

# A Literacy Intervention for Young Offenders and Subsequent Changes in Resilience: A Case-Series

## Background

**Context:** There is a high prevalence of speech, language and literacy difficulties within the Young Offender population. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ; 2016) has proposed that 'secure colleges' replace Young Offenders Institutes (YOIs); thereby placing education at the heart of treatment for young offenders

**The Intervention:** Rapid English (RE) is a computerised intervention used in many YOIs and Youth Offending Services (YOS). It targets speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

**Resilience:** YOS assessment is based on risk and protective factors. Interventions at the YOS aim to increase young offenders' resilience in order to prevent reoffending

## Methodology

**Design:** A case-series design; several cases within a case-study approach (McLeod, 2010; Yin, 2013). **Participants:** Four young offenders with literacy needs (pseudonyms **Deepa**, **Joe**, **Ricky** & **Scott**) aged 11-17 attending two YOS in the South-East of England. **Sources of Evidence:** Interventionist diary, case summaries, YOS database records, session observations, standardised measures - Gray Oral Reading Test 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (GORT-5) and the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA). **Quantitative Analysis:** Reliable Change Index (RCI; Jacobson & Truax, 1991). **Qualitative Analysis:** Conventional Content Analysis (CCA; Schreier, 2012)

## Cross-Case Analysis

Pattern matching logic (Almutairi, Gardner & McCarthy, 2014) was used to draw the following conclusions:

**P1.** Partially met. CCA indicated that improvements were not linear. Rival explanations: more sessions required. Specific learning difficulties (SpLD) may have affected response to intervention rate.

**P2.** Partially met. CCA highlighted positive relationships between participants and the interventionist. Rival explanation: Therapeutic relationship with interventionist improved resilience

**P3.** Partially met. Rival explanation: external events also impacted on resilience

## Results

Deepa

- Improvements in reading were not significant after six RE sessions (GORT-5)
- Significant improvements in Relatedness and Resource (RSCA)

Joe

- Improvements in reading were not significant after six RE sessions (GORT-5)
- Significant improvement in Emotional Reactivity (RSCA)

Ricky

- Improvements in reading were not significant after six RE sessions (GORT-5)
- Significant improvements in Mastery, Relatedness, Resource and Vulnerability (RSCA)

Scott

- Significant improvements in reading accuracy and fluency after 18 RE sessions (GORT-5)
- Significant improvements in Mastery, Relatedness and Resource (RSCA)

## Implications

**Programme Duration:** RE sessions carried out regularly over at least a term (13 weeks) are recommended to produce greater gains in literacy scores. **Assessment:** An in-depth assessment (e.g. by the Educational Psychologist) may help to identify SpLD/ areas of need. **Relationships:** A positive relationship with YOS staff may increase young offenders' resilience. External events may also impact on resilience; the EP could deliver training to support YOS staff.

## Theoretical Propositions

- P1.Improvements in reading:** due to RE including five principles of instruction (Merrill, 2002)
- P2.Improvements in resilience:** due to making progress and forming relationships through learning (Rutter, 1987)
- P3.Improvements in resilience in accordance with improvements in reading:** due to having an increased sense of control over their achievements (Rotter, 1966)

## References

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