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Using an identity lens:
Constructive working
with children in the
CJS

September 2020



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USING AN IDENTITY LENS:
Constructive working with children in the
criminal justice system

The BYC programme was an England-wide learning and awareness programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund, which ran from 2012 to 2018. It was a partnership of Nacro, ARCS (UK), the University of Salford and the University of Bedfordshire.

The programme found that resettlement was successful when it involved a personal journey for young people, where they shift their identity from one that allowed offending to one that encouraged a positive and constructive future.

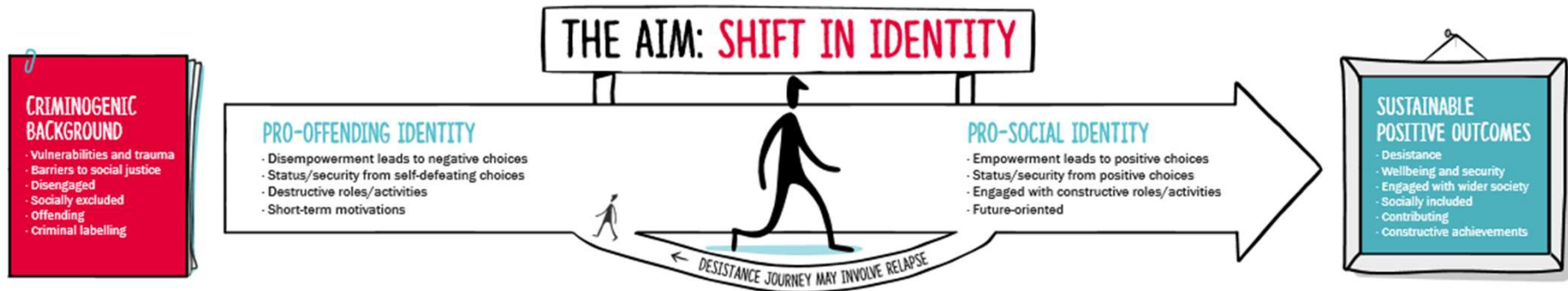
BYC concluded that effective resettlement required that **the role of all services should be to facilitate this shift in identity.**

In order to help policymakers and practitioners consider how this could be achieved, BYC turned the research findings into a framework consisting of:

1. a model for organising casework to facilitate identity shift, and
2. a set of five principles (“5Cs”) that showed how services could support this shift in identity (Constructive, Co-created, Customised, Consistent, and Coordinated)

BYC also started to explore how practitioners’ actions could best underline rather than undermine identity shift (“Identity Awareness”).

The importance of identity



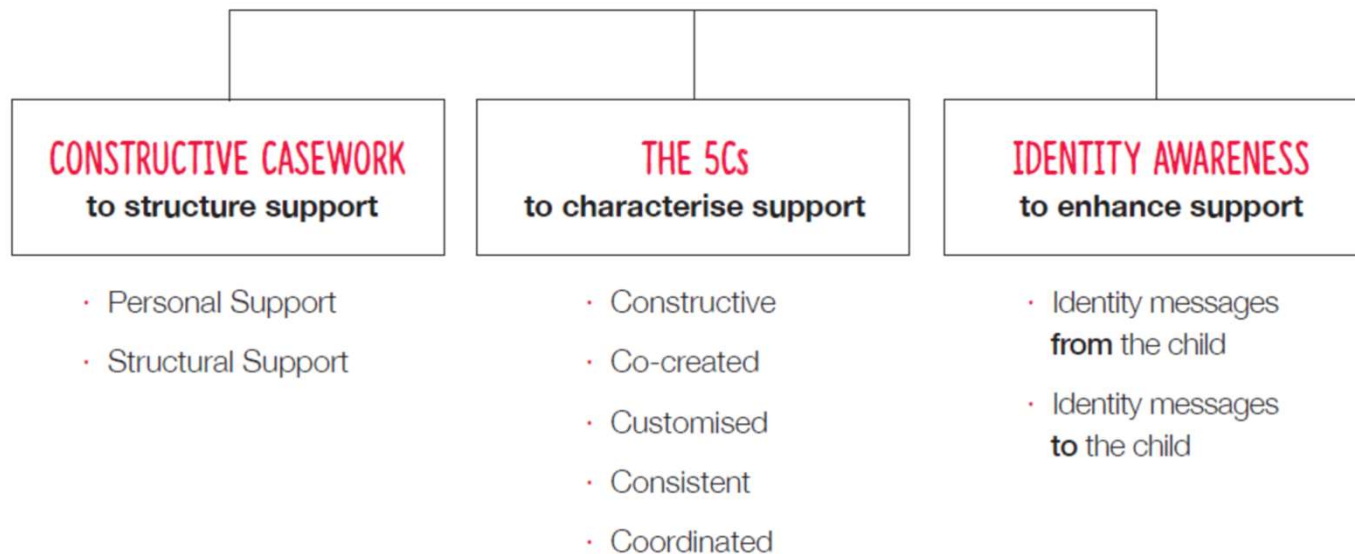
Using the principles of the BYC programme, this toolkit outlines how they can be applied to working with children before custody to support them towards positive outcomes and prevent further offending and includes sections on:

- Understanding the importance of identity
- Helping children develop their pro-social identity
- Tools to help you work constructively

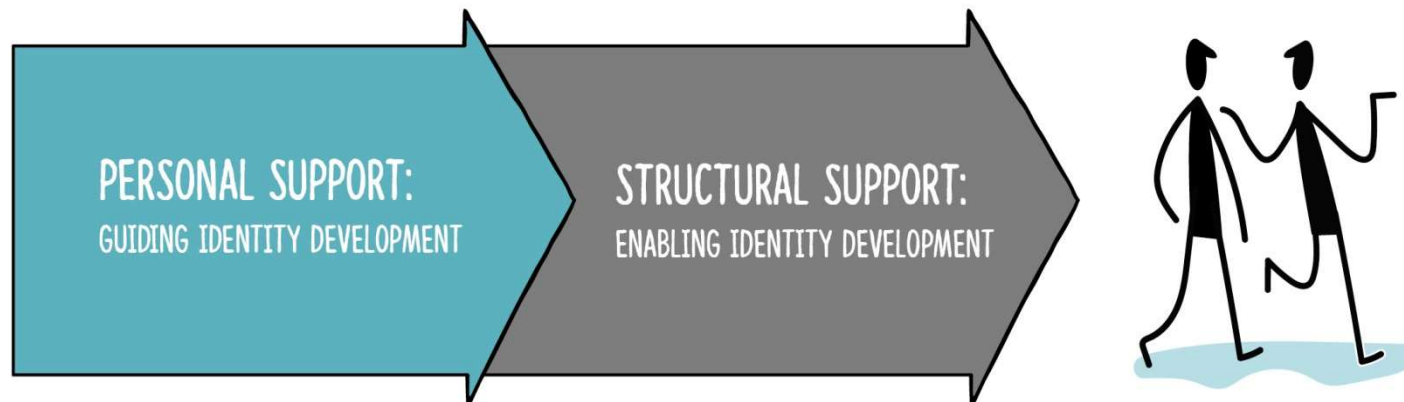


Helping children develop their pro-social identity

Framework for Constructive Working



Constructive casework to structure support includes two different types of help for the child:



Five principles (“5Cs”) for how services can support a shift in identity:

1. Constructive:

The overall objective of the diversion support should be to help the child develop their identity, and agencies should consider the purpose of all intervention in relation to that objective. The support should look to the future, rather than focusing on past behaviour in a way that risks underlining the pro-offending identity.

Five principles (“5Cs”) for how services can support a shift in identity:

2. Co-created:

A child’s identity is personal to them, and can only be developed by them, so it’s crucial that they are involved with any planning. Such co-creation will also help ensure that the child considers the support as relevant to their needs and future, and so is more likely to engage with it.

Five principles (“5Cs”) for how services can support a shift in identity:

3. Customised:

As every child’s identity and personal development journey is unique, their diversionary plan and support needs to be individualised. Children should not be fitted to generic interventions.

Five principles (“5Cs”) for how services can support a shift in identity:

4. Consistent:

Understanding and developing the child’s identity should be the focus of all those involved from the start, including YOT agencies, panel members and police officers, who all need to use an identity lens to both look for identity clues and be aware of how their own interactions with the child can underline or undermine pro-social identity development.

Five principles (“5Cs”) for how services can support a shift in identity:

5. Coordinated:

In order to achieve consistency in messages to the child, it is important for the support to be managed. Building the route to a pro-social self for the child is likely to involve a number of agencies so work should start early to broker support. Making those agencies aware of who the child wants to be and the constructive developmental journey they are on (rather than focusing on the behaviour/risks to manage) can help engage that support.

There are two aspects to being identity aware:

1. Being aware of the **messages that the child is giving you** about their identity.
2. Be aware of the **messages you are giving the child** about their identity – about themselves and their place in the world.



What are the building blocks for developing a pro-social identity?



ACTIVITIES



INTERACTIONS



ROLES

Working through an identity lens: Medway Youth Offending Team

Since May 2018, Medway YOT has adopted an approach aimed at supporting the identity disruption and shift principles. In every case, both in and out of court, exercises are completed around three identity-themed questions with the child within the first six weeks.

1. Who am I?
2. Who do I want to be?
3. What does my journey look like to get there?

To address the last question, plans are co-created with the child to explore how they will get to their future goals. The first two questions use identity hooks, such as thinking about heroes or how they think other people view them to form their constructive plan. This plan is revisited and added to throughout supervision.

Working through an identity lens: Medway Youth Offending Team

Staff use the Asset Plus Pathways and Planning module/Additional External controls section to record professional multi agency actions to address safeguarding and potential risk related issues.

Separating the young person's plan from the practitioner's plan has been important in enabling staff to feel they have the space for creativity and freedom when completing the young person's plan.

Notable changes in Medway's work since this approach was embedded include more meaningful engagement and creativity from both children and staff.

Working constructively at each stage of the process

Assessing with the child

- It's important that assessments and reports to the court or panel support in the objective of helping the child develop a pro-social identity.
- When outlining the offence, the reports should try to understand what it was about the child's identity, or disruption to it, that allowed the offending.

Writing reports and intervention plans with the child

- In order to aid professional partnership working and co-ordination, reports need to be explicitly framed in relation to identity.
- The plan should be co-created with the child, so that they see it as relevant to their future.

We have developed six exercises, exploring two main themes:

1. Self-examination through an autobiographical lens

- What are the important events in your life (both good and bad)?
- Who has been an important influence?
- What lessons do we draw from those experiences?

2. Narrative as a frame of reference

- What is the story you tell others about where you come from and where you are going?

The overall objective of these exercises is to aid practitioners explore and develop the child's identity, both self-biographically and framed in a wider narrative.

Tools: Evaluation checklists

HOW DOES THE SUPPORT IDENTIFY AND BUILD ON THE STRENGTHS OF THE CHILD?

HOW ARE ACTIVITIES, ROLES AND INTERACTIONS FACILITATING AND SUPPORTING IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT?

HOW DOES THE SUPPORT EMPOWER THE CHILD TO BE ABLE TO MAKE POSITIVE CHOICES?

HOW DOES THE SUPPORT GUIDE AND ENABLE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT?

HOW ARE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR THE CHILD TARGETED AND MEASURED?

HOW IS THE SUPPORT ORIENTED TOWARDS THE FUTURE, RATHER THAN JUST THE PRESENT/PAST?

HOW DOES THE SUPPORT MOTIVATE AND PREPARE THE CHILD FOR POSITIVE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT?

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Thank you

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