Programme – new project aimed at early intervention;

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

IN ALL OUR INTERVENTIONS IT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO WORK IN CLOSE LIAISON WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED IN THE YOUNG PERSON'S LIFE SO AS TO ENSURE A HOLISTIC SERVICE;

THE SUPPORT OF PSYCHOLOGISTS IS CRUCIAL IN ADDRESSING THE TRAUMAS ENCOUNTERED BY YOUNG PEOPLE;

THE SUPPORT, INTERVENTION AND CONSULTATION OF FAMILY THERAPISTS ENABLE BETTER INTERVENTION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND HIS/HER FAMILY SYSTEM WHENEVER THIS IS POSSIBLE – THIS IS CRUCIAL TO SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES.

## CONCLUSIONS

WHEN WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE PRESENTING VERY DIFFICULT SITUATIONS WE AS PROFESSIONALS NEED TO LOOK BEYOND THE PROBLEM AND SEE THE YOUNG PERSON AS AN INDIVIDUAL THAT NEEDS TO BE CARED FOR AND WHO HAS POTENTIAL THAT NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED



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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**

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