

PPO CASE STUDY

X started offending at the age of 13 and these early offences tended to be of an acquisitive nature, mainly consisting of shoplifting and burglaries of commercial premises. The reasons for the early onset of offending are slightly unclear as drug and alcohol problems did not begin until two years following this. She appears to come from a reasonably stable family background and despite 20 years of problems for her family, they remain supportive. However, her brother was also involved heavily in crime and drug misuse, as were her peer group at school and on her home estate. She left school at the age of fifteen without any qualifications and quickly became involved in drug and alcohol use. Initially her drug of choice was cannabis and as yet the prolific nature of her offending was not evident, although from the time of her first offence until the present day there have been no significant breaks in her offending. Her early disposals from court were usually in the form of Supervision orders but in 1987 at the age of sixteen she received her first custodial sentence of 6 months following a Dwelling House Burglary.

At the age of nineteen she was introduced to heroin by her then partner, this quickly developed into heavy use. A prolific pattern to her offending began to emerge and also the type of crime was predominately shoplifting. She explains this shift very easily, firstly the penalties for such offences are much lower than for burglaries and secondly, she discovered that she was good at it. The convictions, by her-own admission, are barely the tip of the iceberg. She quickly gained kudos among Hartlepool's criminal fraternity as a very good shoplifter and admits that she often "got a buzz" from the thefts she would commit. Her heroin habit has fluctuated over the intervening years, often requiring up to £100 per day, but she has never had a sustained period without the drug and this is reflected in her previous convictions, which now total 126. She and her partner have two children, who initially were cared for by the couple, but following concerns about their being neglected they were taken into local authority care. However, they now reside permanently with her mother.

Her continued offending was highlighted in the local press and this gained her a level of notoriety probably not experienced by her male counterparts. It was little surprise when she was among the first group of PPO's identified in Hartlepool in the autumn of 2004. This followed six appearances at Court in the preceding twelve months, the last of these offences had resulted in her being made the subject of a Community Rehabilitation Order supervised by Teesside Probation Service in July 2004. Those newly identified PPO's supervised by the Probation Service were transferred from their current supervising officers to the Dordrecht Initiative. Our case study was among the first to be transferred. At that time, she was homeless, had just entered drug treatment and was struggling to comply in attending weekly appointments. Her drug treatment had originally been arranged through DIP but her poor record in treatment did not bode well for complying. Also her notoriety meant that there was only one chemist in Hartlepool willing to supervise her Methadone consumption, and then only if she was accompanied by a responsible person. Initially this was the DISC worker's, arranged by DIP but gradually the Dordrecht's staff group took this task over.

Progress was slow but the daily liaison with Dordrecht staff meant that she began engage with her treatment for the first time. The daily attendance also encouraged her

to view herself more positively and feel that she could change aspects of her behaviour. This resulted in her having the confidence to begin some voluntary work, interviewing drug users for ADDvance in Hartlepool. However, with such entrenched behaviour it has to be recognised that mistakes will be made and in December 2004 following one offence of shoplifting she was given a condition to attend the Dordrecht Initiative. Unfortunately after only a week on the order she was remanded into custody for an offence of Burglary, where she remained until May 2005. This was contributed to by the increased monitoring of PPO's offered by the Dordrecht's Police Officer. Despite these setbacks staff felt connections and progress had been made, with this in mind regular visits to prison were made by team members. The Burglary charge was dropped and she pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of Theft from Person. This resulted in her being given a three year Community Rehabilitation Order with a condition to attend the Dordrecht Initiative.

Prior to her release from prison, Dordrecht nursing staff had arranged with prison workers for her Methadone prescription to continue without a break on release. Probation staff had liaised with her parents and because of the support been given, they have allowed her to return home. Her mother meets with staff regularly to get support herself and our case study has continued to build relationships with staff members. Whilst it is early days, there has been a continued positive shift in her behaviour and attitudes. Since commencing work with the Dordrecht, there has been a marked drop in the prolific nature of her offending. There have been slips and no doubt there will be others but Rome was not built in a day.