



THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

# The Duke of Edinburgh's Award: Making a difference with young people in custody – Executive Summary

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# Foreword

Contrary to the perception that some sectors of our society wish to convey about the secure estate, there is some very good work going on. Indeed, there are one or two programmes that, if given the right acknowledgement and encouragement, could become surprisingly successful. This report, which draws on the direct experiences of young people and staff in the secure estate participating in, or running, DofE programmes, speaks strongly to a sense of achievement, positive change and hope for the future. In this alone, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award makes a significant impact.

DofE programmes are, and always have been, open to all young people between the ages of 14 and 24, whatever their background or circumstances, including some of our most vulnerable young people. There are many qualities that doing a DofE programme instils, but perhaps most important for young people within the secure estate is building a sense of self-worth and being acknowledged for what they're capable of rather than for what they are not. For this to work the role of the staff member or DofE Leader is absolutely crucial.

In thanking all those who contributed to this report, I particularly want to express my gratitude to all the members of staff throughout the secure estate and Probation and YOT Service who help to deliver DofE programmes and for all that they do for the DofE participants. It is your effort which has demonstrated that doing their DofE can build skills and capacities in young people who have hitherto achieved little and can contribute towards the essential resilience that is needed for our young people to lead better lives. I sincerely hope many more will be inspired to follow your example.

**HRH The Earl of Wessex KG KCVO**  
Trustee, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award

## Acknowledgements

The DofE would like to thank Dr Chai Patel's family charitable foundation, Bright Future Trust, for the generous support of this research project and the DofE's work with young offenders (the Aspire project). We are also pleased to acknowledge the consistent support of the John Laing Charitable Trust, The Kirby Laing Foundation and Glen Care Group for the Aspire project.

The research team would like to thank the following organisations/individuals. This study would not have been possible without the support of the Youth Justice Board who acted as gatekeeper to the research, participating institutions in the secure estate, their staff delivering The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (the DofE), young people in the secure estate doing their DofE and Youth Offending Teams who completed questionnaires and/or were interviewed as part of the study.

To these organisations and individuals we are very grateful. We also acknowledge gratefully the support of Sarah Hadley, Youth Justice Project Officer for the DofE, who negotiated and eased our access into secure estate institutions, and who was a constant source of invaluable knowledge and information about the DofE and the secure estate.

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*"It was just so rewarding to see those kids out in that environment... that was completely different, you know going past fields of cows and them getting excited because they'd seen fields of cows and they'd seen sheep and they thought they were on a safari and it was truly brilliant... it was brilliant to watch them go off and not panic thinking that they were looking to run away."*

(Staff member)

# Executive Summary and Recommendations

The report sets out key findings and recommendations from an appraisal of the impact of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (the DofE) in the secure estate, carried out by a team of researchers from Glyndŵr and Cardiff Universities. The study, commissioned by the DofE, set out to examine delivery and organisation of the DofE in the secure estate and explore implications for young offenders and staff providing DofE programmes.

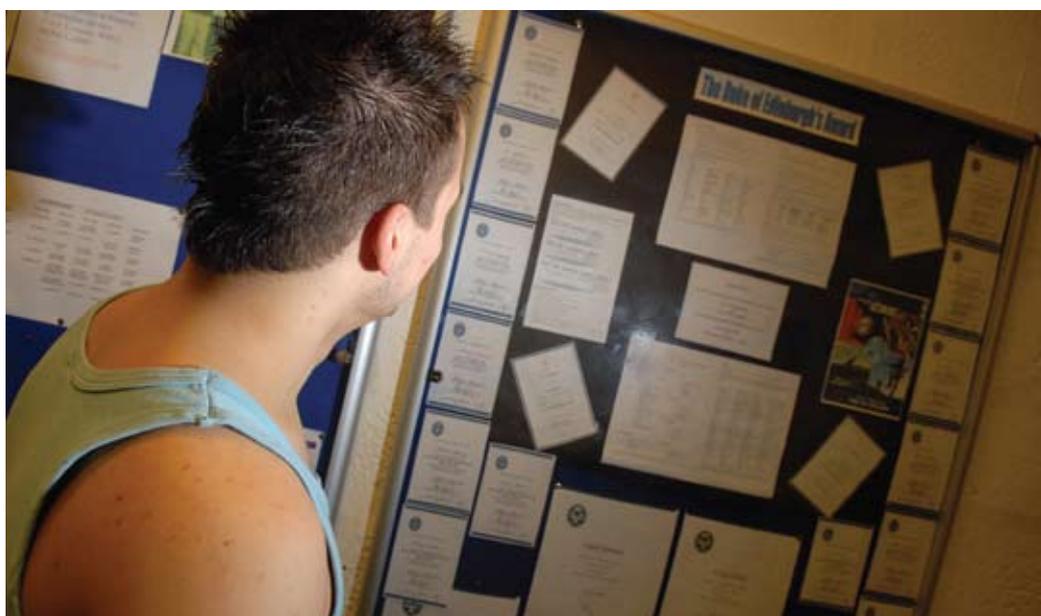
## Study design

The study used a longitudinal mixed-method but mainly qualitative research design. A purposive sample of seven secure estate establishments in England and Wales were visited on two separate research phases in 2008, with an intervening period of six months. These phases comprised pre and post participation in DofE activities by young people in custody.

At each phase, focus groups were carried out in the establishments with young people engaged in DofE activities who also completed an offending behaviour instrument (CRIME-PICS II) which aimed to identify any changes in attitudes towards crime. Some 110 CRIME-PICS schedules were completed by young people across both phases.

At phase one of the study, interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of secure estate staff with operational responsibilities for planning and delivering DofE programmes in all establishments visited. Brief follow up interviews were conducted with selected staff at stage two.

In addition, an online survey was sent to all Youth Offending Team managers in England and Wales, and interviews were held with a small sample of YOT staff delivering DofE programmes.



*"The reason why I do this course and want to finish it is that it might give me a chance when I'm released."*

(DofE participant)



## Findings

Findings from the study suggest that doing their DofE has a positive impact upon the experiences of young people in the secure estate, and may improve their chances for a brighter future and increase their resilience and resistance towards re-offending.

The CRIME-PICS II analysis indicated that after engaging in DofE activities young people in this study demonstrated a more positive attitude in relation to:

- offending in general
- higher levels of victim empathy
- less perceived reward for crime
- reduced anticipation of re-offending
- perceived fewer life problems in future.

The CRIME-PICS findings were supported by data from the young people's focus groups and from interviews with staff delivering DofE programmes in the participating secure estate establishments.

A key benefit of doing a DofE programme highlighted in interviews and focus groups resonates with the ethos of restorative justice, which encourages acknowledgement of the impact of any harm inflicted and provides opportunities to make reparation.

The findings from this study illustrate how through doing their DofE young people learnt new skills and worked in ways which encouraged the development of maturity and empathy, and which underpinned their often stated wish to 'make right' and 'give something' back to the community.

The findings also suggest that their DofE fostered realisation of an alternative and attainable way of life other than crime, among young people in the secure estate.

The study revealed that knowledge of these alternative life possibilities and the acquisition of skills and experiences for their realisation, via a DofE programme, may increase their resilience and resistance to crime amongst young offenders and improve their prospects for a brighter future.

It is acknowledged that the findings of the study are based on a small purposive sample of secure estate establishments in England and Wales, and YOTs. While recognising that the organisation of secure estate establishments in Scotland and Northern Ireland may differ in some respects to England and Wales, it was deemed that the sample accommodated sufficient diversity in order for many aspects of the study findings to be relevant to DofE delivery in the wider UK secure estate context.

The sample did not include young women's secure estate establishments and it is recommended that further research might usefully examine how the DofE is implemented within this field.

We also recognise that while CRIME-PICS II has been used successfully with young offenders, it is not without its problems (CRG, 2003): notably loss of participants at follow-up (CRG, 2003) and controlling for other variables which might affect outcome scores (Rex et al., 2004). Notwithstanding these caveats, there was considerable consistency in the findings between the different data sets (CRIME-PICS II, focus groups, interviews, survey) which lends robustness to the study's key messages and recommendations.



*"We must have gone around that field 50 times, we were proper trekking we were."*

(DofE participant on doing laps for charity inside the prison grounds)



## Key messages and recommendations

**1** The DofE has a positive impact upon the experiences of young people in the secure estate. It is perceived by those who deliver and receive DofE programmes as improving technical and life skills and offering the possibility of attainable alternative ways of life. In short, it helps offer young people a 'second chance' and improves the likelihood of a brighter future.

### Recommendation:

**That the breadth of DofE delivery is expanded to include all establishments across the secure estate.**

**2** The success of implementation in the secure estate is dependent upon championship of DofE programmes at the highest level. Its success depends upon senior managerial support, staff knowledge about the DofE, and shared commitment to delivery top to bottom.

Findings suggest that while there is significant knowledge about, and enthusiasm for, the DofE in the secure estate, this is often confined to discrete pockets within establishments and linked closely to those with hands-on responsibility for delivering DofE programmes.

### Recommendation:

**That establishment heads, managers and operational staff in the secure estate are targeted with information about the positive impact of the DofE on young people in custody and that information and training sessions are tailored to their requirements.**

**3** Delivery of DofE programmes in secure estate establishments is most effective where it is not confined wholly to one department of the institution but is more widely integrated across the whole establishment. Where this is the case, DofE activities can be seen to dovetail with other existing establishment activities and programmes, harnessing a broader spectrum of expertise and spreading the responsibility for delivery over a wider staff group.

In addition, integrated delivery means that DofE activities need not necessarily be constrained to narrow designated time periods in the operational day.

### Recommendation:

**That a model of optimum delivery regarding organisation and implementation of DofE programmes is offered to secure estate establishments.**



*"We're learning all the time as well aren't we? And just building up our relationship with the kids as well which makes our other classes a lot easier... I think the kids then start looking up to us then, not as father figures I don't think, but as, well, maybe, role models. So our classes then, we've got the easiest jobs in the world you know, honest to God."*

(Staff member and DofE Leader)

*"I think people want to get involved in it, because in here a little thing is a huge thing. This is massive, you can end up in trouble for the smallest thing, so when you get something good like this you try and do your best and hang on to it."*  
(DofE participant)



**4** For staff running DofE programmes in the secure estate, programme responsibility is frequently an 'add on' to their routine work. Many reported working on DofE activities out of hours and providing unpaid input.

Effective provision of DofE programmes in the secure estate seems in some instances to rely overly on the goodwill and commitment of staff. Because staff input is often voluntary, DofE programmes are sometimes seen as a marginal entity by the wider staff group. This can negatively affect institutional attitudes to the DofE and to staff delivering its programmes.

**Recommendation:**  
That the DofE seeks a more integrated and more widely recognised position in the secure estate infrastructure in order that its programmes become more mainstreamed rather than peripheral and reliant on the goodwill of volunteer staff.

**5** The majority of young people participating in the study had no formal educational qualifications, and many had problems with literacy. Most were wary of formal education, traditional teaching and learning approaches. Hence, the DofE was valued by staff and young people for its 'hands on' approach to skills and knowledge acquisition. In some cases doing their DofE was described as a 'back door' way in which the young people learnt basic educational skills of reading and writing. The findings suggest that benefits of the 'hands on' learning style associated with the programme may find wider application outside the secure estate among low educational achievers who reject traditional teaching and learning methods.

**Recommendation:**  
That aspects of DofE programmes which may be particularly relevant to engage marginalised/disadvantaged young people disconnected from mainstream education are identified as part of a strategy to protect young people who may find themselves on the cusp of offending.

**6** Many young people in focus groups acknowledged a sense of spoiled identity as a consequence of being in custody and having a criminal record. Related to this they expressed fears about how the stigma of their criminal past would affect their life-chances upon release, particularly in regard to employment.

In this context, doing a DofE programme was seen by many as a way of gaining new skills and experiences, equipping them for an alternative future (other than crime) and helping repair discredited identities. Role models and success stories about young offenders who had achieved a Duke of Edinburgh's Award and had secured employment after release were a powerful source of hope and encouragement in this respect.

**Recommendation:**

**That the DofE work with the Youth Justice Board and Youth Offending Teams to devise, share and maintain record-keeping systems of young people's outcomes which can, amongst other things, be used as a resource for success stories and role model support.**



*"I was chosen out of 300 candidates. It was a big trusted job (peer support mentor)... you got more respect, you could speak to staff, be more mature and they would listen to you."*

(DofE participant)

**7** The ethos of restorative justice, which can be seen in the DofE's Volunteering section, was evident in the importance which many young offenders doing their DofE programme in the secure estate attached to 'giving something back to the community'.

**Recommendation:**

**That the DofE work with the Youth Justice Board, secure estate establishments and community organisations to explore mechanisms to promote more opportunities for young people in the secure estate to undertake volunteering as part of their DofE.**

**8** Risk is a critical factor in delivery of DofE programmes in regard to the institution, staff, to the young people themselves and to the wider community. Strategies for risk management employed by secure estate establishments inevitably impacts on aspects of DofE delivery.

This is most evident in the case of the Expedition section of DofE programmes. Only young people eligible for Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) can complete the external Expedition section of their programme.

**Recommendation:**

**That the DofE works closely with secure estate establishments and the Youth Justice Board to help initiate and streamline procedures for reviewing applications for young people resident in the secure estate wishing to complete their Expedition section, in order to optimise opportunities for participation in light of acceptable risk.**

*“Their lifestyles have been drink, drugs, stealing, fighting... the concept of doing something for somebody else is totally alien to some of them. That’s the kind of barriers we have to break down here, but that’s no different to kids on the out really, in the outside world.”*

(Staff member and DofE Leader)

**9** Provision of DofE programmes in the secure estate demands an innovative and flexible approach to delivery. The study found many examples of this, including (for those not eligible for ROTL) the provision of the expedition experience within the perimeter of secure estate establishments. Better information-sharing about innovative delivery where things work well may help some secure estate establishments overcome internal constraints to delivery which they currently experience.

**Recommendation:**

**That mechanisms be developed to widen facilitation of DofE models of good practice and new innovations to secure estate establishments.**

**10** Institutional constraints within the secure estate include the limited window of DofE programme exposure which is afforded to inmates, as a function of, for example, length of sentence and movement of young people between institutions. The findings suggest that successful completion of discrete sections of their DofE is important for young people’s esteem and future aspirations. Linked to this is the importance of providing opportunities for young people to achieve their Award(s) at the institution to which they are moved, or upon release to YOTs. The findings suggest that continuity of involvement in DofE activity is hampered through limited contact across the secure estate by staff delivering DofE programmes, little contact between secure estate staff and the YOTs, and inadequate systems for recording young people’s DofE participation across Criminal Justice Services.

**Recommendation:**

**That, in order to promote a more seamless delivery of DofE programmes within the secure estate and between the secure state and YOTs, the DofE work closely with the YJB which is currently ‘wiring-up’ its information sharing systems in order to facilitate a more holistic understanding of needs, provision and outcomes at the interface of youth justice and other service systems.**

**11** A significant problem highlighted by YOTs delivering DofE programmes is staff resource, particularly where there is no dedicated DofE worker in the YOT. Limited staff knowledge, expertise and experience of the DofE were also perceived as barriers to the development of DofE programmes by YOTs.

**Recommendation:**

**That the DofE work closely with YOTs to provide the necessary information, training and support to YOT workers.**

**12** Variations were evident in the level of knowledge about, access to, engagement with and style of delivery of DofE programmes across secure estate establishments and across YOTs. Currently, there appears to be limited opportunities for institutional sharing of knowledge, expertise, and innovation by those delivering DofE programmes in Criminal Justice Services.

**Recommendation:**

**That consideration is given to a DofE knowledge-transfer and training resource within criminal justice services co-ordinated by the DofE.**

**Further information**

For further details and a copy of the full report please contact:

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