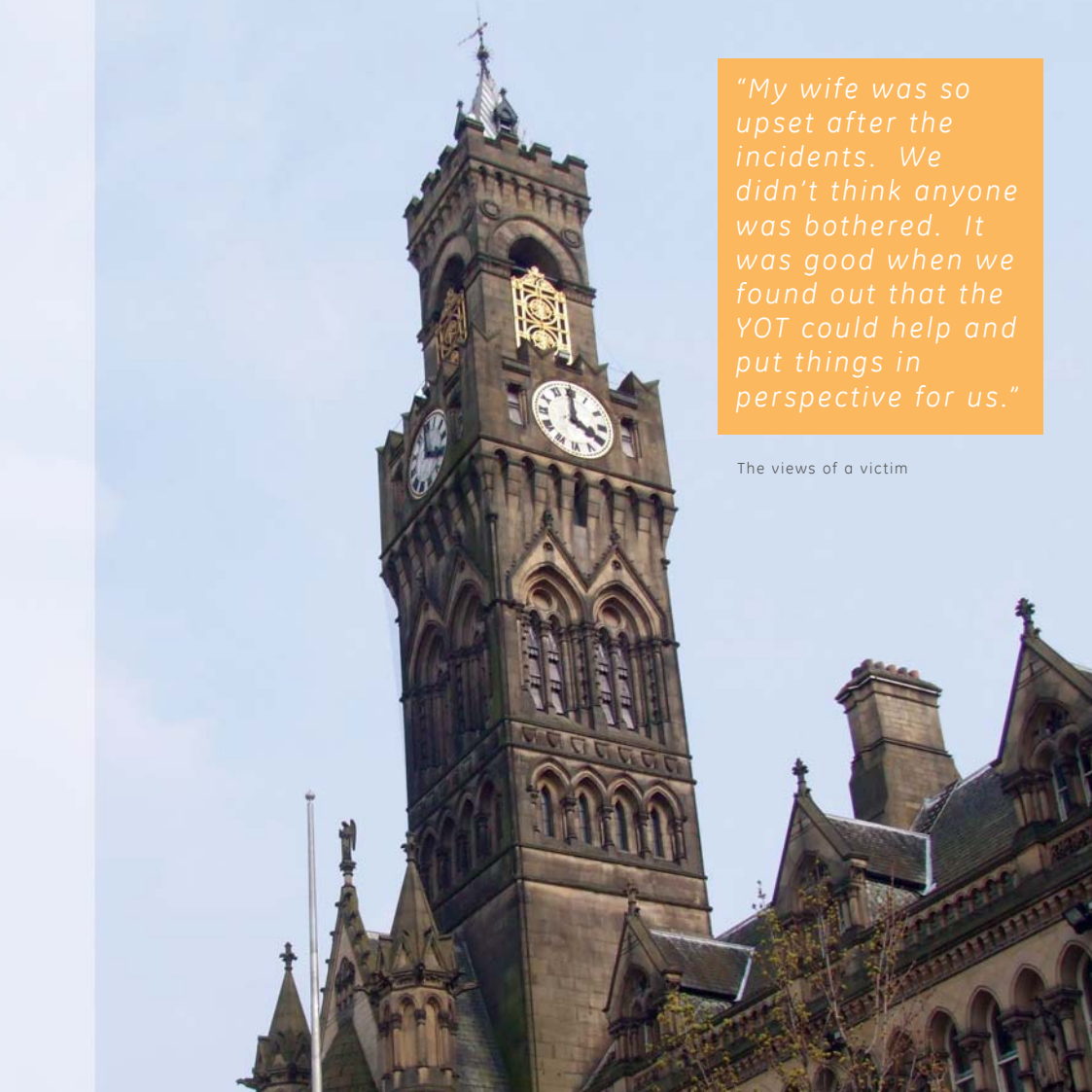




Support for Victims of Youth Crime in Bradford

**BRADFORD & DISTRICT
YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM**



"My wife was so upset after the incidents. We didn't think anyone was bothered. It was good when we found out that the YOT could help and put things in perspective for us."

The views of a victim

The Bradford Youth Offending Team deals with young people who have committed offences and been dealt with by the police or the youth court.

The YOT is a partnership involving Children's Social Care, Police, Probation, Education Bradford and Health.

The aim of the YOT is to prevent offending. As part of our work we try to ensure that every young person is made fully aware of the effect of their crime upon its victim.

This booklet explains why we believe that involving the victims of crime can be beneficial for all concerned and how, if you are a victim of crime, we will support you.

"I was so angry I didn't know how I'd react but the YOT worker was brilliant. I got my views across and I'm sure the young person understood how upsetting their actions had been for my family."

The views of a victim

We know that being a victim of crime can be a very upsetting experience and we want to help you come to terms with the distress and loss you may have suffered.

In our experience many victims have found that being able to express their views and feelings has been of help to them.

"When the guy told me he needed his car to take his dying wife to hospital and that it was off the road for 2 weeks because of the damage I caused I felt really bad.

To try and make up for it I spent 4 Saturday mornings cleaning the car. I also met his wife. They are a really nice couple. I won't do anything like that again."

The experience of a young offender...

You can, if you wish, be involved in planning how the young person is dealt with. They will be expected to repair the harm they have caused by some form of reparation to yourself or the wider community. You will be asked to say how you think this can best be achieved.

There are also opportunities for you to meet with the offender in different ways which we are happy to discuss with you before you commit yourself.

"I was glad he met my wife and he worked really hard cleaning my car. He's not such a bad lad and I'm sure he'll get back on track especially as he's now at college."

...and his victims.



"I'm pleased I went through the process. It was hard at first but worth it for all of us. We haven't had any more problems."

The views of a victim

You may have questions for which you would like answers. You may feel very angry towards the young person who has harmed you. Telling them how you feel and how the offence has affected you may help you feel a little better.

If you wish we will also keep you informed of how the young person is doing on their sentence.

Hearing the consequences of the offence and being confronted by your questions helps the young offender take responsibility for their actions making them less likely to offend in the future.

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to have my say of how I feel the incident affected me and how much it enabled me to move on easier"

The views of a victim

Meeting the offender is only one of a number of different options which are designed to give you the chance to have your voice heard and to confront the offender with the consequences of their offence.

You may receive answers to questions such as why the offence was committed or why you were the victim. It may also give you the chance to get feelings of anger and frustration off your chest and help you to feel better about what has happened to you. We can talk to you about the different options open to you.

To help you understand how this process can help, we have produced a short DVD, '**Views of the Victim**'. It shows the victims, young people and parents telling their story in a clear, simple and effective way. It demonstrates, from a Bradford viewpoint, how they benefited from participation.

Please ask if you would like to see it.

This approach is by no means a soft touch. Being confronted by a victim or with the harm that has been caused is a humbling experience and one that most offenders will learn from. Feeling ashamed is much more likely to mean the young person won't repeat that behaviour than being punished by a spell of custody or completing some unrelated community sentence.

Won't the offender want to get me back if I get involved?

It is our experience that when a young person understands the victim's situation they won't want to harm them again. An offender will only want to further harm a victim if they continue to feel anger or have bad feelings towards them. This process is designed to stop this happening.

Aren't YOTs more interested in helping or punishing young offenders than supporting victims?

We understand just how upsetting and difficult it is to be a victim of a crime and our staff are experienced in helping victims deal with these feelings. We think it is important that offenders are also aware of this and confronted by it. This will encourage them to make better decisions about the way they behave in the future.

If you are a victim of a crime, you may be offered the chance to take part in a restorative justice (RJ) process. This provides the opportunity for those directly affected by an offence – victim, offender and members of the community – to communicate and agree how to deal with the offence and its consequences.

Restorative processes typically result in the offender making practical amends (reparation) to repair the harm – this may include an apology. Communication between victim and offender can help victims put the offence behind them and be more satisfied with the outcome.

"I did worry that it might be a soft touch but by the end of the meeting with the young person I knew it wasn't. The lad was really sorry for what he did and I don't think he'll do anything like that again. I'm pleased that he'll have to do some work putting something back to the community."

The best known and most commonly used restorative processes are:

- Victim-offender mediation
- Restorative conferencing
- Family group conferencing
- Referral Order Youth Offender Panels

Reparation

Reparation is a practical way to pay back for the harm caused by the offence, either by directly repairing the harm or through constructive work to help the local community. The victim is usually consulted about what should be done. Reparation can include:

- **Reparation to the victim**
For example, an oral or written apology, or financial or supervised activity-based reparation to the victim.
- **Community reparation**
Includes a variety of activities to 'pay back' benefits to the community, including work similar to community service activity.

The experience of a parent of a young offender:

"My son was involved in a burglary when he got caught up in the wrong crowd. We met the lady who owned the flat and heard how upset she was to lose things like photos and jewellery with sentimental value. She also said that she now doesn't feel safe in her own home.

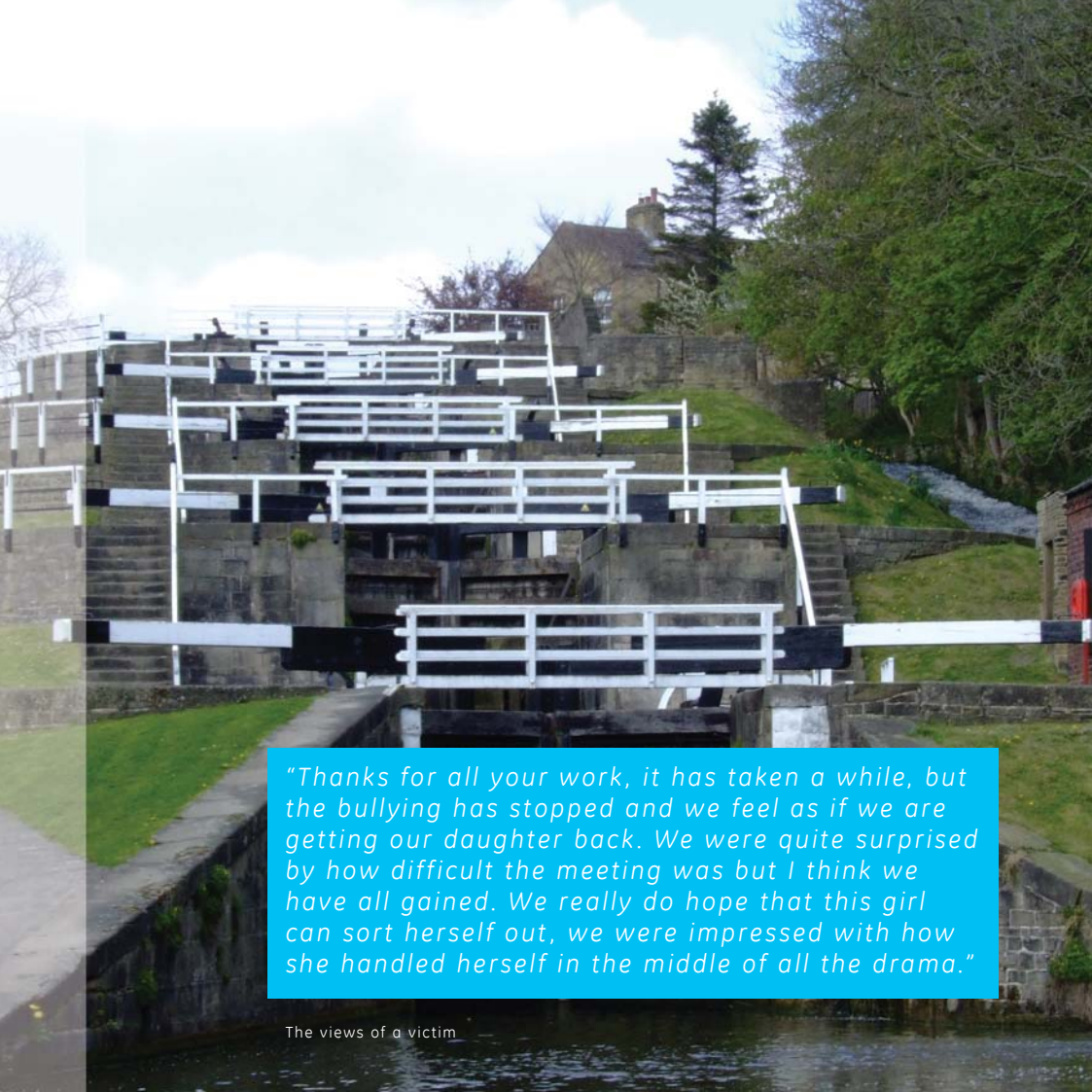
My son, husband and I felt really ashamed but it was good to meet her and for my son to apologise. It was agreed that he should do some work at a community allotment along side people with disabilities.

My son got a lot out of helping those less fortunate than himself and his attitude is much better now. He has stopped hanging around with the lads that were a bad influence on him and is working hard at building college."

The experience of a victim who was supported by the Youth Offending Team.

"I was encouraged by (Referral Order) Panel Members to ask my questions and was even helped out in getting replies from the young offender. Some of the questions I asked were quite personal and I think it was these questions that gave me more of an understanding of the young offender and the life he led. Some of my questions were followed up by further questions from the Panel which made me feel more at ease and relaxed about asking more questions.

All the way through I felt that the Panel were being very supportive and understanding towards me and my son. At no point did I feel pressured by the Panel, in fact quite the opposite, they made me feel as though I could have asked any question to help me and my son understand. During the meeting my anger towards the young offender changed as I got to understand him a bit more. All of my questions were answered and it did make me feel a lot different about what had happened. Not that there was any justification in what had happened just more of a realisation of how and why. It definitely helped me to come to terms with it all."



"Thanks for all your work, it has taken a while, but the bullying has stopped and we feel as if we are getting our daughter back. We were quite surprised by how difficult the meeting was but I think we have all gained. We really do hope that this girl can sort herself out, we were impressed with how she handled herself in the middle of all the drama."

The views of a victim

Equal Opportunities

At all times you have the right to be treated fairly and without discrimination. This means the Youth Offending Panels and YOT staff will treat you fairly whatever your race, colour, religious beliefs, gender, sexuality or disability. You are also expected to behave equally fairly towards other people.

Complaints & Compliments Procedure

If you feel you have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by the YOT or Youth Offender Panels you can make a complaint or, if you are pleased with the service you have received you can register a compliment. To do either, contact the Bradford & District YOT Manager at the above address.

Data Protection

The Bradford & District Youth Offending Team deals with personal data under the Data Protection Act 1998. Any information relating to you and anything discussed will be treated as strictly confidential. No information will be shared without your permission. If you have any questions about this please discuss them with the member of staff dealing with your case.

Accessibility

Our information leaflets are available in a number of different formats and languages from our Bradford office.

For further information on how
Bradford Youth Offending Team support
victims of crime please visit our website at:

www.bradford-yot.co.uk

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