

## **Building better futures – empowering better outcomes**

The Oberstown care model, CEHOP, has 5 strands - Care, Education, Health, Offending Behaviour and Preparation for leaving. Under this framework, we look for ways to work with young people in detention to build their responsibilities and to address the factors associated with their offending behaviour. Our aim is to equip them with the personal and vocational skills to live a positive and productive life once they return home.

To support young people in reducing the likelihood of reoffending, we have developed a range of programmes. In 2019 we delivered six offending behaviour programmes with 51 participants completing one or more of these programmes.

Our programmes are designed to promote rehabilitation through practical skills to support young people's return to the community and reduce their likelihood of relapse. The programmes help young people to develop skills such as victim empathy, dealing with impulsive behaviours and reducing dependence on drugs.

A brief snapshot of the programmes is outlined below:

**The Victim Empathy Programme** encourages empathy in young people who commit crimes or hurt others through their actions. It challenges the young person to face the harm they have caused and consider what they can do to help put things right.

**The Decider Programme** is based on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) which uses skills that attempt to deal with impulsive behaviours. The programme enables participants to learn effective coping skills before they need them and build resilience.

**Crinan – Drug Relapse Prevention Programme** is a group work intervention that aims to teach participants how to examine the triggers and the consequences for their drug/alcohol use. Young people are supported in developing strategies that help them effectively manage and overcome any stressors or triggers in their environment that may cause a relapse.

**Anti-Violence Restorative Practice Training – (ART)** enables participants to deal with potentially violent situations in new and creative ways. Workshops use the shared experiences of participants, interactive exercises, games and role-plays.

**Challenging Choices** aims to challenge young people's existing negative attitudes and beliefs by presenting them with alternative attitudes, beliefs and behaviours to promote a more pro-social lifestyle and reduce the young people's risks of reoffending.

**Street Law** places trainee solicitors studying at the Law Society of Ireland in Oberstown to teach young people about the law. The programme aims to better equip young people in their dealings and understandings with the legal system. It also helps them develop critical thinking and communication skills and assists in changing mind-sets and attitudes.

Our young people aren't the only ones benefitting from the programmes, for the staff at Oberstown working with the young people allows us to discover the best approach for them and to refine the content and delivery in response. Learning is most effective when the young people feel comfortable and supported so it's up to us to make sure this is the case. For example, we have seen how having to stay focused and in one place can be challenging for some young people, therefore, where necessary, the format is adapted to their individual needs. We are constantly working to review the effectiveness and further develop our suite of programmes in line with best practice.

To further address some of the behavioural challenges the young people face, we run workshops on campus in collaboration with our external partners on a range of themes or issues.

We are delighted to work with Jigsaw Ireland, Street Doctors, ShoutOut, Pavee Point and the ISPCC who carry out fantastic work with our young people to support and progress them both on campus and in preparation for when they leave.

Our staff also deliver Foroige's REAL U (Relationships Explored and Life Uncovered) programme which focuses on helping young people to express and explore their own, and others, views on issues that affect them around relationships and sexuality.

Our young people also have access to the Teen Parents Supports material which is also used by Le Cheile.

We are always pleased to welcome An Gaisce, The Presidents Awards, on campus who are a huge part of our work. Everything the young people do on campus can be used towards their awards and engenders a huge sense of achievement amongst our young people.

SpunOut will be with us on campus once a month between February and July to work with young people on issues such as healthy living, goal setting, alcohol and drug misuse, body image, self-confidence and online safety / healthy social media use. Our advocacy officer, Grainne Smyth, worked with the young people to decide on these topics.

Once a month, two volunteers from the Samaritans visit Oberstown to take part in evening activities with the young people. They discuss emotional health, what that means, ways you can look after yourself and what supports are available. The main point they try to get across to the young people is that it's important to know how you are feeling and how to talk about those feelings, and that we all need support at different times in our lives.

For the young people who have participated in the programmes and workshops, there is a visible increase in the level of empathy, self-confidence, and openness to discuss previous negative behaviours. They have engaged willingly and with enthusiasm in sessions and are receptive of the interventions on offer. Young people in detention have varying needs and challenges, our aim is to continue to develop these programmes to meet these needs.