the responsivity principle.

Just as the risk and need principles state that the offenders’ risk and need status should be considered in the design of programmes and the allocation of offenders to them, the responsivity principle states that treatment programmes and the delivery of them should be geared to the offenders’ abilities and learning styles. In the broadest sense this principle means that programmes based on cognitive behavioural principles (those that focus on challenging individuals’ thoughts and attitudes in order to alter their behaviour) should be adopted as these have been shown by research to be most effective with offenders. This consideration has been termed ‘general responsivity’ as these methods, in a general sense, have been shown to produce positive results.

However, there is also a much wider interpretation of the responsivity principle which has been termed ‘specific responsivity’. Specific responsivity refers to the need for interventions (and for those that deliver them) to be sensitive to the individual needs of those who are in attendance on the programme. The individual characteristics that should be considered under specific responsivity range from race and gender to cognitive and reading ability, motivation and the ability to function in groups. This list is not exhaustive and may include many other individual factors that should be addressed if it is felt that they may impact on the effectiveness of the intervention for that individual. For example, if an offender has a low reading ability and would struggle to complete some of the exercises within a programme because of this, then the service provider should be responsive to this and provide additional support for this offender.

As we have seen over the last few pages, there has been a shift over the last ten to twenty years towards the use of offender rehabilitation within some criminal justice systems. Nowadays, the design of programmes is becoming better rooted in research findings and increasingly practice is being based on the evidence that is available. However, there are still many questions to be answered about the effectiveness of programmes and research needs to build on what we already know in order to expand knowledge of ‘What Works’.

offending behaviour programmes.

This section will present two examples of offending behaviour programmes.

think first.

Think First is a treatment programme which has been specially devised for offenders who are deemed to be medium to high risk of reoffending and have displayed a general pattern of offending, not specializing in any type of crime, in their past. The programme was designed by Professor James McGuire, a Forensic Clinical Psychologist in the UK, for use within the Prison and Probation Services of England and Wales but has also been adopted by some correctional services in Australia. The core of the Think First programme is a block of twenty-two group-based sessions, each of which is two hours long. In addition, offenders are expected to attend pre-group and post-group sessions which are not group-based but instead are delivered on a one-to-one basis.

Think First is a programme built upon cognitive behavioural principles. It therefore aims to address offenders’ attitudes and underlying thought processes that contribute to offending behaviour. The principle goal of the programme is to help those who attend the programme to acquire, practise and begin to use a number of problem-solving and related skills that will allow them to manage their lives and any associated difficulties in a more appropriate manner and without resorting to offending.

For example, offenders (generally speaking) tend to be rigid in the responses they choose in certain problem circumstances. For example, if a male offender is in a bar and catches another male (a stranger) looking at them, it may be the case that the offender thinks that the other male is goading them or ‘offering them out’. The offender’s response may be to do what he always does when someone is acting that way towards him – he goes over and punches the other male. If the offender had stopped to weigh up the situation, he may have found that the stranger was not actually staring at him but was eyeing up the attractive female behind him! The offender has, therefore, not only impulsively jumped to the wrong conclusion about why the man is looking in his direction, but has also stuck rigidly to his usual course of action for resolving such circumstances. The question the programme asks of the offender is – is there an alternative action that could have been taken to remedy the situation in a more pro-social way?

Rigid thinking is just one factor that may contribute to offenders committing a crime such as this assault described above. Think First aims to teach the offender alternative responses by providing such skills as problem awareness, problem definition, information gathering, distinguishing facts from opinions, alterative solution thinking, consequential thinking, selection and decision-making and perspective taking. The programme also highlights the need for self-management in situations such as the one outlined above and provides skills to enhance personal control over the feelings and behaviours that may cause problems for offenders. The programme also uses training in how to interact in social situations (‘social interaction training’) and ‘values education’ (or moral reasoning) training in order to strengthen the offenders’ social problem-solving skills.

Evaluations of the programme, to date, have provided tentatively positive evidence for its rehabilitative qualities. An initial evaluation of the programme, conducted by researchers at the University of Liverpool, found positive pre- to post-programme changes on psychometric tests measuring constructs such as attitudes towards offending, anticipation of reoffending, victim empathy and impulsivity.

A number of reconviction studies of the programme have also been performed by two groups of researchers in the UK: one group from the Probation Studies Unit at the University of Oxford and another from the Universities of Leicester and Liverpool. Both research groups reported significant reductions in the reconviction rates of those who completed the programme compared to those who failed to complete. However, the use of those who failed to complete programmes (or non-completers) as a comparison group is not ideal. Both groups of researchers have shown that the non-completers were already at a higher risk of reconviction than those who managed to complete. It stands to reason that those who are at a higher risk of reconviction are more likely to be reconvicted. The research carried out by the Universities of Leicester and Liverpool, therefore, also compared those who completed the programme with a comparison group of similar individuals who had received an alternative community sentence. When holding the effects of age, risk of reconviction, gender and offence type constant, completers of the programme were almost thirty percent less likely to be reconvicted compared to the non-completers and the comparison group.

A finding common across these evaluations, however, is the high non-completion rate of programmes (this is common to all community programmes and not just Think First). Non- completion rates for Think First ranged from 62 to 72 per cent of those who were ordered by the courts to attend the programme. Although there are indications that these figures have improved since the research was conducted, these findings have to raise questions about whether the delivery of programmes can be enhanced in order to persuade more offenders to complete.

aggression replacement training.

The Aggression Replacement Training programme (ART) is similar in many respects to Think First – it provides specific cognitive behavioural exercises which aim to develop offenders’ thought processes and attitudes in relation to crime and criminal behaviour. The ART programme differs from Think First and other general offending programmes in that it is an offence-specific programme – this means that it is targeted at a specific group of offenders. As the name would suggest, the ART programme is aimed at offenders who have displayed violent offending or aggression related problem behaviour.

ART was originally designed by the late Professor Arnold Goldstein in the USA for use with juvenile offenders but has since spread geographically and is now delivered to offenders across North America as well as in countries such as the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden. Additionally the contents of the programme, originally developed for work with children and adolescents, have also been adapted for use with adult and mentally disordered offenders.

The ART programme consists of three component parts. Each group session comprises two of these components and these are rotated throughout the programme so that an equal amount of each component is received. The three components are skill- streaming, anger control training and moral reasoning training: each of these will now be explained in more detail.

Skillstreaming is the behavioural part of the programme. Based on the understanding that offenders characteristically lack personal, interpersonal and social cognitive skills, the skill streaming element is designed to teach the offenders these skills and pro- vides the opportunity to practise and rehearse these skills. The provision of constructive feedback helps the offenders to transfer their learning into real-life situations.

Anger control training constitutes the emotion-based branch of the programme. This component addresses the emotions of offenders and how these relate to their ability to control (or not!) their anger. Anger control training does just that – it teaches offenders anger control techniques. The aim of this section of the programme is to provide offenders with alternative courses of action in situations where their anger would have previously resulted in violence and offending.

The moral reasoning section of the programme provides offenders with the chance to challenge their attitudes towards certain situations. While the other components are thought of as the behavioural and affective elements, the moral reasoning component is the thinking element. This section of the programme provides moral dilemmas which build in their complexity throughout the programme. The aim of these dilemmas is to challenge the reasoning of those in attendance on the programme and to help them choose appropriate skills for the situations that they may find themselves in. The ART programme has been subject to a relatively large number of evaluation studies to test its effectiveness. Across geo- graphical locations and different client groups such as incarcerated juvenile delinquents, community-based youths and their families, juvenile gang members and adults, several promising findings have indicated the potential effectiveness of the ART programme. Evaluations have reported cognitive gains in line with the programme aims, as well as more behavioural outcomes such as reduced re-arrest rates, reduced reconviction and enhanced community functioning. Other research, however, has presented mixed results – for example, improvements in the cognitive functions that ART targets but no transference of these gains into behavioural change. As ever, further research is needed to unpick the research findings in relation to the ART programme.

Conclusions.

The aim of this chapter was to provide an overview of the ‘What Works’ debate and the current state of the field of offender rehabilitation. The chapter started out by asking what your thoughts were about the rehabilitation of offenders. Have they changed at all in light of the contents of this chapter?

Rather than focus on the ethical and moral question of whether an offender deserves the chance of rehabilitation, this chapter has focused on the issue of whether treatment is effective and has explained how today’s practices are becoming based within evidence-based practice, at least in some countries. The chapter has also provided a couple of examples of the programmes along with the related research evidence.

It is hoped that the general message taken from this chapter is that the rehabilitation of offenders may be successful for certain individuals and under certain conditions. However, there are still many unanswered questions – for example, how can we ensure that a greater proportion of offenders complete programmes? Why do people drop out from programmes? Are the right individuals targeted for the programmes? Could altering the dosage of these programmes increase the treatment effect? And so on ... More research is needed to try and unpick the answers to questions such as these.