

## Work with young offenders

The North Yorkshire County Record Office worked with the HM Young Offenders Institution, in Northallerton, to educate young offenders about the lives of offenders in the past, with the goal of minimising their chances of re-offending.

Fifteen young people took part in Changes in Society and got to research the histories of young offenders from the region. The Record Office guided the research as the institute's internet access was restricted.

The original 1890s police charge book, with its photographs of young offenders, was taken from the archive to the Young Offenders Institution to inspire staff to take part.

The young offenders' research was used to create a presentation which they gave themselves to an invited audience. An exhibition was also developed which is touring the region throughout 2009 and continues to inspire those who see it.

### Trial re-enactment

One particularly compelling story was that of Sophia Constable, an 11-year old girl from Whitby, who was put on trial for stealing. The young offenders researched her case, and their evidence led to a re-enactment of her trial, in Middlesbrough, which was held as part of 2009's International Youth Justice Year.

The Magistrates' Court in Northallerton are now planning a similar event on Saturday 24th October, 2009 – following Sophia's trial with a modern day trial re-enactment of a young offender, to highlight the contrasts in handling and sentencing over the ages.

In addition to the improved research and practical skills developed through putting together their own exhibition, the young offenders reported an increase in their confidence.

One named Karl said, "What I learnt out of this project was the confidence to learn to speak to other people."

Another participant, Shane, said, "I feel excited. I feel relieved that I achieved this. I feel good in myself."

### Formal qualifications

Spending time talking through the project with the Young Offenders Institution paid off for the Record Office. They were also able to produce a DVD which provides compelling evidence of the positive outcomes for the young offenders.

Keith Sweetmore of the Record Office said: "Securing £10,000 for the MLA and BIG Lottery fund for Their Past Your Future was also instrumental in the success of Changes in Society and allowed us to step beyond our day to day activities to implement the project."

What began as an interesting history project is now linked to an accreditation scheme within the institution itself and City College Manchester, which enables offenders to gain a formal qualification through their participation. Education packs for use in other prisons have also been developed.

For more information on this case study, visit the case study section on the [MLA research website](#).

## Changes in Society

The project was designed to show the ways that archives can be made relevant to people in a wide variety of contexts and how archives can be a vehicle for education, skills development and confidence building. Originally it began as a history project but it

developed into a wider skills building project which is linked to an accreditation within the institution itself and City College Manchester.

A presentation within the prison was one of the products of the project.

## Target Audience

Young Offenders themselves, they were really the project deliverers, but then also local politicians, civic groups and the wider public. Presentations were held over two days by the participants.

A wider audience is now viewing the exhibition as it tours the region.

This had led to all kinds of spin offs by interested viewers, for example, 2009 is International Youth Justice Year. The work has already been used in displays in Middlesborough (Youth Justice 100 which included a re-enactment of trial from history, a case of Sophia Constable on the My Learning website, an 11 year old girl from Whitby was in front of the court and magistrate for stealing in an image of Sophia in the Police Charge book dated from the 1890s.) and the Magistrates Court in Northallerton are planning a similar event in October - a re-enactment of the trial of Sophia followed by a modern day trial of a young offender highlights the contrasts in handling and sentencing over the ages.

## Aim

To work with archives and exploit the interest in some of the documents, such as the police charge book and to support education work with young offenders.

The archive had not expected the way the work would also more broadly improve the young offenders skills and confidence.

## Process

Key was the offer of funding from TPYF (BIG Lottery and MLA), as no budget was allocated from the core funding from the record office; all projects of this kind has to come from external project funding.

Broad association with conflict, intergenerational, and innovative.

Developed into a proposal for the Young Offenders Institute (YOI). Took along the original charge book this one time to a meeting, to show the original photographs along with the notion to win £10,000 to do something different. Enthusiastic, and especially by one part member of staff - April who was willing to do what it takes to make it happen.

The institutional barriers can be off-putting but April was prepared to get behind the idea, surmounting and working with the barriers, such as security, to ensure that the project was possible within the constraints.

Managed to obtain agreement to film a dvd in the prison, but this required a lot of negotiation as well as limitations to what could be shown on the dvd. Access also had to be patiently worked out from both sides.

In developing the proposal the Record Office went with a concept but also an open mind. Already had contact with the North Yorkshire County Library Service which had a mechanism with the YOI and their onsite library which is provide by the county library service.

There is no internet access for offenders within the prison. This meant various issues had to be worked around with regard to research online through the archive website. Physical copies of the archive documents had to be made for the prisoner. Self-directed research was limited because of this. Requests for more research had to be done by archive staff themselves. Staff had to access resources for them. Funding for the project enabled this.

## **Number of participants**

15 Young People, 8 for the duration of the project

70 people attended the by invitation presentation events in the prison

No precise monitoring but estimate that more than 5,000 have had the opportunity to view the exhibition in its 14 venues

The exhibition started travelling in August 2008 and will complete touring in 2009

## **Impact and outcome**

Production of education packs for use in other prisons

For the young people, the dvd provides compelling evidence:

Karl said that 'What I learnt out of this project was the confidence to learn to speak to other people'

Shane said 'I feel excited. I feel relieved that I achieved this. I feel good in myself.'

There was a genuinely positive response.

## **Evaluation**

The dvd provides compelling positive evidence that the project was of value. But, of course we do not know what has happened to the young people now - this is a difficulty.

## **Tips**

Be prepared to take the time to thoroughly negotiate what is required.

## **Future development**

Like to do more on the back of this project. the more people see it the more feedback and suggestions are being received. Capacity to continue is really down to a sustained funding stream. Ideally the record office would like to work with the prison again, now that the relationship is established and patterns of working have been set up.

## **Project website:**

[www.mylearning.org](http://www.mylearning.org)

## **MLA funded:**

Yes

## **Institution:**

North Yorkshire County Record Office

**Key partners:**

North Yorkshire County Record Office  
HM Young Offenders Institution North Allerton  
County Library Service  
Green Howards Regimental Museum, Richmond  
plus other links to City College Manchester

**Team members:**

Ruth Rising  
James Towe from the archive  
April Stephenson From YOI  
Keith Sweetmore

**Start date:**

2007

**End date:**

July 2009

**Contact:**

[Keith Sweetmore](#)  
North Yorkshire County Record Office  
01609 535123

**Work packages:**

Learning And Skills

**Domains:**

Museums  
Libraries  
Archives

**Sector developing role:**

Partnerships

**Social groups:**

Children and young people  
Prisoners and ex-offenders

**Social outcomes:**

Positive outcomes for vulnerable groups  
Community empowerment & active citizenship  
Learning & skills

**Geographical Coverage:**

(Yorkshire and the Humber) North Yorkshire

Yorkshire and the Humber