



# THERAPY FOR OFFENDERS

## *Using complementary therapies to help young offenders*

**J**ane Giddings, owner and principal of the School of Excellence in South Gloucestershire has taken an innovative approach to counselling. Working with young offenders at Ashfield Young Offenders Institution, Jane has introduced the use of complementary therapies as an aid to her therapy sessions and has seen a vast improvement in the troubled teens she has set out to help.

Jane incorporates traditional therapy and counselling techniques with complementary therapies such as Indian head massage, Reiki and reflexology with aims to not only relax the young people she works with, but also to reduce aggression and tension and to create harmony within the session.

Jane tells us how she finds working with and helping young offenders:

*"Initially, I found my role very challenging, with considerable responsibility. However, as I noticed the great changes in the young people's attitudes and behaviours, the work became extremely rewarding. I feel very proud and privileged to be given this opportunity at Ashfield, to help improve the young people's futures and the capacity for young people to initiate self-change, giving them a toolbox of skills for life."*

Jane has been working with young people for over 15 years in youth clubs, schools and secure units and with children of all ages who have a wide variation of behavioural issues for over a decade. Four years ago she also worked with the 'Lads and Dads' scheme funded by children's charity Barnardo's, showing young offenders, who are fathers, how to calm their babies by using baby massage. Jane also taught 'Cycles of Change' in classrooms – a programme related to knife and gang related crime. During the last two years Jane has covered intervention and one-to-one sessions and says the success of the combination of all the different methods shows how they enable the young people to relax, open up and develop self-awareness and emotional literacy.



One main therapy technique used by Jane is Indian head massage - the results of this approach show a decline in aggressive behaviour and report that the young people feel calmer and more able to cope with daily stresses, also a reduction in adjudications, fights and bad comments were noted. Indian head massage is very successful in helping the young people to physically relax and feel less inclined to fight and be aggressive; it also helps to reduce anxiety, insomnia and feelings of depression.

Another approach commonly used by Jane is the use of Reiki combined with massage; this helps to restore the balance, which aids Jane in creating harmony and a truly relaxing therapy experience. She uses these techniques for five minutes at the end of each session, meaning that the young people leave the session in a positive, calm state of mind.

Jane also takes the opportunity to teach the young people how to treat themselves using hand reflexology. This gives them the skills to remedy minor ailments, such as headaches or toothache. The young people reported that they used this technique often and it gave them something positive to focus on

while spending long periods of time alone - as some of the them were in solitary confinement, and although they commented that this approach helped pass the time away and comfort them, it also helped them stay positive, alert and engaged in learning.

Alongside these complementary therapies Jane uses approaches such as; therapy through art, song, poetry and rap, hypnosis, acupuncture, meditation, visualisation, self esteem building, forgiveness and moral guidance.

It is the combination of these styles along with the complementary therapy techniques coupled with a traditional take on counselling that has proven so successful with the young offenders.

*"During the sessions, I encouraged the young people through a variety of means to discuss their feelings and their lives. They were very open and talked in detail about their families, friendships and gang culture. This enabled them to reflect on their situation and see their errors clearly. This was*

*sometimes a painful experience but it really did help them see what went wrong and how they can change and put their lives right."*

Jane's colleagues at Ashfield are so impressed with her work for the institution that they have nominated her for a prestigious Butler Trust Award. The annual awards ceremony promotes excellence in prisons, probation and youth justice and is supported by the trust's Royal Patron, HRH The Princess Royal.

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This unique style of therapy has proven incredibly successful and has allowed the young people with whom Jane works to be able to gain the support that had often lacked as they were growing up, and has enabled them to develop the self-confidence required to take up the opportunities to expand their emotional, personal and educational skills that will assist them in the long-term.

**VTCT offer a range of qualifications in complementary therapies including the following:**

VTCT Level 3 Certificate in Indian Head Massage (QCF) AM30137

VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Reflexology (QCF) AC30405

VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Infant and Child Massage (QCF) AC30267

VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Reiki (QCF) AM30247

For the full list of qualifications offered by VTCT visit our website [www.vtct.org.uk](http://www.vtct.org.uk).

