Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Programmes for Offenders

Research indicates that the most effective and time efficient programmes for changing behaviour are based on CBT approaches.

Underlying Assumptions

- Foundations for criminal activity are dysfunctional patterns of thinking.
- Offender treatment programmes target the thoughts, choices, attitudes and meaning systems associated with antisocial behaviour.
- Structured techniques are used to build cognitive skills and restructure any distorted ways of thinking.
- CBT therapist acts as a coach or teacher.

Problem Solving

- It is reasonable to expect that individuals who are not good at problem solving will opt for illegitimate means of reaching their goals. This is because they may repeatedly experience failure in their legitimate attempts to obtain what they want and become easily frustrated and aggressive. (Ross & Fabiano 1985)
- Programme concentrates on the process of problem solving instead of getting the right answer: “We should be teaching students how to think; instead we are primarily teaching them what to think.” (Lockhead, 1979).

CBT Programmes Can Involve:

- Group exercises
- Role play
- Rehearsal
- Intensive feedback
- Homework assignments
- Diaries
- Worksheets

Further Info

The Home Office website has some useful information regarding the “What Works” initiative together with details of programmes for offenders. The initiative aims to ensure that probation work is evidence based, consistent and effective.

Further information can be found in the ‘what works initiative’ section at www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk
Victim Awareness

- Victim awareness can be taught as a stand-alone programme on a one to one basis.
- All the programmes undertaken by the Probation Service have a victim awareness element to them.
- In all cases where there is a clear and identified victim the possibility of either direct or indirect restorative approaches will be considered. The full and informed agreement of the victim will be ensured prior to any restorative process being initiated.

Programme Content:

Victim Awareness Definitions

- Aims to help offenders understand that victims are created as a result of other people’s actions.
- There is more than one victim – direct and indirect victims.

Exercises on the ‘Ripple Effect’

- Aids recognition that when the offender does something it impacts a wide variety of people, not just those directly affected, or their families, but many people they do not even see.
- Crime scenarios are discussed highlighting the impact of all crimes extending well beyond the immediate victim.
- Ripple effect is applied to the client’s own offences.

Victim Impact

- To develop insight into how victims are affected by crimes perpetrated against them.
- Analysis is undertaken of how victims feel, think and behave in the short and long term.

Role Reversal

- Taking the victim’s place to further develop empathy.

‘My Victim’ Exercises

- Helping offenders understand that they actually do plan who they will victimise, even if it is in a broad way.

Letter

- Writing a letter (not for sending) to their victim so that the offenders express remorse and empathy for the person that they have victimised.
Restorative Approaches in relation to Court Reports and Outcomes

The Probation team have given a great deal of thought to how and when we should report on RJ processes undertaken with offenders in the course of supervision or imprisonment, and have prepared a protocol for guidance in all cases where there is statutory involvement. The protocol takes into account the following principles:-

- The ethos of restorative justice approaches is that they are for the benefit of the victim and any consequences to the offender in terms of improvements in behaviour or attitude are a welcome by-product but must remain secondary to the needs of the victim.

- It is inappropriate that an offender should gain any benefit from taking part in a process which should be part of a moral duty and not laid down in law.

- As there is no compulsion on the victim to take part in restorative approaches there can be no guarantee how RJ can be used in any case we are dealing with.

Therefore in regard to Social Enquiry Reports there will be no specific mention of plans to undertake RJ with an offender. All cases will be considered individually and the Probation protocol followed which says that in all cases where there is a clear and identified victim the possibility of either direct or indirect restorative approaches will be considered by the Probation Service. The full and informed agreement of the victim will be ensured prior to any restorative process being initiated.

The protocol was introduced on 1st July 2010. We have been using RJ approaches for some years and individual officers have been doing complex and innovative work with serious cases for some time. Although not new, RJ will be considered for use in every case.
Offending Is Not the Only Choice

This is a general offending behaviour programme which has similar themes to the ‘Choices and Challenges’ course which is delivered in the prison.

Programme Focus

- Programme is designed to focus on altering criminal patterns exhibited by repeat offenders.
- Sections: criminal thinking and how to counter it, morality and victim awareness, problem solving and consequential thinking.
- Teaches skills and links learning to real life situations clients will face.
- Uses a cognitive behavioural approach.
- Consists of 23 sessions.

Course Uses the Task Centred Approach

- Designed to help people with problems of living such as interpersonal conflict, problems with formal organisations, reactive emotional distress.
- In order to reduce further offending the problems addressed will be those which focus on the reasons for the offence behaviour and not just upon general problem solving.
- Clients are helped to move forward with solutions to psychological and social problems that they define and hope to solve.
- They are assisted to find solutions through their own actions or tasks.

Values Enhancement/Moral Reasoning

- Conflicts of interest underlie moral problems.
- Resolving problems not through force requires: empathy and understanding in personal relationships, use of reasoning and applying principles such as fairness and reciprocity.
- Programme teaches moral reasoning and empathy by challenging clients to examine their beliefs and develop the ability to understand how others think and feel.
- Clients take part in discussions and role plays requiring them to think about their responses, the feelings of others and to consider alternative viewpoints.
Dealing With Destructive Levels of Male Aggression

Programme Focus

- Teaching cognitive skills to reduce individual aggression and violence.
- Designed to be thought provoking and challenging and delivered in a task orientated environment.
- Delivered in groups with co-leaders.
- Repetition and practice of skills are essential elements.
- Consists of 25 sessions.

Session Topics Include:

- **Anger, Aggression and Violence**
  - Teaches offenders how to differentiate between anger and violence.
  - How to recognise the physiological signs of anger and how to use this skill in self-control techniques.

- **Masculinity and Violence**
  - Explores the relationship between masculinity and: self identity, language, sexuality, power, control, culture and values.
  - Skills exercises are directed to helping individuals take control of their lives by giving up the power of violence and aggression.

- **Values Beliefs and Violence**
  - Values are questioned and examined for how they affect their behaviour.
  - Highlights the value of thinking about the feelings of other people.

- **Life Stories and Offence Histories**

- **Consequential Thinking**
  - Teaches basic skills of thinking ahead and to stop and think about the consequences for self and others.

- **Self Awareness**

- **Self Instruction Techniques**
  - Introduces the idea that what we think influences how we feel and behave.

- **Choices and Decisions**

- **Alternative Thinking Skills**
  - Teaches the necessity of avoiding impulsive decision making and discusses alternative solutions to problem situations.

- **Self Control**

- **Non Verbal and Verbal Communication**

- **Assertive Communication**
  - Understanding and practising that the most effective way of dealing with problems is to be assertive rather than passive or aggressive. Learning assertive communication helps individuals to stay in control of their anger and avoid violence.
Sexual Offender Treatment Programme

- The programme has been developed by Forensic Psychologist Dr David Briggs who acts as consultant to Probation Officers delivering the programme.
- Designed for use with offenders aged 18 or over.
- Designed for use with men who have been convicted of a sexual offence or where sexually motivated behaviour underpins criminal activity.
- Overall aim is risk management – treatment and surveillance both have a role to play in risk management.
- Number of sessions varies, the programme is delivered on a one to one basis.

Programme Content

- **Motivation Module**
  - Explores the costs and benefits of changing for the offender.
  - Encourages the offender to review their past success at managing urges to sexually abuse and fosters strategies for self-management.
  - Promotes responsibility taking for past sexually abusive behaviour.

- **Addressing Attitudes Supportive of Offending**
  - Dysfunctional attitudes are seen as risk factors related to re-offending. For example, women as wanting or deserving rape, sexual entitlement and callous attitudes.
  - The offender’s attitudes towards his sexual offending are explored and they are encouraged to accept that thinking errors are common in sexual offending.
  - An aim of this module is for the offender to work towards describing their offence without using excuses and distorted beliefs.

- **Managing Offence Related Sexual Interests**
  - Sexual arousal and the use of fantasy in relation to offending are explored.
  - Offenders are taught techniques to contain and control urges to offend.

- **Promoting Social Functioning/Intimacy**
  - Aids the offender’s development of an internal locus of control. Owning responsibility for one’s actions is an important component of change.
  - Strategies for coping with emotional loneliness and overcoming low self esteem are taught.
  - Looks at ways of developing healthy intimacy in adulthood and an understanding of how emotional needs may have been met through contact with children.

- **Promoting Behavioural Control**
  - Teaches problem solving skills and demonstrates its relevance to sexual offending and relapse prevention.
Only Pictures?

Therapeutic work with Internet Sex Offenders
(Quayle, Erooga, Wright, Taylor and Harbinson)

- The target group for this programme are those convicted of accessing, making, and/or sharing abusive images of children on the internet.
- The programme is not a ‘cure’ for sexual offending, rather it seeks to enable offenders to recognise and take full responsibility for their part in the abuse of children. It also seeks to equip participants with the skills necessary to avoid re-offending if they choose to do so.
- This programme is not as developed as other programmes and is not provided in workbook style. As such, facilitators must adapt the research and expected learning points from each module into accessible sessions. Guernsey Probation Service has been devising its own ‘workbook’ to accompany the programme.
- The course consists of seven modules. If undertaken weekly, this programme would last approximately 6 months, each session lasting about 2 hours.
- Can be run as a groupwork programme or one to one. Groupwork is preferable as it enables greater challenge and a more productive learning environment.

The Process of Offending on the Internet

Use a process model of offending behaviour to identify the types of behaviour the offender had been engaged in
Look at the pathway to offending, and in what way the offence behaviour has progressed
Look at the factors that facilitated or inhibited movement through that process

Images are Children

Confront the offender with the reality of the pictures as being evidence of abusive relationships
Assist the offender to empathise with the experience of such children
Look at the offending process that lies behind such victimisation

Fantasy and its Escalation

Offer strategies to explore the use of internet abuse images (and perhaps pornography in general) in the escalation of fantasy with adults with a sexual interest in children
Assist offenders to gain some understanding of the role of internet based fantasy in their sexual behaviour
Assist in the development of strategies to control problematic fantasy

Emotional Avoidance
Suggest ways of assessing how offender’s values might be a vehicle for accepting distressing thoughts and feelings without acting on them
Assist offenders to develop mindfulness skills as an additional strategy to avoid re-offending
Assist offenders to develop an understanding of distress tolerance skills (i.e. managing negative thoughts and feelings)

**Social Activity and Internet Images**
Assessment of an offender’s online versus their off line social worlds, and the level of overlap
Identify the level of engagement with the internet community
Identify what online relationships might have meant and how this might be met in their off line life

**Collecting Images**
This module is most relevant for those who collect and catalogue images
Assist offender in assessing and developing their awareness of the reasons for collecting abuse images
Consideration of the trading of abuse images
Examine the function 'collecting' had in their life

**Maintaining Change**
Relapse prevention
Development of an individual risk management plan
Development of a good life plan
Set goals for the future
Expectations of future/ongoing work