

WHAT WORKS IN INTERVENTIONS

A guide to evidence based practice

Gareth Mc Gibbon
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GROUP DISCUSSION

What is your understanding of 'what works' in interventions?

A brief history of What Works in probation

- The central premise of the UK 'What Works' approach was that CBT programmes would deliver reductions of between 5 and 10 per cent in reoffending.
- McGuire (1995) highlighted key principles for effective programmes that have developed over time to include.

Risk	Match programme intensity to risk;
Responsivity	Match programme delivery to offenders' learning styles;
Needs	Address factors contributing directly to criminal behaviour;
Integrity Programmes	Consistently and uniformly delivered
Modality	Multi-modal intervention to improve cognitive and other skills;
Community focus	As effects are stronger when delivered in the community. (Hedderman, 2007 after Vennard et al., 1997)

Does 'what works' work?

- Evaluations of UK accredited programmes have been hampered by methodological shortcomings. It is argued there is still too much concentration on the single outcome measure of reconviction at the expense of other measures.
- A deeply flawed process - *'...judging rehabilitative interventions by recidivism is a bit like judging the success of health interventions by whether anyone shows up at the doctor again (for any reason, not just in relation to the problem that has actually been treated); (Mc Neill et al 2010)*
- Summary of findings
 - Those who complete programmes are considerably less likely to reoffend than expected and do relatively better than those who do not complete recommended interventions.
 - Matching intensity of intervention to the risk principle is valid and a stronger offender focus and good case management should improve results.
 - The quality of case management, including assessment and allocation to the most proportionate programmes with ongoing support improves the chances of successful completion.
 - 2008 National Audit Office judged that there was only 'weak' evidence for the effectiveness of domestic abuse programmes, Employment and Basic Skills training, intensive supervision and unpaid work.

Defining desistance

- Desistance theory strives to explain the process by which offenders come to live life free from criminality.
- It is accepted that desistance is a process as opposed to a specific event.
- Desistance markers provide an overview of variables that are associated with desistance.

Rehabilitation Vs. Public Protection

- Probation has had longstanding historical links to social work.
- The provision of guidance, care and assistance to 'offenders' has often been seen as the most important job of probation services.
- Rehabilitation, so it is argued, has become something that is done to offenders in the putative interests of others; offenders are not the intended beneficiaries of rehabilitative efforts – they are the targets of such efforts.
- The focus is less on restoring the errant citizen and more on protecting the law-abiding one.

What do we know works?

- Successful outcomes are associated with individuals who have ambitions and optimism for their future.
- Stable partner relationships or enduring carer and professional relationships were a feature of most adults with positive outcomes.
- Educational achievement and the ability to gain employment also constituted significant desistance factors.
- Poor outcomes associated with individuals with poor body image and poor health.
- Relationship failure, chaotic or unstable living conditions and drug and alcohol misuse were common amongst those with the worst outcomes.

Desistance focussed practice

- Interventions must accommodate and exploit issues of identity and diversity.
- The development and maintenance of motivation and hope are key tasks for workers.
- Desistance can only be understood within the context of human relationships.

The Good Lives Approach

- The practitioner has to create a relationship in which the individual is valued and respected.
- Interventions should be tailored in line with particular life plans and their associated risk factors.
- Interventions should be structured and systematic, they should also be shaped to suit the person in question.
- The language used by the practitioner and their agency should be 'future-oriented, optimistic and approach goal focused' (Ward and Maruna, 2007: 127) in order to foster motivation.

Its all about relationships!

The recognition of the significance of relationships and environments for positive change within the GLM chimes with the emphasis on social capital in the desistance literature.

The importance of relationships and integration have long been recognised through indigenous and spiritual practices.

Such approaches have informed mainstream intervention practices such as COSA and Family Group Conferencing

Positive reconviction data analysis with RTC (*Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2005*)

Promoting of social capital interventions must be acknowledged as a central feature of community supervision

Thank you for listening!