



Using Video Messaging across the Criminal Justice System

Held on
Wednesday 21st May 2008

Conference Report

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1. A Description of the Three Year Project

What is Video Messaging?

Video messaging is the technique of recording personal messages, accounts, stories, apologies, experiences or feelings by and to interested parties on DVD.

Background to Film It's Video Messaging Practice

Three years ago Film It was awarded a grant by the DCSF to look at ways of improving contact whilst a family member is incarcerated. The project worked with women in prison and young offenders.

Year 1 the project took place at HMP Bullwood Hall (female but now rerolled to house male foreign nationals). The women made toys and games and wrote bedtime stories which they then recorded onto DVD with personal messages of love for their children and families on the outside. Film It took these 'story sacks' to the families and they recorded a message back. The project was a powerful, emotional and bonding experience for all parties.

Year 2 women from the year 1 project felt that certain times of year were harder than others for women to be separated from their families. These occasions were religious festivals, birthdays and mothers day. Film It decided to take the most generic of those occasions to run a project at HMP Holloway. Christmas Wishes was aimed at helping women in HMP Holloway and their families stay in touch through the December holiday period. Video messaging was used to rehearse a pantomime; mothers inside made DVDs for their children at home, telling them what they needed to rehearse. The children watched their DVDs and then recorded themselves so their mothers could see how they were getting on. In this way they rehearsed. Just after Christmas the prison allowed the families in to perform the pantomime to an invited audience. The project relieved the pain of separation over the Christmas period and as a result there were fewer incidents of self harm within the core group during the time the project was running.

Year 3 took place at HMYOI Hindley, working with young men- possibly the most difficult group to manage. The focus was on practical work, which meant big cameras, instant results and hands on practical work and as a result enthusiasm and commitment was high. The young men made 'boxes of hope' and recorded messages for their families outside. The messages that the families recorded back were extremely strong; one mother used her message to speak at length to her son about the impact his offending had had on the family.

As a result of the success of the project, Film It was awarded a further grant by the DCSF to oversee the training of 900 practitioners in the criminal justice system on the use of video messaging.

2. Independent Evaluation and Summary

Independent evaluation was conducted by Dr. Anita Wilson. It has found that video messaging:

- Achieved its aims through succeeding in gaining access to families and offenders, in the exchange of video messages between parents and children, in the up-skilling of participants in film and creative endeavour, and in encouraging team work between the prison, the prisoners, their families and friends
 - Participants with 'good to excellent' **computer skills** rose **63%**
 - **Research skills** that were 'good to excellent' rose **69%**
 - **Ability to listen** that was 'good to excellent' rose **42%**
 - **Musical, camera and artistic abilities** rose significantly
- Successful interventions such as this can make a significant difference to the way that families can continue to support each other when faced with issues of incarceration
- Successful interventions such as this should be embedded within core prison business
- Fulfils NOMs Objective 6 (the children and families pathway) by helping people to remain connected to their loved ones. It strengthens the family unit, which often crumbles when a parent or juvenile is sent to prison.
 - Retaining positive links with family can **reduce rates of reoffending** by up to **six times** (Home Office, 2002).
- Helps relieve a prisoner's anxiety about their family thus supporting NOMs pathway 7 (attitudes, thinking and behaviour). It is only when personal issues are addressed and a person's emotional state of mind is reasonably stable that they can change their offending behaviour.
 - **Ability to deal with stress** rose from 20% to **55%**
 - **Capacity to 'have fun'** rose from 67% to **90%**.
- Can relieve the trauma of separation for the 150,000 children affected by the imprisonment of a parent every year. A video message reassures a child that mummy is alright.
- Is especially relevant for those with poor language/literacy levels. The visual nature of video messages makes the resource accessible by all
- Is a permanent record of a moment in time and a record by which people can be held to account at a later date.
- Is a positive and creative medium, with endless possibilities.

To read the full-length report go to **www.film-it.org.uk**

3. Taking the Project Forward

As a result of the prison projects and training, Film It formed partnerships with a number of organisations working in the justice sector. These included prisons, YOIs, secure training centres, youth offending teams, youth inclusion projects, charities and government bodies. Film It offered advice and guidance for practitioners wishing to apply the video messaging method within their own organisation.

There were many calls for video messaging to be more widely used:

- creating visual CVs for people to take to prospective employers to illustrate their skills
- as educational and awareness messages to inform others
- in victim empathy work
- as part of parenting orders
- as part of offender behavior management courses
- in parole hearings
- in panel meetings
- as victim statements for the courts

In response, Film It hosted the first ever national conference on using video messaging across the criminal justice system. The conference was held on 21 May 2008 at Sadler's Wells Theatre in central London.

Conference Aims

- to raise awareness of the value of video messaging as a tool to work with offenders, victims and their families
- to publicise the evaluation of 3 years worth of Film It video messaging practice across the secure estate
- to share examples of good practice/ how to use the method within your own organisation
- to screen Victim Offender Video Messaging pilot project
- to analyse the work and see if there is a need for wider take-up of the method
- to create an action plan to take video messaging further

4. Results of the Conference

It is clear that even at this early stage, the aims of the conference (see above) have been met:

1. Raising awareness of video messaging as a tool

- 90% of attendees say they can see a valuable role for video messaging in their organisations.

2. Sharing examples of good practice

- 18 video messages were screened as examples of good practice. These comprised personal messages from prisoners, prisoners' partners, children, mothers and extended family, young offenders on ISSP, and victims of crime.
- The documentary 'Locked Up Love' was shown, demonstrating how video messaging can help maintain family contact whilst a parent is in prison.
- The documentary 'The Woolf Within' was shown, demonstrating the efficacy of restorative justice: "*proven to reduce reoffending by up to a half*".
- Workshop 1 'Mapping My Offence' was reported by delegates to be "*an invaluable demonstration of video messaging practice and the preparation work supporting it undertaken at Newham Youth Offending Team*". Delegates were shown how this work could be used by other Youth Offending Teams as part of an offender's reparation work.
- Workshop 2 'Locked Up Love' showed delegates how video messages were used to encourage and support good parenting from prison at HMP Bullwood Hall. This was reported to be "*really useful*".
- Workshop 3 'Young Offenders, Parents, Siblings and Victims' shared examples of video messaging practice at HMYOI Hindley. The message given by a mother to her son in prison was said to be "*fantastic*".
- Delegates had opportunities to network and share examples of good practice amongst themselves.

3. Victim/offender pilot project

Staff at HMYOI Hindley ran a pilot project using video messaging in victim/offender work. They worked in partnership with Film It to draw up a good practice guideline, looking at confidentiality, ethics and risk assessments.

Film It worked with Oxfordshire, Newham and Wakefield Youth Offending Teams, and filmed a total of 10 offenders and 6 victims. Victims were given the chance to talk about the impact of the crime. Many had questions they wanted answering: "*would you have attacked Ashley if you had known one blow to the head could cost him his eyesight*" (*Dawn, the mother of a partially sighted teenager who was assaulted*). Others just wanted the offenders to understand what they had done to them. For several of the offenders, seeing the victim's message was an eye-opening

experience: “I never knew it made people feel like that” (Ryan, who had previously committed 60 street robberies). For many it was a chance to apologise.

8 of the messages were screened at the conference.

4. Panel discussion

- John Podmore, from the Department of Health gave an overview of the policies and strategies that support offender management from the government perspective and chaired questions and comments from the floor.
- Harry Dunne, Resettlement Governor at HMYOI Hindley spoke of the usefulness of video messaging in the prison context. He mentioned the difficulty of getting victims to attend parole hearings, and his hope for video messaging to be available as an alternative to victims who are unwilling to come to the prison.
- Representatives from each workshop reported back to the conference on what were thought to be the benefits and challenges of implementing video messaging.

List of Attendees

There were almost 100 specialist delegates, representing nearly 60 different prisons, YOIs, youth offending teams, the police and crown prosecuting service, public-private partnerships and non-governmental organisations

Youth Offending Teams
 Hammersmith & Fulham YOS
 Haringey YOS
 Lancashire YOS
 Derbyshire YOS
 Oxfordshire YOS
 Maidstone YOT
 Calderdale YOS
 Harrow YOT
 Islington YOS
 Wakefield YOT
 Haringey YOS
 Wolverhampton YOT
 Kensington and Chelsea YOT
 Dudley YOT
 Newham YOT
 Essex YOS
 Wandsworth YOS
 Worcester YOS
 Merton YOS
 Ealing YOS
 Chelmsford YOT
 Barking and Dagenham YOS
 Bromley YOT
 Hackney YOT
 Greenwich YIP

**Public-Private Partnerships/
 Non-governmental
 Organisations**
 Prison Reform Trust
 Action for Prisoners Families
 De Paul Trust
 New Bridge
 Storybook Dads
 The Forgiveness Project
 Campaign for Learning
 Women In Prison
 Angel International
 Families Do Matter
 Ormiston Trust
 The Learning Journey
 Clean Break
 Friends of Bronzefield
 Prisons Video Magazine
 NACRO
 Thames Valley Partnership

Prisons and YOIs
 HMP Holloway
 HMP Bronzefield
 HMP Wolds
 HMP Warren Hill
 HMP Altcourse
 HMP Bullwood Hall
 HMYOI Lancaster Farms
 HMYOI Castington
 HMYOI Rochester
 HMYOI Hindley
 HMYOI Feltham

**Criminal Justice System-
 other**
 Crown Prosecution Services
 Association of Panel Members

Other
 West Kent Mediation
 Maidstone Mediation Scheme

5. Action Plan for the Future

At the final plenary delegates to the conference looked at how to take the project forward:

- An action plan was created (see below).
- A steering group was formed to take the action plan forward.

1st Steps:

- Create good practice guide, looking at impact on regime, security issues, number of staff hours, benefits and challenges for the establishment
- List existing library of DVDs and educational resources and note gaps in provision
- Set up a web/blog/online messageboard to share information and advice
- Publicise the evaluations as widely as possible
- Draft guidelines on screening restrictions/permissions
- Create ethical guidelines: victim issues, appropriateness around the offence
- Invite members of NACRO, YJB, Ministry of Justice Probation, DoH, DCSF, Unlock, Ormiston, National Family Learning Network, APF, PACT, Victim Support, Open Book, ex offenders and victims to form part of the steering group
- Create the following films:
 - Video messaging training DVD
 - Victim Offender DVD
 - Victim Empathy DVD
 - Resettlement DVD
 - Weapons Awareness DVD

Video Messaging Training DVD

A large number of practitioners have requested a video messaging training DVD to be available. The DVD would cover the technical aspects of filming, editing and burning a video message DVD and would show examples of good practice in a variety of secure and community settings. This would be used as a 'refresher' by practitioners already trained on Film It training courses and those new to video messaging. Funding would be required to produce this.

Victim Offender DVD

The pilot victim offender films were created to illustrate the different uses of video messaging with both victims and offenders. The majority of offenders filmed were undertaking ISSP with Newham Youth Offending Team. At this stage practitioners from Newham felt that the most valuable way of using the method was part of their behaviour management programme 'Mapping My Offence'. This method consists of asking offenders to look at the thoughts, feelings, pressures, benefits and losses that they experienced before, during and after the offence. This helps them to understand the impact of their crime and equips them with the skills and foresight necessary to make different choices in the future. At the end of the programme the offender has reached a point where they want to apologise to their victim.

This pilot film has highlighted the need for further filming to take place. For this to take place further funding is required.

Victim Empathy DVD

Film It has also received a number of requests from practitioners working with young offenders to produce a 'Victim DVD' comprising 10-15 victims of crime talking about the impact crime has had on their life. Practitioners feel that this would be an invaluable tool in making young offenders understand the impact of their actions, particularly with regards to crimes perceived to be 'victimless', such as graffiti, vandalism, and shoplifting. It has been reported that the only DVDs currently in existence are more than 15 years old and extremely dated.

Resettlement DVD

An informative film would be made available to prisoners nearing the end of their sentence to help with successful resettlement back into the community. The film would cover topics such as how to access benefits, housing and employment advice, advice on disclosure and staying straight. Funding is required to make this resource available.

Weapons Awareness DVD

Film It has also been asked to assist Newham Youth Offending Team with producing a DVD to be used in their Weapons Awareness Programs with young offenders who have been convicted of gun and knife crimes. The DVD consists of testimonials from former gang members who in many cases have been both the victim and the perpetrator of gun/ knife crime. The young people on the DVD 'tell it like it is' about the reality of gang life which include crippling wounds, long prison sentences and living in fear of revenge attacks.

A pilot taster has been shown to groups of young people deemed at risk of becoming gang members. The evaluations have been extremely positive: the young people regarded the DVD as "*credible*" because the participants in the DVD had been in similar situations to them. Given the rising number of young people carrying weapons and involved with gangs, funding is urgently required to make this resource available.

- Where video messaging has already shown positive results, these will be promoted by Film It and the steering group. These areas are as follows:

Prisons:

- In restorative justice work- apologies from offenders to victims
- As a way of maintaining family contact for families throughout incarceration
- As a way foreign national prisoners can send messages to family abroad
- Dispute resolution/ mediation
- Guidance by long term prisoners to be shown to juveniles just entering the criminal justice system
- Recording statements from victims to be shown at parole meetings if the victim is unable/unwilling to attend
- Recording the offender at parole hearings to be shown to the victims if they are unable/unwilling to attend so they can see level of remorse/ rehabilitation
- In recognition of the fact that the children of prisoners are also the victims, video messaging has a potentially powerful role in helping to reduce the harm caused by a parent going to prison. Used in this context, video messaging should be child-centred.

Community:

- In restorative justice work- apologies from offenders to victims
- Dispute resolution/ mediation
- An educational film of victims talking about the impact crime has had on their lives to be used in victim empathy work, offender behavioural management work, and reparation work undertaken by offenders on ISSP
- Recording the offender at referral panel meetings to be shown to the victims if they are unable to attend
- Recording victim impact statements to be shown at referral panel meetings if the victim is unable to attend
- Helping to improve interview techniques for young people
- Crime prevention and education for pupils in schools
- Developing self awareness
- Clear role in teacher training - 150,000 children have a parent in prison. Many schools are not aware of this, or of the devastating impact the imprisonment of a parent has on a child.
- An educational film for use in schools featuring young offenders talking about youth on youth crime to act as an awareness raising tool, a catalyst for discussion and as a way of helping young people take simple measures to protect themselves from becoming victims of crime.

6. The Role of Film It

Film It has been requested to provide the following in the Video Messaging Action Plan for the Future:

- Co-ordinate the steering group
- Training in the video messaging method
- Providing workshops
- Consultation, advisory and ongoing support role to practitioners
- Creating written educational, training resources and films

7. Funding

Three types of funding are required:

- To support steering group core costs in managing this work
- To produce educational DVDs and packs: victim DVD, resettlement DVD, and video messaging training DVD
- To train and supply individual organisations with equipment and skills

NOMS has identified 7 pathways that need to be addressed if an offender is to stop re-offending. These are:

1. accommodation
2. education, training and employment
3. health
4. drugs and alcohol
5. finance, benefit and debt
6. children and families
7. attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

If a method is proven to work on any given pathway, it should attract core funding. The independent evaluation of three years worth of video messaging practice across the secure estate shows that video messaging has a profound impact on *attitudes, thinking and behaviour, children and families, education and health*.

As with Film Its 3 year pilot project all future trials should be independently evaluated with a focus on outputs and outcomes. (see below).

The following should be approached for funding/partnership working:

- YJB YOTs, Ministry of Justice Probation, DOMs, DCSF, DoH
- Llanekelly Chase Foundation (Peter Kilgarath)
- National Family Learning Network
- European Family Learning Network
- NACRO

8. Evaluation

Evaluations should be carried out by individual organisations at an early date and must measure outcomes e.g. fewer adjudications, fewer people reporting sick, less violence, less vandalism.

- Thames Valley Partnerships have suggested monitoring/ overseeing a pilot project to evaluate the efficacy of video messaging as a way of maintaining family contact. Measurable outcomes with and without the use of video messaging practice would be successful re-integration with the family and the 7 pathways. HMP Downview and Send have been mentioned as test sites.

9. Partnerships/Steering Group

The following partners offered to form part of the steering group:

India Gebler Film It- **Steering Group Co-ordinator**
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Sue Dawson Film It
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Lisa Vernon Campaign for Learning
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Dave Farnworth Haringey Youth Offending Service
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Sylvia Charles Wakefield Youth Offending Team
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Tim Parkhouse Oxfordshire YOT
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Lisa Isaac HMP Bullwood Hall
Ljisaac71@hotmail.com

Appendix 1: Workshop Details

Workshop 1:

MAPPING MY OFFENCE

Facilitator: Shelly Khaled, Operations and Interventions manager, Newham YOS

Workshop Summary:

LB Newham has one of the highest rates of gun and knife crime and youth on youth crime in the country. Working with Film It, they have been pioneering a video messaging project that aims to reduce rates of reoffending. Offenders are filmed talking about their crime and offered the opportunity to send their victims an apology. In this way, offenders are helped to understand the motives, feelings and consequences of their actions and make different choices in the future.

Workshop 2:

LOCKED UP LOVE

Facilitator: Lisa Isaac, Family Links Worker, HMP Bullwood Hall

Workshop Summary:

A collaboration between Film It and HMP Bullwood Hall used video messages to help female prisoners maintain contact with their children on the outside. The women made teddies, games and recorded a bedtime story onto DVD for their children. Film It then recorded personal messages back to the women from their families. This workshop will discuss the necessity of parenting courses in prison, what topics are most valuable for offenders and their families and how video messaging can play a useful role.

Workshop 3:

YOUNG OFFENDERS, PARENTS, SIBLINGS AND VICTIMS

Facilitators: Harry Dunne & Sue Dawson

Workshop Summary:

HMYOI Hindley has been using video messaging to help young offenders maintain contact with their families on the outside. A personal DVD message is recorded by each party and is sent into or out of the prison. Dialogue in this way is encouraged in between visits. Following the success of this project, Hindley is now looking at using video messaging in reparation and offender behavioural management programmes.

Workshop 4:

THE TECHNIQUE OF VIDEO MESSAGING

Facilitator: India Gebler, Film It Video Messaging practitioner

Workshop Summary:

A practical, hands-on demonstration of how video messages are made. Delegates will be shown how to film professional looking video messages and instantly burn them onto DVD using DVD camcorders.

Workshop 5:

THE WIDER USE OF VIDEO MESSAGING

Facilitators: John Podmore

Workshop Summary:

Presentation of the overview of the Department of Health remit with regards to prison health. Following this, group discussions will explore the benefits and logistics of the wider use of video messaging among

- Foreign nationals
- Young offenders
- Children and families
- Victims and offenders

Appendix 2: Speakers Details

John Podmore

Department for Offender Health

John Podmore has worked in the Prison Service for over 20 years. He has governed 3 prisons: Belmarsh, Swaleside and most recently, Brixton. He spent 3 years as a team leader in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and carried out consultancy work for the Office of the Custodial Inspector in Western Australia and the Prison Service in Mauritius.

John left Brixton in May 2006 and now works as Senior Operational Advisor in the Department for Offender Health. During his time at Brixton, the jail rose from the very bottom of the league table of 135 prisons to 15th and he received a Marjorie Fry Special Commendation from the Howard League for Penal Reform and an Achievement Award from the Butler Trust.

Sue Dawson

Director Film It

Sue Dawson began her career on the other side of the camera, as an actress and presenter in television, radio and theatre. She then moved into writing and producing, forming her own production company in 1995. Early commissions were mainly in the field of social documentary; creating programmes and educational resources on Aids awareness, alternative therapies, parenting, youth justice, anger management, teenage pregnancy and children in care. In 2004 the charity Film It was created, developing the companies work with vulnerable young people and supporting them in finding positive direction and a way out of exposure to high risk pursuits and criminality. Today Film It is an independent company and registered charity which continues to develop and deliver award winning arts projects.

Anita Wilson

Prison ethnographer

Anita Wilson is a prison ethnographer. She has applied her knowledge to academic research, national training strategies for prison staff, and the application of research to practice such as prison education, parenting, and mental health and well-being. In this work she has been funded by the Home Office, the Youth Justice Board, HM Prison Service, the Women's and Young Persons Team. She also has an interest in the efficacy of the creative arts and their ability to uplift and empower the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society. Her work in this field has been sponsored by Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and Regeneration Budgets, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the Trust for the Study of Adolescence and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Harriet Bailey

Chief Executive, Restorative Justice Consortium

The Restorative Justice Consortium (RJC) is the national voice for Restorative Justice (RJ) in England and Wales. Central to the RJC's work is the belief that every person harmed by crime or conflict should have the opportunity to resolve it through a restorative process. Members are Government and voluntary organisations, police forces, Youth Offending Teams, police and probation services, community mediation services, schools and research organisations. Individual members include practitioners such as criminal justice professionals, community volunteers, and teachers working in RJ.

Harry Dunne

Resettlement Governor HMYOI Hindley

Harry Dunne joined the Prison Service in 1981, after a previous life as a Merseyside Fireman. His service with Her Majesties Prisons was shared between HMP Liverpool and HMP YOI Hindley and he has experience of working with Adults, Young Adults and Juveniles. Harry has been involved with the resettlement or reducing reoffending needs of all these groups but more recently worked specifically with the Under 18's. His work involves the sentence management of young people and developing links within the prison and the community to ensure a multi agency and co-ordinated resettlement approach to meet the needs of the young people in his care.