

# Achieving the Vision for Children Team around the Child Good Practice Series

Involving Children and Young People in Planning  
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## The work

Canongate Youth Project works with young people ages 5-21 in youth work services, which include open access youth clubs and individual support programmes for young people who are experiencing difficulties at home, at school or in the community. The young person chose Brooke for her case study name.

This case study illustrates good practice for Team around the Child in:

- **Information sharing – a confidentiality policy and a system for recording information**
- **Supporting young people in planning to achieve progress**

## Laurene and Brooke's story

Laurene first met Brooke when she was fourteen years old. Brooke was referred to Canongate Youth Project (CYP) because she was having problems at school and in the community. Brooke was unhappy, her relationships with her mum and other family members were not good, and her dad was terminally ill. Brooke was acting out at school, and drinking in the community. She had been in trouble with the police.

At first Brooke's refused a referral to CYP – although her mum had agreed because the family already knew of the project, Brooke had been to youth clubs and so had previous generations of the family. Eventually Brooke agreed to the referral if she could choose the worker, and CYP was able to be flexible and provide Laurene to work with Brooke.

Laurene has worked with Brooke and supported her through some extremely difficult situations. On the surface, Brooke appears very shy and unwilling to engage with people, and she has a knack of putting people off with her defensive attitude. But, Laurene feels that Brooke is a young woman with a lot of potential, and is a very deep and caring person. Once her trust has been gained, Brooke is very warm and protective towards people. But these very positive qualities are buttoned up inside Brooke, who finds it extremely difficult to discuss her own feelings or to express a lot of the pain and hurt she has experienced in her life. Brooke finds it very difficult to believe that people could care about her, or to believe she could be good at anything. Laurene really wanted Brooke to build a more positive view of herself and to discover her own talents.

For Laurene, this has made supporting Brooke to participate in meetings and planning processes very difficult. Together they have sat through many meetings where adults, including Brooke's relatives, have talked about Brooke in negative ways, constantly focusing on problems. Laurene has found it difficult to prepare Brooke for these meetings, because the adults have not been prepared to focus on some of the positive aspects of Brooke's potential.

Laurene has developed a programme of work with Brooke which is very solution-focused.

1. Laurene's first meetings with Brooke were spent explaining CYP's policies on confidentiality and information sharing, and how information in CYP is stored and discussed within the team. Brooke agreed that information could be shared within the team and between CYP and her school guidance teacher. CYP has an information folder for young people and parents explaining their policies and how they work.
2. CYP has developed tools for working with young people to help them self-assess their personal situation and set their own goals for moving forward, using scales to score where they are now and where they want to be. Laurene and Brooke have been working on a programme focusing on Brooke's self confidence and ability to meet others, especially adults. This is an important goal for Brooke as she has now left home and is trying to cope in her own tenancy, and will need to liaise with agencies to get the support she needs to achieve her potential.

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3. Laurene developed a personal folder for Brooke, called 'Seven Steps to Confidence' and used exercises from a toolkit called 'TeenTalk' for each of the steps. Each exercise helped Laurene and Brooke discuss aspects of her life and feelings, so that further steps could be identified for Brooke's plan.
4. Laurene recorded all of the sessions with Brooke on CYP's IT monitoring system (Quad). She used this to share updates with her manager and team and with other agencies.
5. Brooke's Guidance Teacher collated information from Laurene, and in turn provide Laurene with updates on any information other agencies were sharing. Laurene noted these in Quad.
6. Brooke was aware of information sharing, and sometimes asked for comments she had made to be shared with school.
7. Laurene attended planning meetings with Brooke, preparing her beforehand and meeting her afterwards to review how things went.
8. Brooke sometimes asks Laurene if she can look at her notes, which Laurene shares. Brooke also asks Laurene if other workers know about some of her circumstances. Laurene is able to share the information CYP holds on Brooke easily and reviews the CYP confidentiality policy with Brooke.

Laurene has now worked with Brooke for four years, proving a great level of continuity for a young person during a difficult transition into adult life, involving school, social work, housing services, careers service, school, family members, the police and probation officers.

## **Brooke's comments on her experience of information sharing and planning**

Brooke didn't want to make specific comments but she enjoyed reading the case study and will revisit it with her worker when they next review progress.

## **The tools**

- The Quad system is a bespoke system used by some youth projects in Edinburgh to enable electronic recording of youth work (both groups and individual programmes) and provide easy analysis of the organisation's work as a whole. It has some clear benefits to support information sharing:
  - it provides an easily searched database of who is involved in the project and when they were last in touch (to identify if CYP is involved with a young person who is being considered for a Team around the Child)
  - it also enables workers to report to other agencies, and note when information from other agencies has been received.
  - it enables workers to track progress over time, using 'session dynamics', 'issues raised' and 'follow up' fields to record information
- The regular focus on support and supervision for staff involved in supporting young people
- The Canongate Youth Project 'Information Folder' providing clear information on the organisation's confidentiality policy, to support their information sharing
- The CYP self-assessment scales, focusing on different aspects of young people's lives, to support goal setting and reviewing progress
- The investment in Laurene's time for a sustained period to support Brooke.

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## **Possible developments to think about for Team around the Child practice:**

- Quad could be further developed to assist multi-agency working:
  - a 'front end' flag built into the system to identify a Child's Plan is in place or warn about information sharing, child protection or other concerns
  - a place to record a chronology
  - A check-box to confirm consent has been given to share information, and space for a date
- Information sharing and confidentiality could be regularly reviewed with young people (e.g. a policy to repeat the consent process regularly, and each time a sensitive issue occurs)

## **Things to think about**

How could Laurene have changed the way that meetings about Brooke were held, to become more positive experiences?

- It is difficult for workers in young person-focused work to consider how to work with the adults involved to prepare them to act differently in a meeting. In a multi-agency setting, reviewing the meeting with other workers *might* help them to take on the work with adults to approach things differently.
- Laurene sometimes advocated for Brooke when it was too difficult for her to speak.

How could the self assessment tools have assisted in constructing a Child's Plan?

- The tools Laurene uses have great potential for helping young people break down big issues into smaller parts to focus on and to help set goals. This is a vital part of Team around the Child – how to bring forward young people's perspectives and how to engage them in taking on some action themselves, which can be empowering, while adults and services work out their responsibilities in the situation.

What contribution did Laurene make to Brooke's transition?

- Laurene has been able to work with Brooke over four years, and provided continuity of support over the transition from school to adult life. Teams around the Child will need to plan for transitions carefully, and where possible, plan in some continuity of support.