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| Family Engagement Strategy  Medway Secure Training Centre |
| September 2018 |

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**Version Control Page**

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**Introduction**

Medway Secure Training Centre is committed to the fostering of good family relationships and the maintenance of existing relationships, in order to aid the resettlement of the young people in our care. Medway Secure Training Centre aims to provide a framework that enables positive outcomes and interactions for families with a close family member in our custody. The impact of any custodial sentence is not only felt on the family member but also on the family and friends of the young person in custody.

At Medway Secure Training Centre, due to the dynamics of the population “families” at times are also extended to the young person’s support network as part of their resettlement plans.

Families play a vital contribution to the successful reintegration of young people back into their communities. Problems arising for individuals in the area of children and families are often complex and inter-related. Therefore it is important that we maintain and develop family relationships and community support to help young offenders reduce their likelihood of reoffending. By providing support, encouragement and guidance, offenders can be successfully reintegrated back into society on their release from custody.

**Why focus on Children and Families?**

Supportive families are a great resource for those in custody and they often play a vital role in helping an individual move away from crime. A supportive family can also provide effective protective factors for prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm. Having a stable family to return to on release, can also encourage young offenders to engage in sentence planning interventions and maintain positive behaviour whilst in custody

Research on desistance from crime, also suggests that positive family ties can have an encouraging effect on the rehabilitation of offenders. Prisoners who had not received visits whilst in prison were 39% more likely to re-offend, compared to those prisoners who had received visits from family members (Action for Prisoners Families).

### Safeguarding

In a small number of cases maintaining family ties may not be appropriate, possibly due to the risk of harm that a young person poses to the family or vice-versa. Safeguarding children and supporting victims should always be a priority in the work at Medway Secure Training Centre supported by partners such as local Youth Offending Teams, National Probation Service and Social Services.

**Medway Secure Training Centre’s Resettlement Pathways and our commitment to young people’s families.**

### Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour

To provide accredited programmes to help young people to understand their offending and provide them with tools to help them avoid re-offending in the future.

Current accredited programmes include

**Starving the Anger Gremlin (STAG)** – Develops anger awareness and management skills.

**A to Z** – Develops motivation to enable engagement and readiness to change.

**Short Term Offender Programme (STOP)** – Raises awareness of impact of offending on self and others, whilst encouraging alternative behaviour.

**JETS** – Develops thinking skills i.e. problem solving, self-control and values.

**ACCESS** – Develops problem solving to increase coping, self-esteem and communication with others.

**ART** – Aggression Replacement Training – Emotion management, social skills and values.

**Life Minus Violence – Enhanced** – Reduces risk of aggression and build upon strengths

Current non accredited work being delivered is Most Valuable Player (MVP) which is an innovative gang intervention project written and designed for young people in custody to challenge and reduce contemporary gang related behaviours.

### Children and families

Families and community support systems play a crucial role in the successful resettlement of young people. We will work closely with community agencies to support families of young people placed at the Centre and involve them throughout the young person’s time at the Centre.

On admission, caseworkers will make contact with the young person’s parents/carers to provide information and reassurance and to involve them in the planning for the young person. Throughout the young person’s stay at the Centre staff will maintain regular contact with their parents/carers to ensure they receive timely information.

An information leaflet will be sent to every parent/carer of a Young Person placed at the Centre. Information provided will include guidance on booking visits and assistance available for travel costs.

We will encourage families to visit the Centre and spend quality time with their children. In order to help improve their understanding of the environment in which their children live, parents will be encouraged to visit residential units and to see their children’s bedrooms. We will also run family days, where families can spend longer periods of time in a more relaxed setting with their children. We are looking to extend these events and include opportunities for parents/carers to meet with teachers within our education environments and gain a better understanding of their child’s education within the centre, where they are achieving and what support is being offered to help ensure that young people progress towards recognised qualifications.

The Centre shall support young people who are parents in maintaining contact with their children, which shall include use of temporary release, where appropriate. Sentence and resettlement plan objectives shall include interventions to develop parenting and independent living skills, which will be provided in appropriate circumstances.

Parents/carers of young people placed at Medway Secure Training Centre will be invited to engage in a “Parent Panel” which will be established with the aim of giving then a voice in how Medway STC engages with young people in our care and the services offered. Members of the Parent Panel will be asked for input and ideas around a range of initiatives and encouraged to share their views through questionnaires, informal meetings and group discussions.

The use of modern communication should be considered to help reduce or remove barriers to communication between young people and their families. Medway Secure Training Centre are considering the use of email to enhance communication between parents/carers and their children. Once established, parents/carers will be able to send emails to an agreed establishment functional mailbox, so long as the email address they are sending it from is the agreed, recorded address as per the Centre’s contacts and communication policy

The use of video conferencing facilities are also being considered which could help families who would have to travel a long distances to attend a social visit.

Young people at Medway STC who have family members at other secure establishments (Prisons, YOI’s or other STC/SCH) are able to have contact via telephone, so long as this contact is authorised by the relevant authority (Social Services or YOT).

**Accommodation**

Young people who are LAC (Looked After Children) or other young people who upon release, are being placed into accommodation they are unfamiliar with, we will look to offer opportunities for those young people to visit their release accommodation prior to discharge. Cases will be assessed on individual basis and risk assessments will determine how these visits are conducted (i.e. via temporary release, accompanied absence or special purpose licences).

Lack of appropriate accommodation upon release is a national problem for people coming out of custodial environments and this is especially difficult for young people who are care leavers or approaching 18 years of age. Medway Secure Training Centre will continue to escalate cases where young people do not have details of release accommodation at the point of the final review a month before release and work with partner agencies such as The Children’s Commissioner to ensure the rights of young people in care are adhered to.

**Finance, Benefit and Debt**

Finance should not be a barrier to families visiting Medway Secure Training Centre. Where appropriate we will offer families financial support in the form of Travel Warrants to enable them to visit close family members within our care.

We aim to support young people to be able to access setting up bank accounts in their name and will look to use Temporary Release to enable young people who are eligible to set up access to benefits upon release.

**Drugs and Alcohol**

Central and North West London (CNWL) NHS Trust are co commissioned by Offender Health and NHS England to deliver services for young people with a history of, and with current substance misuse problems. The service aims to provide an environment where recovery can be achieved. The cycle of recovery is often a difficult one and relapse can be a feature, the involvement of family you can positively support, challenge and promote recovery.

**Mental and physical health**

The healthcare provision at Medway Secure Training Centre is provided by the Central and North West London (CNWL) NHS Trust**.** Young people in our care can expect to receive comparable levels of primary and secondary support and treatment as they would receive in the community. Parents and Carers of young people at Medway STC can speak to healthcare providers and discuss individual care needs and any concerns about a young person’s health or treatment. Members of the Healthcare team will also attend sentence/remand planning meetings and give up to date information about treatment or ongoing care they are providing.

The same trust also provides services that work with young people with mental health problems, supporting them towards improved mental health where possible.

**Education, Training and Employment**

**NACRO** provide young people at Medway Secure Training Centre with the opportunity to obtain qualifications in a variety of academic and Vocational subjects.

Parents and Carers can expect to receive feedback about how their child is doing in education, what qualifications they are working towards and what levels they are working at in terms of literacy and numeracy. This feedback is provided at the regular sentence/remand planning meetings at which parents/carers are welcome and encouraged to attend. NACRO will be providing more formal feedback in the form of regular reports about a child’s progress in education which will be sent to parents and carers directly.

Learning at Medway Secure Training Centre can be enhanced by educational trips and Medway STC has already competed a number of excursions where young people have been able to experience activities that improve their learning and confidence. In the future we are looking to invite parents and families to attend some of these trips so that a child’s learning can be a shared experience.