

The Life of a Persistent Young Offender

Families

Developed by Garner Clancey



Research (and experience) tells us that young people who are persistent offenders, will, in most instances, have grown up in difficult environments. Increasingly, there is evidence to suggest that the impact in the very earliest moments of our lives can have a dramatic impact upon our future. Pre-natal maternal drug use, early exposure to violence, erratic and inconsistent parenting are frequent experiences of persistent young offenders.

In trying to tackle the criminogenic factors in the lives of persistent young offenders, it will be important to understand the impact of the family on the young person.

The following provides some excerpts taken from various books (criminological or sociological texts) about offenders. These excerpts have been taken to demonstrate the childhood experiences of people who have later become offenders. Read the excerpts and then answer the questions below.

“My mother was fifteen and a half, my dad was sixteen when I was born... My father used to abuse my mother physically”

“Dad’s very hard, strict in rule, very strict, a man of few words”

“He used to come home from work drunk and bash Mum for many, many years. One day Mum got her own back; when he was drunk, bashed him and kicked him and threw him out... I was four or five then”

“When I was younger she loved to drink... I’ve looked after Mum when she’s been drunk and vomited in her bed. I don’t know how old I was, could have been nine... but I picked her up and put her in the bath, undressed her, dressed and changed the sheets”

“I got belted; I’d get two or three beltings a week with the strap. You know the strap that barbers used? That was the razor strap. It had the silver hook on the end... Sometimes I’d cop that end of it”

References:

Marshall, P. (2002) *Scarred for Life: the true story of a self harmer*

Korn, N. (2004) *Life Behind Bars: Conversations with Australian Inmates*

Bourgois, P. (1995) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*

Questions:

- How would you describe these parenting styles?
- What impact might the above experiences have on a young person?
- How does the family relate to other people in the neighbourhood?
- How might these experiences contribute to later offending behaviour of the young person?