



Parenting interventions for male young offenders: A review of the evidence on what works

K. Buston*, A. Parkes, H. Thomson, D. Wight, C. Fenton

MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, 4 Lilybank Gardens, Glasgow G12 8RZ, UK

A B S T R A C T

Keywords:

Parenting interventions
Young offenders
Literature review
Evaluations
Fatherhood

Approximately one in four incarcerated male young offenders in the UK is an actual or expectant father. This paper reviews evidence on the effectiveness of parenting interventions for male young offenders. We conducted systematic searches across 20 databases and consulted experts. Twelve relevant evaluations were identified: 10 from the UK, of programmes for incarcerated young offenders, and two from the US, of programmes for young parolees. None used experimental methods or included a comparison group. They suggest that participants like the courses, find them useful, and the interventions may improve knowledge about, and attitudes to, parenting. Future interventions should incorporate elements of promising parenting interventions with young fathers in the community, for example, and/or with older incarcerated parents. Young offender fathers have specific developmental, rehabilitative, and contextual needs. Future evaluations should collect longer-term behavioural parent and child outcome data and should use comparison groups and, ideally, randomization.

© 2011 The Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

There is a high rate of teenage fatherhood amongst incarcerated young offenders. At least one in four of the thirteen thousand (Berman, 2010; Northern Ireland Prison Service, 2011; Scottish Prison Service, 2010) incarcerated young offenders in the UK is an actual or expectant father (Macmillan, 2005; Mardon, 1996). Surprisingly, there are no comparative official statistics for young men in the general population in the UK, or indeed for non-incarcerated young offenders, but in the US only around one in twenty 16–21 year olds are fathers (Savio Beers & Hollo, 2009).

Men who become fathers at a young age tend to have an accumulation of risk factors: low social class, early risk behaviour including sexual activity and substance use, mental health problems, lack of social support, and low educational attainment (Barlow et al., 2011; Thornberry, Smith, & Howard, 1997). Furthermore, a number of problems are associated with the day-to-day realities of being a young father including financial hardship and instability of intimate relationships and the impact these may have on continued involvement with the child (Fagan, Bernd, & Whiteman, 2007; Lamay, Cashman, Elfenstein, & Felice, 2010; Quinton, Pollock, & Golding, 2002). Young fathers are unlikely to know much about child development or effective parenting skills (Barlow et al., 2011).

Problems associated with being a father at a young age are likely to be heightened by incarceration (Kazura, 2001; Nurse, 2000) Involvement, and even contact, with one's child tends to become more difficult, and financial hardship can be

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 (0) 141 357 3949; fax: +44 (0) 141 337 2389.

E-mail addresses: Katie@sphsu.mrc.ac.uk (K. Buston), Alison-P@sphsu.mrc.ac.uk (A. Parkes), Hilary@sphsu.mrc.ac.uk (H. Thomson), Danny@sphsu.mrc.ac.uk (D. Wight), Candida@sphsu.mrc.ac.uk (C. Fenton).

exacerbated. Furthermore, offending young fathers are even more likely than their non-offending peers to have poor mental health, problems with literacy and numeracy, and to engage in risk behaviours (Golzari, Hunt, & Anoshiravani, 2006). They are more likely to have been in care, experienced violence or sexual abuse at home, and/or experienced problematic parenting themselves (Biggam & Power, 1998; Shannon & Abrams, 2007). They are likely to have experienced a lack of trust in personal relationships and with social support agencies, and to have received little support from these sources (Dudley, 2007; Tyrer, Chase, Warwick, & Aggleton, 2005). Young offender fathers are, in short, likely to be the most disadvantaged amongst young fathers and to face an even greater number of barriers to becoming engaged and involved fathers than their non-offending peers.

This suggests the need for parenting interventions for young offender fathers, to help them fulfil their roles as fathers, and improve outcomes for the child (Lundahl, Tollefson, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2008). Importantly, such programmes could also improve outcomes for the offender himself (Barlow et al., 2011).

Though parenting programmes have been widely implemented in British Young Offender Institutions for around twenty years, no review has been undertaken of their effectiveness, nor of the effectiveness of parenting programmes for non-incarcerated young offenders. This paper uses systematic literature searches and expert consultation to bring together and review studies which evaluate parenting programmes for male young offenders. We critically assess the findings of the evaluations identified, and conclude by discussing what effective parenting interventions might look like and how they should be evaluated in the future.

Methods

Literature searches

Preliminary searches were conducted to identify evaluations of parenting programmes for male young offenders. Terminology and definitions around 'young offenders' are country specific, and are used inconsistently even within countries. In Scotland, for example, Young Offender Institutions house 16–21 year olds and 'young offender' tends to refer to this age group, though the age of criminal responsibility is 12. In England, offenders between the age of 10 (the age of criminal responsibility) and 17 are usually referred to as 'juvenile offenders', with those aged 18–21 more consistently referred to as 'young offenders'. In the United States, where the age of criminal responsibility varies between states, the youngest being 6 years, the term 'juvenile offender' appears to be generally used for non-adult offenders. For this review we included studies which use the term 'young offender' or 'juvenile offender' (whether or not they have ever been incarcerated), or which refer to men who are or have been incarcerated when aged between 16 and 21 years. The parenting programmes evaluated could be delivered in a Young Offender Institution (YOI), or similar, or in a community setting, including settings linked to the criminal justice system such as parole sites. It was required that findings focused specifically on young offenders.

A search strategy was developed in discussion with an information scientist (CF) who conducted the database searches. Table 1 shows the search terms used, in various combinations and in accordance with requirements for each database in terms of fields and filters used. Information on the construction of the search strategies is appended. There were no date limits to any of the searches. The geographical range included developed countries only. All search terms were specified in English. Table 2 lists the 20 electronic bibliographic databases that were searched.

All abstracts ($n = 4100$) retrieved by the searches were scanned by CF. Clearly irrelevant references (there were many relating to parents of young offenders) were discarded. KB read full texts of potentially relevant references ($n = 59$).

Once the first author (KB) was familiar with this literature she conducted searches on the World Wide Web using Google to identify unpublished grey literature or work in progress not already identified. Prison and parole related websites in the UK and US were explored, including those of support organisations and pressure groups in the criminal justice area and those known to be involved in prison-based interventions. Web-sites relating to fatherhood and to parenting were also examined (a full list of web-sites searched is available from the authors).

Lead authors of the included studies were contacted by e-mail, as were additional experts in the field either known to KB from her own research on young offenders (Buston & Wight, 2010; Buston, 2008, 2010) or identified through Google searches. This in turn led to further expert contacts. Altogether, 48 experts were contacted. They were asked whether:

- they were aware of any work in progress in the area
- they were aware of, or themselves had, any plans for further studies in this field
- there was any other expert they thought should be contacted.

In this correspondence KB outlined her impression of the state of the field, and asked each whether s/he agreed with this assessment. Correspondence was continued until no new names emerged and it became clear that no substantive work had been missed and no new directly relevant work was planned.

Finally, in order to complement the above strategies, more restricted, but systematic, literature searches were conducted to identify recently published evaluations of more general fathering programmes. This was so that the work on young offenders could be set in context, but also to ensure that no work specifically on young offenders existed amongst this more general literature. No more studies meeting our inclusion criteria were identified.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10436742>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10436742>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)