

JUST GRACE NPC

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**2022
REPORT**
SIPHO

LEARNER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME



**2022
CASE STUDY**



BACKGROUND

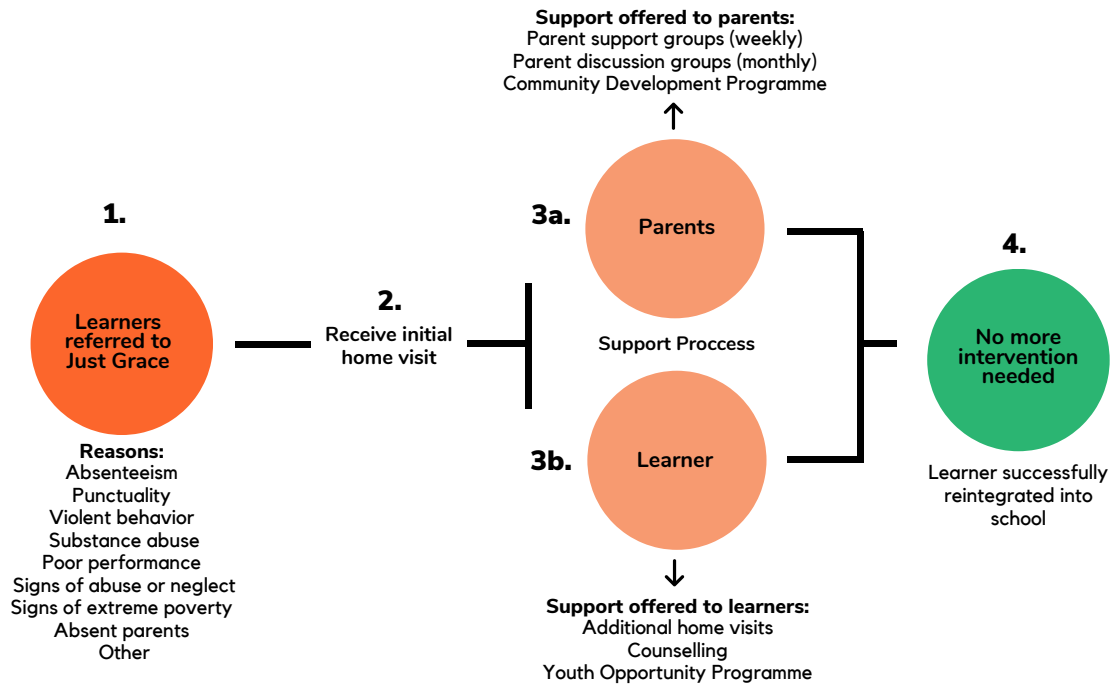
Sipho* is a 15-year-old boy doing grade 9 in one of our schools. He has yet to determine which career path he wants to follow. Sipho was caught smoking dagga on the school stairs with other boys. His teachers noticed that his academic performance had dropped, and this incident seemed to explain his lowered academic performance. Sipho was referred to our social worker, and during his first session, he denied that he was smoking and did not want to talk. All he did was ask for forgiveness because he did not want his parents to be informed about his smoking habit at school. He refused to give his parents' address and contact details to the social worker, so the school secretary contacted his parents and asked them to come to the school.

Sipho started crying when he realised that his parents had been contacted and informed the social worker that he was afraid that his parents would beat him when they found out about the smoking incident – these beatings were apparently a regular occurrence. He explained that he used to play soccer and was helpful at home, but the physical abuse changed his attitude, and he lost interest in soccer. He went on to share how his parents had physically abused him, and he opened his school bag and took out a book where he had written a suicide note to his parents. In the letter, Sipho tells his parents how much he hates them due to the physical abuse he was subjected to and apologised to his siblings for taking his life. The social worker established that Sipho used smoking as an escape mechanism in the hopes that he would get home high after school and not stress about being beaten up. The social worker learned that Sipho was the last born and his older brothers had dropped out of school before they finished matric. Sipho seemed to believe that his brothers had also suffered similar physical abuse, leading them to drop out of school.

It was revealed that Sipho's mother is a traditional healer, and she was training one of the teachers in Sipho's school to become a traditional healer. Sipho's class teacher knew about the teacher in question, and this teacher confirmed the physical abuse and how the boy was working hard at home to please his parents but would be beaten for even the slightest mistake. His father beat him up, and on the worst times, both his parents beat him. It was unfortunate to realise that a teacher was aware of the child's situation, but she never said a word about it.

The social worker established that Sipho used smoking as an escape mechanism in the hopes that he would get home high after school and not stress about being beaten up.

JUST GRACE - LEARNER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME OVERVIEW



INTERVENTION

Sipho's parents were then asked to come to the school to discuss the allegations of physical abuse. When his parents arrived, the social worker explained their rights and responsibilities as parents and emphasised the child's rights. The social worker explained to the parents that Sipho needs to attend ongoing sessions because of the physical abuse he endured. Sipho will also be provided with psycho-social support to cope at school without using substances. Sipho's parents seemed to fear losing Sipho, as they had lost his two brothers. Both parents had no idea about the hatred they had built in Sipho's heart while they thought they were disciplining him. According to them, they wanted the best for him and had no idea they were tearing their son apart. During this meeting, Sipho was allowed to share his opinion, and he asked to move out of his home to stay in Delft (a neighbouring township) with his paternal aunt, whom he usually visits when his parents leave for the Eastern Cape over weekends. It was clear that Sipho enjoyed visiting his paternal aunt. Sipho did not trust that his parents were not going to physically abuse him after telling the social worker what was happening at home. He was unsure if his parents would grant permission, so he felt he had to ask in the presence of the social worker; his parents agreed.

*Names have been changed to protect learners' identities.

OUTCOME

Sipho stopped smoking, but he has consequently faced bullying from his peers for quitting. His peers started calling him derogatory names, but Sipho is determined to focus on positive things. He has developed a good relationship with his parents because he visits them regularly. He has new friends at school because he wants to focus on his schoolwork, and his attitude and academic performance has improved.

Sipho did not initially understand why he was referred to a social worker; all he thought about was what his parents would do to him when they found out about his smoking habit. He was also scared of being expelled from school. Sipho had never thought that meeting with the social worker would change his life and even rescue him from the physical abuse he was experiencing from his parents.

Sipho was one of the few learners committed to attending his sessions. Sipho has discovered his dream of becoming a commercial mixed farmer. He is eager to find a farming school where he can start studying what he is passionate about. Sipho was encouraged to finish his grade 12 and go to university to further his pursuit of mixed commercial farming.

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