

Youth Justice: Lived Experience Case Study Findings

Colleagues from Youth Justice completed four in-depth case studies with young people and families in 2023, that had at some time in their past been either persistently or severely absent from school. Taken together, the following conclusions were drawn from these four stories of change.

Relationships

All four young people felt the teacher and student relationships should be improved. Mainly around how children are challenged which they believed was a punitive method rather than a restorative approach.

One parent did acknowledge that their child is “*not an angel*” however tried to explain to school how to address behaviours and feels this was not successful.

It was explained to some parents that school must follow a behavioural policy. One parent stated that children are all different and he understands that the rules apply to everyone but there must be some leniency and it is not only about the rules it is how the children are challenged.

On an encouraging note, young people reported having positive relationships with some staff members has helped them.

One young person informed us that she felt that a teacher has made it easier for her when she is attending school.

Communication

Parents and students felt that communication from school was not accurate at the best of times. In some instance calls were not returned. It was also felt staff were not communicating with each other in school so if there was a plan in place some staff were not aware of this.

However, parents did state that when school took advice from professionals’ things did improve.

Support from external services

Parents believed support from agencies was one factor that contributed to improving attendance but more importantly that they supported their views and helped get their message across to school.

Conclusions

The consensus from parents was that a combination of intervention work and having support from agencies to challenge schools as well as better communication helped their child attend.

It was made clear in some cases that relationships with teachers helped improve attendance.

Some schools made changes and reasonable therapeutic adjustments and tried more restorative approaches which also made a difference to attendance.