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Article Title: South Leytonstone SRB: Evaluation of the Crime Prevention Programme

Year of publication: 2000

Citation: Fearnley, R., Tucker, A. (2000) 'South Leytonstone SRB: Evaluation of the Crime Prevention Programme' CIS Commentary No 95, London: Centre for Institutional Studies, University of East London.

ISBN: 1-902494-41-5

Commentary Series

South Leytonstone SRB: Evaluation of the Crime Prevention Programme

Rebecca Fearnley and Amanda Tucker



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Centre for Institutional Studies
University of East London

September 2000

Published as CIS Commentary No 95

ISBN 1-902494-41-5

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This report was written by Rebecca Fearnley and Amanda Tucker.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the young people who participated in this research. The youth workers for their co-operation and staff at Stratford Development Partnership Ltd for assisting with the work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report evaluates the effectiveness of the Crime Prevention project that is funded as part of South Leytonstone Single Regeneration Budget Programme (SRB) and contributes to Strategic Objective 6 (SO6), '*Tackle crime and improve community safety*'. The research aimed to evaluate the effect of the project on its users and to consider its wider implications as a crime prevention initiative in South Leytonstone.

The research

The research took place between April 1999 and February 2000. Interviews were conducted with four youth workers, six teachers, two police officers, a worker from a residential home and 21 young people. Three detached youth work sessions were observed and data was collated and analysed from the project monitoring data.

The research project was limited by difficulties in obtaining access to young people. This was due in part to the reluctance of some youth workers to participate in the evaluation and in part due to the small numbers of young people in contact with the crime prevention project.

The evaluation has assessed short-term behaviour and attitude changes of young people who have participated in the project.

The context

The SRB area extends south from the railway bridge at Leytonstone High Road station along Leytonstone High Road to Maryland Point. It covers the two wards of Cathall and Cann Hall, which stretch out from either side of the High Road. The work undertaken by the crime prevention project targeted this area, with most detached work taking place in and around the local estates.

The project

The project is one initiative that aims to address SO6, '*Tackle crime and improve community safety*' in the local area by

- Reducing the risk of young people offending
- Reducing youth crime
- Enabling pupils to benefit/improve attainment
- Show positive attitudinal and behaviour change.

The project aims to target young people deemed to be 'most at risk in the community who are disadvantaged and disaffected', particularly those who are:

- Developing truancy patterns

- Likely to be excluded from school
- Unemployed and not in training.

Youth workers aim to address these problems by enabling young people to:

- Gain information and guidance and make more informed choices
- Learn to constructively use their leisure time
- Establish a sense of social responsibility
- Examine the short and long-term effects of their behaviour
- Learn alternative strategies and skills to deal with conflict, aggression and harassment so they can have a positive outcome for the young person rather than negative.

Findings

Monitoring

The project's monitoring data show the following:

- It appears that the project is small scale and is not working with as many young people as was originally anticipated.
- Analysis of project files identified 214 young people with whom the project worked between March 1996 and November 1999 but is probably an underestimate as the project has incomplete monitoring data and disorganised records.
- It is not possible to identify the exact number of young people the project has worked with or those who dropped out.

Referral agencies

The research found that the project has:

- experienced problems in obtaining the co-operation from a number of agencies who could make referrals, for example the police, Education Welfare Officers, and some schools.
- did not liase with community organisations and tenants' associations.

Detached work

Observations and interviews show that:

- the youth workers are trusted and respected by those young people and welcomed enthusiastically by the groups who knew them.

Impact on views and behaviour

The research found that the initiative had most impact on the following attitudes and behaviours of the young people who were interviewed:

- **Confidence and self-esteem:** Thirteen young people said they felt more confident since participating in the project, and eleven who felt better about themselves. In the majority of cases this was attributed to the project.
- **The future:** Twelve respondents stated that they felt more confident about their future job prospects since participating in the project, ten attributed this change directly to the project.
- **Behaviour:** Sixteen young people felt their behaviour had improved, fourteen respondents attributed this change to the project. Nine young people felt that they did things that could get them into trouble with the police less often, with all of them attributing the change directly to the project.
- **Personal relationships:** Six young people interviewed felt that they got on better with their friends and nine said that they got on better with their family.
- **Attitude and behaviour of young people within school:** The majority of respondents still attending school (9) said they behaved better in class since attending the project (5) and six who said they were getting better marks. This positive impact was reflected in teachers comments who additionally measured the projects success in terms increased attendance.

Criminal and anti-social behaviour

Crime reported to the police since the start of the SRB programme has decreased for some crimes such as burglary in a dwelling (-29 per cent) and assault (ABH), (-51 per cent), but increased for others, including burglary in other buildings (+69 per cent), criminal damage (+12 per cent), assault (GBH) (+40 per cent) and street robbery (+ 1050 per cent).

Youth crime data supplied by the Metropolitan Police relates only to young people who have been prosecuted for crime(s) and not the number of crimes committed by young people. The total number of crimes committed by young people is likely to be higher.

- It is not possible to be certain that the crime prevention project has had an impact on the local crime rate. Those young people who participated in the research were not highly likely to offend.
- It is unlikely that the project is targeting those most at risk of crime because the research indicates that multiple indicators of risk were not present amongst the majority of respondents.
- The majority of young people interviewed indicated that they came from fairly stable family backgrounds, twenty respondents had a father and they all had a mother. Eleven lived with both parents.

- Eighteen respondents said they had been involved in at least one anti-social activity.
- The most common response given for getting into trouble was boredom (10), followed by peer pressure (9) and hating schoolteachers' (7).
- The majority of young people felt that South Leytonstone was 'boring' and lacked excitement with nothing for young people to do (12).

Understanding the change

The research suggests the approach taken by the youth workers who help the young people make 'informed choices' is crucial in terms of having an effect as

- The young people felt that the youth workers had enabled them to 'make informed' choices and change their behaviour.
- Teachers felt that the youth workers had helped the young people gain an insight into their behaviour and realise what they were throwing away in terms of their futures and shutting down their options.
- The only police officer working with the project felt it was valuable in demonstrating alternatives, rather than becoming involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour.
- Work undertaken in a local children's home had a positive impact on the attitudes of young people.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings the following recommendations have been made:

- Address the lack of co-operation from agencies, particularly the police, Education Welfare Officers, perhaps through a series of presentations or workshops to explain the project and increase referrals.
- Restructure the project to give liaison with community groups, tenants' associations and community leaders a much higher profile.
- Efforts are made by all agencies to refer young people most 'at risk' of criminal and anti-social behaviour to the project.
- Explore ways of increasing the number of young people they work with, through more publicity within schools and community groups for example.
- Provide the resources for some dedicated administrative support to ensure that the monitoring data is collected and collated.
- Review output measures so they more accurately reflect the work of the project.

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings of research carried out during 1999/00 to evaluate the effectiveness of the Crime Prevention project funded as part of the South Leytonstone SRB programme. The evaluation was commissioned by the SRB Partnership and SDP Ltd and aimed to evaluate the effect of the project on its users, and the wider implications of the project for crime and crime prevention in South Leytonstone. The intention is that the findings will be used by the project to inform its on-going development and direction, within the lifetime of the SRB programme and beyond.

The research was carried out in the context of abidingly high levels of crime within South Leytonstone (Fearnley and Roberts, 1999; Waltham Forest Crime Audit, 1999), and in the light of concerns expressed by the Partnership about the effectiveness of the Crime Prevention project. The research also reflects recognition that, given the nature of the project, and its comparatively small scale of operation, the effect of its work is unlikely to be truly reflected in changes in the incidence of reported crime. A more careful and specific evaluation of its activities was therefore called for.

The research

This report is based on the findings from research carried out over ten months of 1999/2000. The evaluation aimed to explore the effect of the project on the behaviour and attitudes of the young people who have participated, as well as exploring the views of other agencies such as the police and schools. The difficulties inherent in evaluating this type of project discussed below are compounded in this case as the project aims to target those at risk. Thus in looking at progress towards its crime prevention objectives, the evaluation was seeking to assess whether participation in the project has diverted the young people away from a route and activities they in many cases had yet to embark upon. The evaluation therefore concentrated on whether it appears that the project is effectively targeting its services to young people who are 'at risk' and on assessing changes in attitudes towards criminal activity and anti-social behaviour, in addition to actual changes in behaviour.

Methods

The research started in April 1999 with meetings between researchers and the youth workers, and the fieldwork continued until February 2000. Interviews were conducted with four youth workers, six teachers at the three schools in the area, two police officers, and one worker from a residential home in the area. It was initially anticipated that we would interview Education Welfare Officers, but the researcher was unable to find any that had heard of the project. In addition, three detached youth work sessions were observed, 21 young people were interviewed, and researchers spent some time collating and analysing existing records kept by the SRB project.

The evaluation did however, encounter some difficulties in accessing young people to be interviewed, and this aspect of the research project was the most problematic and time consuming. The main difficulties arose because the young people had to be identified via the youth workers, but over a period of seven months, the workers failed to identify any potential interviewees. There were a number of contributing factors which led to these difficulties: initially the youth workers were understandably uncertain about allowing the researchers to interview the young people, and would not allow researchers to contact the young people directly themselves. Even once this uncertainty had been overcome however, the youth workers had difficulties identifying and locating many young people. Problems experienced by the project in trying to keep track of people who had left meant that they had few contact addresses and were often relying on word of mouth, or messages being passed between friends asking people to get in touch. More importantly perhaps is the nature of the work being carried out. The youth workers did not necessarily know the young people accessed through detached sessions by address or in some cases names, and this meant that the researchers were unable to contact many of the young people who were no longer 'hanging around' on the streets.

It was initially anticipated that the interviewing would start at the beginning of the autumn term and that up to 50 young people would be interviewed. However, in spite of considerable efforts by the researchers, interviewing the young people did not start until December 1999, and by February 2000 we had only interviewed 21 young people, a number of whom were accessed with the co-operation of one of the schools. At this stage, we drew the fieldwork to a close as it was felt we would be unlikely to locate further young people and the time spent trying to get interviews meant the project was behind schedule and over budget.

The context

South Leytonstone is located within the London Borough of Waltham Forest which has high levels of deprivation, and unemployment (Inspection of LBWF LEA 2000). The SRB area extends south from the railway bridge at Leytonstone High Road station along Leytonstone High Road to Maryland Point. It covers the two wards of Cathall and Cann Hall, which stretch out from either side of the High Road. At the start of the SRB programme in 1996 the area was characterised by high unemployment, an un-competitive local economy, housing in a generally poor condition and unacceptably high levels of reported crime (Urban Regeneration Evaluation Team, 1996). All of these are issues the SRB programme has been aiming to address over the last four years. However, the Crime and Disorder Audit published in 1999 suggests that crime in the area remains an issue, and one or two areas within South Leytonstone display some of the highest levels of reported crime within the whole borough. The work undertaken by the crime prevention project targeted this area, with most detached work taking place in and around the local estates.

Crime

Interviews with the youth workers and police officers suggest in terms of youth crime, South Leytonstone is not the worst area in the borough for youth crime and anti-social behaviour. This suggestion is supported by recent figures for referrals to

the Multi Agency Panel (MAP) which show that of referrals made to the panel, only 12 per cent of the young people were from E11 (South Leytonstone), compared to 42 per cent from E17 and 28 per cent from E4.

Youth crime data supplied by the Metropolitan Police relates only to young people who have been prosecuted for committing crime(s) and not the number of crimes committed by young people and therefore the total number of young committing crime is likely to be higher. Data for South Leytonstone and the wider borough indicate fluctuations in the number of young people aged 10-17 being prosecuted for committing some categories of crime in South Leytonstone and the wider borough between 1999-00 (Table 1). The number of young people prosecuted for violence against the person (+1300 per cent) and robbery (+800 per cent) has increased in the local area and the wider borough. There has been a decrease in the number of young people prosecuted for criminal damage (-71 percent) and theft and handling which has decreased at a slower rate than the wider borough (-17 per cent). The number of young people prosecuted for burglary has remained the same, compared to the wider borough where a decrease has occurred (- 62 per cent).

TABLE 1
Young people aged 10-17 prosecuted for crimes
in Waltham Forest and South Leytonstone, 1996-00

| Area | Offence | Year | | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|------------|
| | | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 | 1999-00 | Total | Change (%) |
| | <i>Violence against the person</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 60 | 102 | 86 | 91 | 339 | +52 |
| South Leytonstone | | 1 | 7 | 5 | 14 | 27 | +1300 |
| | <i>Sexual offences</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 0 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 12 | +300 |
| South Leytonstone | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | <i>Robbery</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 29 | 68 | 26 | 35 | 158 | +21 |
| South Leytonstone | | 0 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 19 | +800 |
| | <i>Burglary</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 50 | 151 | 41 | 19 | 261 | -62 |
| South Leytonstone | | 2 | 7 | 31 | 2 | 42 | 0 |
| | <i>Theft and handling</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 190 | 254 | 139 | 95 | 678 | -50 |
| South Leytonstone | | 6 | 12 | 4 | 5 | 27 | -17 |
| | <i>Fraud and Forgery</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 18 | 52 | 17 | 20 | 106 | +11 |
| South Leytonstone | | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | <i>Criminal Damage</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 45 | 61 | 30 | 40 | 176 | -11 |
| South Leytonstone | | 7 | 13 | 4 | 2 | 26 | -71 |
| | <i>Drugs</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 26 | 51 | 53 | 41 | 171 | +58 |
| South Leytonstone | | 0 | 0 | 10 | 1 | 11 | +100 |
| | <i>Other Notifiable Offences</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 13 | 44 | 8 | 13 | 78 | 0 |
| South Leytonstone | | 3 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 9 | -67 |

Source: Metropolitan Police Service Note: This data has been compiled using the following ID/Beat codes: 9999, 4A1, GL06, JC01, JC02, JC03, JC04, JC05, JC06, JC08, JE01, JE03, JE04, JE05, JE06, Jf36, JM01, JM02, JM03, JM04, JM05, JM06, JN13, JS01, JS02, JS03, JS04, JS05, JS06, JSA, JW07, JW08, JW09, JW10, JW11, JW12, Jw13, KB01, KE03, WL01, unrecorded.

Note: Changes to Home Office counting rules in April 1998 mean that data are not exactly comparable.

The most recent crime figures supplied by the Metropolitan Police indicate that Progress is being made towards Strategic Objective 6 (S06), '*Tackling crime and improving community safety*' for some categories of crime (Table 2). Burglary in a dwelling has decreased by twenty-nine per cent in the local area, a slightly slower

rate than the wider area, although burglary in other buildings had risen by sixty nine per cent compared to the wider borough where a small decrease of nine per cent has occurred. Some progress is also being made to reducing assault (ABH), where a decrease is apparent for the local area (-51 per cent) and the wider area (-35 per cent). An increase in theft/taking of a motor vehicle, assault (GBH) and more notably street robbery has occurred in both the local and wider borough.

TABLE 2
Reported Crime in South Leytonstone, 1996-00.

| Area | Offence | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 | 1999-00 | Total | Change (%) |
|-------------------|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|--------------|
| | <i>Burglary in a dwelling</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 3206 | 2312 | 2012 | 2133 | 9663 | -33 |
| South Leytonstone | | 230 | 173 | 124 | 164 | 691 | -29 |
| | <i>Burglary in other</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 1797 | 1681 | 1395 | 1633 | 6506 | -9 |
| South Leytonstone | | 39 | 74 | 48 | 66 | 227 | +69 |
| | <i>Theft/Taking of a motor vehicle</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 1767 | 1907 | 2038 | 1863 | 7575 | +5 |
| South Leytonstone | | 125 | 132 | 127 | 129 | 513 | +3 |
| | <i>Theft from a motor vehicle</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 2592 | 2617 | 2727 | 2852 | 10788 | +10 |
| South Leytonstone | | 252 | 296 | 237 | 153 | 938 | -39 |
| | <i>Criminal damage</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 3769 | 3683 | 3706 | 3720 | 14905 | -1 |
| South Leytonstone | | 210 | 282 | 267 | 236 | 995 | +12 |
| | <i>Assault (ABH)</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 1013 | 984 | 775 | 660 | 3432 | -35 |
| South Leytonstone | | 96 | 81 | 60 | 47 | 284 | -51 |
| | <i>Assault (GBH)</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 118 | 141 | 144 | 163 | 556 | +38 |
| South Leytonstone | | 8 | 11 | 8 | 11 | 38 | +40 |
| | <i>Street Robbery</i> | | | | | | |
| Waltham Forest | | 239 | 152 | 758 | 1014 | 2163 | +324 |
| South Leytonstone | | 8 | 13 | 81 | 92 | 194 | +1050 |

Source: Metropolitan Police Service. Data is comprised of Beat Codes JS01 and JS06 plus all other beat codes for the borough. Changes to the Home Office counting rules in April 1998 mean that data are not exactly comparable.

It is not clear if the crime prevention project has contributed to these changes in reported levels of crime. The information collected from the young people who participated in the project suggests that this is unlikely as few admitted to committing crimes. Other prevention projects such as those initiated by Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust, for example, may have contributed to the decline in crime (see WFHAT Annual Report and Accounts: 1998 -1999).

The research reported here also indicates that for young people, the area lacks excitement and is 'boring', with nothing for young people to do (12 respondents). Typical comments when the young people were asked about their experiences of living in South Leytonstone included:

'Boring, there's nothing to do. I'm not surprised that people get into trouble, you need excitement'
'Boring, there is nowhere to go. Hackney was much better when I lived there, there were parks and youth centres and friends used to lives closer.'
'People's attitudes are aggressive, they shout at you for no reason. There is not enough to do for young people in the area and the area can make you like the others if you do not think about it'.

THE PROJECT

The South Leytonstone Crime Prevention project is funded as part of the South Leytonstone Contract for Change SRB programme, receiving funds from the SRB programme, London Borough of Waltham Forest, Waltham Forest HAT and, in the latter years, from Safe in the City. In its initial appraisal form, the project gave its core objective as follows:

'To make a positive intervention in young people's lives targeting those particularly at risk of crime and disaffection and by doing this develop in them the "core" social skills which will divert them from crime and access them to training, work and opportunities in the community'.

Delivered by the local authority's youth and community service, the project therefore undertakes a range of programmes aimed at diverting young people from crime. Although the project aims to target those young people deemed to be 'most at risk in the community who are disadvantaged and disaffected' the co-ordinators and project workers regard all young people as being 'at risk' of entering into anti-social and criminal behaviour. Those 'most at risk' are identified in the project appraisal as those who are: developing truancy patterns, likely to be excluded from school and are unemployed and not in training.

The project contributes towards SRB Strategic Objective 6, 'Tackle crime and improve community safety'. The project aims to achieve this objective by:

- Reducing the risk of young people offending
- Reducing youth crime
- Enabling pupils to benefit/improve attainment
- Showing positive attitudinal and behaviour change.

The funding from the SRB pays for three youth workers who between them work the equivalent of one full time post. The project is based principally at Leyton Youth Centre, where it has its office, but the services it provides are focussed in the South Leytonstone area. Primarily the youth workers focus on detached work in the South Leytonstone area, in which they identify and aim to work with young people they encounter while walking around the area. They also do a great deal of group work in the local secondary schools, working with non-attendees, young people who have been excluded or those showing 'signs of disaffection' or anti-social behaviour. The work undertaken by the youth workers, aims to enable the young people to:

- Gain information and guidance to make more informed choices
- Learn to constructively use their leisure time
- Establish a sense of social responsibility
- Examine the short and long-term effects of their behaviour
- Learn alternative strategies and skills to deal with conflict, aggression and harassment so they can have a positive outcome for the young person rather than negative (Project re-appraisal form, 1997/98).

By working quite intensively with the young people, the youth workers therefore aim to help the young people question their behaviour and attitudes, enabling them to make 'informed choices' about their lives, other than crime and anti-social behaviour. They address issues such as anger management and conflict resolution,

and work with young people to try and help them understand the consequences of any particular course of action. The resources available to the project and the scope of its work mean that the majority of the sessions are on a group work basis, and the opportunities to work on a one-to-one basis are limited.

The project is open to referrals from a range of sources including schools, the police, local residents, Education Welfare Officers, and the Youth Offending team (Multi Agency Panel). Within the schools the majority of referrals come from teachers who are concerned about the behaviour and/or the attainment levels of a pupil. According to the youth workers, the intention is that pupils referred to the project are those who are deemed to be at risk of imminent exclusion. In the majority of cases the youth workers aim to hold sessions during PSHE classes so that the young people are not missing main curriculum lessons in order to attend. The project also works with young people who they come into contact with while carrying out detached work which aims to take the project out to the young people.

The collation and analysis of project files identified at least 214 young people with whom the project worked between March 1996 and November 1999. However, this figure is probably an underestimate, as it includes an analysis of detached work contact sheets, on which the workers do not always specify the number of young people they meet. The project's administrative systems and record keeping were somewhat disorganised, with referral and other record forms being completed fairly sporadically at best. However, researchers are nonetheless confident that over a period of several weeks in the summer of 1999 and following a subsequent visit in early 2000, all the project's file were incorporated into the analysis. In terms of the project's effective delivery, all of the workers expressed frustration at the lack of administrative support for a project which is administratively heavy, with several forms to complete for each young person contacted. The lack of administrative support meant that the workers often spent time when they should be working with young people sorting out the filing and office systems. It has also meant that the project has not been in a position to establish very effective, computerised monitoring systems.

These records raise questions about whether the project is actively working with as many young people as it anticipated or is claiming. Appraisal forms state that 200 young people a year will benefit, plus 70 improving attainment and around 100 attending youth crime initiatives. It may be that the project counts all young people with whom it comes into contact and counts some twice in subsequent years, but even allowing for administrative and monitoring difficulties, the records within the office fall considerably short of these figures. In addition, the methods adopted and the difficulties experienced by the project in finding young people to interview indicate a project operating on a fairly small scale.

The records collated related to school referral forms, detached work questionnaires, and contact sheets, individual referral forms and initial meeting forms. Sixty-six young people were identified through the school referral forms and indicate that during the period covered, the majority of school referrals came from Norlington School (44). Youth workers came in to contact with a considerable number of people through the detached work with one hundred and seven young people being identified through detached work monitoring data. Unfortunately, for reasons indicated above, it is not possible to specify the exact number, time in contact with the project and those who drop out. Details of those who were contacted reveal the majority (40) were male compared to twenty-two females. The gender of forty-five

young people on these forms was not specified. The data from the initial meeting forms identified forty-one young people with twenty-one not attending school. Reasons given included because they did not feel like going to school (7), did not like attending (4), found it boring (2). Eleven young people said they disliked school, and twenty-one stated that they did not like the teachers. The majority of the young people acknowledged that they behaved badly at school (33), describing inappropriate behaviour as generally behaving badly (11), behaving badly towards teachers (6) and fighting (8). Such negative feelings towards school described by the young people themselves are consistent with the referral forms, which indicate low achievement is the main reason for referral.

THE RESEARCH

In targeting young people, the South Leytonstone Crime Prevention project reflects a realisation that in certain circumstances, young people can be particularly at risk of committing crime. In terms of 'criminal careers' it appears from research studies that individuals more often break the law when they are young, and are most likely to be cautioned or found guilty between 15 and 19. The tendency is for criminal involvement to decline once people reach their 20s. However, those people who start offending when they are younger than 14 are more likely to persist into adulthood, developing longer 'criminal careers' (Farrington, 1996). Thus they are more at risk of becoming serious and persistent offenders (Home Office, 1987 *criminal careers of those born in 1953: persistent offenders and desistence*, HO statistical bulletin No 35/87. London, HMSO). Clearly therefore, it is important to deflect young people from crime, and working with young people seemed to be 'at risk' of offending to address issues around their behaviour and attitude is seen as likely to have a positive effect on their lives in the short and the longer term. The intention is that by working with them even before they begin offending it will divert them from embarking on any criminal activities, helping them make 'informed choices' about the direction their lives take. A considerable amount of research has been carried out to identify these 'risk factors', which can be summarised as including: poor educational attainment, poor relationships with parents, past delinquent behaviour such as vandalism, violence and stealing, and illicit drug use (West and Farrington, 1977). Although it is not possible to accurately predict which individual will become an offender on the basis of how much risk they are exposed to; it is known that the more of these factors an individual exhibits, the more likely he or she is to take part in criminal behaviour (Farrington, 1996). Furthermore, children exposed to multiple risks are disproportionately likely to end up as serious or persistent offenders.

The link between generic youth work and crime prevention is not clearly supported by research findings however (Tuffin et al, 1998), and there is little or no robust evidence that youth work in general reduces crime and criminality (Graham and Bennett, 1995, cited in Tuffin et al, 1998). The reasons behind these limitations to the effectiveness of generic youth work in relation to crime prevention are unclear, but many theories have been proposed. The traditionally broad based approach of much youth work, in which youth workers avoid targeting those known to exhibit criminal or anti social behaviour and resist working with other criminal justice agencies has been proffered as one explanation, which prevents youth workers from offering sufficiently intensive and appropriate interventions (Tuffin et al, 1998). It has also been suggested that typically youth work projects do not have sufficiently well defined aims and objectives, which in the long run means that little attention is paid to measuring changes in attitude and behaviour among the young people (France and Wiles, 1996; Smith and Paylor, 1996, both in Tuffin et al, 1998). The youth work on this SRB funded project is a combination of generic, and untargeted youth work, as well as more focussed activities with young people, challenging their anti-social and criminal behaviour.

Clearly, in developing a project which has crime prevention set out as its primary objective, and which sets out to target young people 'at risk' of offending, the South Leytonstone Crime Prevention project has addressed some of these shortcomings

and doubts expressed about the relevance of youth work to crime prevention. Furthermore, working in partnership with other criminal justice agencies was central to the project's aims, to ensure that in addressing crime prevention, the project was taking referrals from and working with a whole range of possible agencies. There are nonetheless still considerable difficulties inherent in evaluating a project such as a youth work based crime prevention project, whose impact is likely to be in the much longer term. While short term behaviour and attitude changes may be noted, it is difficult to know whether these will be sustained, or even, without careful design and analysis of the evaluation, to know whether changes are attributable to the work of the project, or may have happened anyway.

The need for more longitudinal investigation into the on-going and longer-term effects of preventative interventions is well established (Utting, 1996). It is nonetheless possible to document changes in the young people's lives and drawing on their own testimony and that of people such as teachers and youth workers, to draw some, albeit tentative, conclusions about the effectiveness of the programme in terms of affecting the young peoples' attitudes and behaviour in the short to medium term. In undertaking this evaluation, we therefore sought to identify the areas where the project is likely to have an effect, such as behaviour, attitude, confidence and so on and assessed what, if any, changes have taken place. In addition, in terms of this project, which aims to work with those deemed to be at risk of offending, but not necessarily embarked on a 'criminal career' there are questions about whether the project is indeed reaching those most at risk, and these we also sought to address within the interview schedules.

Findings

This section presents the findings from the observation of detached sessions, the interviews with teachers, police officers and 21 young people. It presents a brief profile of the young people interviewed, before moving on to discuss issues around the referral process, who is referred and the effect of the youth work on the young people.

The young people

Two thirds (14) of the young people who were interviewed were male. The interviewees represented a wide range of ages, from 12 to 18, with the average age being 15 and a half. Seven young people were 18 and six were 13 years old. The interviewees were also fairly well mixed ethnically (Table 2). They all spoke English as a first language and three quarters said they were not religious.

TABLE 2
Ethnic background of interviewees (self defined)

| Ethnic background | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| White/British | 7 | 33 |
| Black English | 7 | 33 |
| Mixed race | 3 | 14 |
| Afro/Caribbean | 1 | 5 |
| White European | 1 | 5 |
| Asian/ British | 1 | 5 |
| Irish | 1 | 5 |
| Total | 21 | 100 |

The interviews indicate that the majority of the young people came from fairly stable family backgrounds. All but one of the respondents said they had a dad, and they all had a mum. Eleven lived with both parents, six lived only with their mum, and three lived only with their dad. One interviewee said she lived with her daughter. The majority of the interviewees said they got on very well or well with their mother (19), and their father (14). Only one person said they did not get on very well with their father and two people said they did not see him. Furthermore, nine young people had one parent that was working fulltime, and six had both parents in fulltime work. Only one young person said that neither of their parents had any job at all.

More than half the young people were still in education, either at school (9), in sixth form college (2), or studying full time at college (1). Three respondents were working full-time and five were unemployed.

The majority of the interviewees (12) still had some contact with the crime prevention project when they were interviewed, and of those who had stopped, five had stopped within the last two years. Most of the young people still participating in the project have been involved for two years or less (9), and most interviewees (16) attended sessions once a week. Referrals to the project had been made by teachers (9) or youth workers (12), and the young people had participated in a range of activities, including group work (19), sports (12), role play (11) and one to one sessions (9). In addition, six people had been on a residential sailing course and five young people said they had taken part in games.

Referral agencies

The bulk of the project's referrals have come from the local schools, who generally refer groups of pupils to the project. There are three schools within the area, who have used the services offered by the project to varying degrees. Other education related agencies and services such as Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) have not used the project and were unaware of it, although the youth workers had advertised the service to them.

The police did use the project when it was first set up, when there was one officer who referred several young people to the youth workers, but since a change in personnel, no further referrals have been made. This research suggests that at present, awareness of the project within the police is limited, and the officer who was contacted for an interview stated that he had no involvement with the project,

despite the fact that project workers stated that they had made the officer aware of the project on a number of occasions. This lack of awareness exists in spite of the MAP, and the fact the police are partners on the SRB Partnership, with one officer who regularly attends. It is not clear why this lack of referrals exists, although one interviewee suggested there was a general lack of interest in the project amongst police officers:

'I have to say that no-one took the project seriously in the police...The project was never publicised enough and this is the fault of the police, it was never put forward and introduced as an important role in our work...It was a simple case of bad management on the part of the police'.

Thus, part of the problem seems to have been a lack of publicity within the police about the project, and a reluctance to take the project seriously. The reasons behind the reluctance are unclear, although one interviewee suggested that for many officers it was an unfamiliar way of working with young people, considerably different from more traditional systems of cautions and final warnings. In some instances this unfamiliarity generated suspicion and therefore resistance, creating a barrier between these more traditional 'harder' ways of working within the police force, and what are viewed as the 'softer' approaches taken by agencies such as the youth service. However, within the context of a policy environment which emphasises greater inter agency working, this apparent reluctance on the part of the police to engage with this type of project is an issue of some concern, particularly given that the officer who used it had found it useful and beneficial.

The extent to which organisations and agencies refer to the project seems to be dependant on individuals: one school which had been using the project quite extensively stopped referring when a key teacher left and the police stopped making referrals when an officer left. It may be that better links with senior managers who then promote the project and encourage their staff to use it are the first steps to addressing this problem, and ensuring that the youth workers can establish good co-operation with the more 'front-line staff'. Better communication between staff at the project and with referring organisations would also enable the youth workers to demonstrate the service's effectiveness, which might encourage greater use of the service. If the project is seen as an optional service whose effectiveness is unclear, officers and teachers are less likely to use the service except as a last resort.

There has also been some confusion within schools about the aims of the project and therefore which pupils are eligible to join, indeed some young people have been turned away by the project workers as they failed to meet the 'at risk' criteria specified in the project documentation. This has occurred despite the liaison with the schools and the difficulties experienced by the project workers reflects the finding in the recent inspection report of the Local Education Authority (LEA) that many behaviour support and exclusion initiatives have developed in a 'fragmentary' fashion. The report suggests a lack of consultation between the LEA and relevant agencies in improving the provision for special educational needs. To amend this, it suggests the LEA should

'Develop an inclusion strategy that is based on a comprehensive review of SEN in which schools and a range of local agencies and other stakeholders are actively consulted' (OFSTED: Inspection of LBWF LEA, 2000).

These findings lend support to the views of the youth workers and youth service staff, who felt that the number of referrals and therefore the project's success, has been hampered by ineffective partnership working between agencies. In particular project workers identified the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) as unco-operative and one worker stated that:

'Educational welfare service was discouraged to work with the youth service, this was raised in early appraisal meetings as a matter of policy concern' (project worker).

In light of the findings from the Ofsted report, and the views of project workers, there appears to be scope to improve communication within the local authority and between agencies to ensure better co-ordinated working so that young people at risk of offending, and who have a criminal history are referred to the project.

Further more there was a limit to which the project integrated itself into the community, and although project workers established contacts with many young people in the area through detached work, greater community participation aided through liaising with community organisations and tenants associations could have increased the number of project beneficiaries.

Referral criteria

There was considerable commonality amongst the criteria used by schools and the police officer. Key indicators which teachers and the police officer used to refer included:

- anti social behaviour (drugs, smoking)
- risk or suspicion of involvement in crime
- actual involvement in crime or contact with the police
- pupils who 'don't quite fit': who are not very motivated, who do not see any connection between education and their future, and who have poor self esteem
- difficulties within school, including:
- risk of permanent exclusion or previous exclusions from other schools;
- temporary exclusions
- bullying
- a significant drop in achievement
- poor patterns of attendance and punctuality
- truancy
- problems relating to teachers
- failure to produce work
- misbehaving in class
- disruptive behaviour or behavioural difficulties
- chaotic family circumstances; a lack of adult supervision and parental support at home
- disaffection.

In general some of these referral criteria were reflected in the data from the school referral forms and initial meeting forms, where the main reasons given were low achievement (26), inappropriate arguing (16) and disruption of lessons (15).

There was a generally good awareness that the project was a crime prevention project, although one school was concerned that involvement would negatively label

the school and the pupils involved in the project. Another school did not tell parents that it was focussed on crime prevention, feeling that it was too negative. However, although some schools did tend to refer pupils felt to be at risk of crime, this was not necessarily always the case. Many of the school based indicators such as a drop in achievement or temporary exclusions were not seen as risk indicators necessarily, but as signs that the young people were starting to 'opt out'. Teachers will try to resolve these issues within school, and it is only when there are no alternatives that they refer to the project, which in two of the schools is seen as something of a last resort. The main referrals from the schools have been year 11 and Year 9 pupils, although teachers from one school felt that Year 11 was too late, and that it was preferable to work with younger children, who there is a greater chance of having an effect on.

Although some of the schools see the project as something of a 'last resort' for the pupils who are referred, it also appears that the young people who get involved with the project need to have some degree of motivation to stay with what is a voluntary scheme. The police officer, who referred five groups for example, tended to refer the young people who needed long term help, but also those who she felt 'could be reached'. She valued the project because there were no other similar or alternative projects.

The interviews with the young people indicate that the project may not only be accessing those 'at risk'. In spite of several of the teachers citing family background as one indicator of referral, and its inclusion as an established 'risk factor' for example (Farrington, 1997; Farrington, 1996), the majority of the young people came from stable and seemingly supportive family backgrounds, as described above. In addition, for most of the young people who go out in the evening without their family (18), their parents always or usually know where they are (10), and always or usually know who the young person is with (9). Only two young people said their parents hardly ever know where they were, and two said they hardly ever or never knew whom they were with.

Furthermore, school did not seem to pose too much of a difficulty for the majority of the interviewees who were still at school when they were interviewed: all of them said they liked school 'a lot' (3) or 'a bit' (6), only two thought their standard of work was below average, and four said they felt they worked hard or quite hard, with four saying they 'did enough to get by'. However, five out of the nine of the interviewees still at school said they had been suspended, for fighting and disruptive class behaviour. Given that the interviews took place during or after involvement in the project, it may be that the generally quite positive views about school are one affect of this involvement and we return to this point below.

There was also minimal involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour among the young people interviewed, the majority of whom said they had never carried out most crimes and behaviour classed as anti social (Table 3). The main exception was physically hurting someone, which the majority (15) said they had done because they were provoked. It is worth noting however, that most of the young people had been involved in at least one activity, with only three young people saying no to all the questions.

TABLE 3
Involvement with criminal or anti social behaviour prior to involvement in the
Crime Prevention project (% in brackets) (n=21)

| | Yes | No | Never done it before |
|--|---------|-------|----------------------|
| Physically hurt someone such as hit or kicked them | 17 (81) | 1 (5) | 3 (14) |
| Threatened someone | 7 (33) | 0 | 14 (67) |
| Broken into someone's home and stolen something | 2 (10) | 0 | 19 (91) |
| Stolen something from someone's car | 4 (19) | 1 (5) | 16 (76) |
| Stolen something from someone's bike | 4 (19) | 0 | 17 (81) |
| Stolen someone's car | 1 (5) | 1 (5) | 19 (91) |
| Stolen someone's bike | 2 (10) | 0 | 19 (91) |
| Damaged someone's car | 3 (14) | 1 (5) | 17 (81) |
| Damaged or destroyed someone's bike | 3 (14) | 0 | 18 (86) |
| Damaged or destroyed any part of someone's home | 1 (5) | 0 | 20 (95) |
| Stolen something that someone had left somewhere | 4 (19) | 0 | 17 (81) |
| Stolen something from someone in the street | 3 (14) | 0 | 18 (86) |
| Graffitied | 4 (19) | 0 | 17 (81) |
| Bullied someone | 6 (29) | 0 | 15 (71) |
| Treated someone differently because of their race or ethnic background | 2 (10) | 0 | 19 (91) |

Boredom was the most common reason given for getting into trouble (10), followed by peer pressure (9) and hating schoolteacher's (7). Very few respondents felt that they had got into trouble because their parents were not strict enough with them (1), because it makes them 'look cool' (3) or 'tough and hard' (2).

Amongst the interviewees, nine had been referred by their teacher, with the remainder referred by a youth worker. The young people themselves seemed to have a fairly clear idea of why they were referred to the project (Table 4): although the most common response was that they attended to get involved with other activities, for all but two of the interviewees this was a reason in addition to those associated with their behaviour.

Before attending the project, eleven young people said that they hoped to benefit from the project. The most common reason given was to 'get me off the streets and stop me being bored' (5), followed by 'help me behave better in class' (3) and 'to go away on a trip' (2).

TABLE 4
Reasons Given by Referral Agent/Person for attending the project

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| To get involved with other activities | 11 | 61 |
| To stop getting bored | 10 | 48 |
| To get off the streets | 10 | 48 |
| To stop getting into trouble with the police | 8 | 38 |
| To help improve disruptive behaviour in class | 6 | 33 |
| To help get along better with class mates | 2 | 10 |

Note: Respondents were able to give more than one response and therefore percentages total more than 100.

The referral process

Once a school or another agency decide to refer a young person to the project, the referral process is relatively informal and straightforward. The youth workers usually ask the teacher to complete a form, setting out details of the young person and why s/he is being referred. There are also a series of forms to be completed by various people, including the young person, teachers and the youth workers over the duration of the young person's involvement. However, the youth workers tended to find the number and length of the forms onerous, and filled them in only sporadically.

In general, teachers and the police officer found the referral process simple and straightforward, although the police officer expressed some concern that there was an absence of 'official' documentation on which to note the fact that a referral had taken place. Only one teacher found the process rather time consuming and cumbersome:

'It's hugely bureaucratic and time consuming and I have to say possibly people have no idea of the pressures that teachers are under because it seems to take forever before anything can start' (headteacher).

However, in this case it appears that there is a lack of understanding that the project need the information in order to establish what problems the school thinks the young person has. Where this understanding existed in other schools, and among different teachers at the same school, there was no problem with the referral process.

A number of interviewees felt that the on-going feedback was not adequate however, and that it was too informal. This perception seems to be associated with how the project was organised within schools. Where the pupils' form teacher was the main link to the youth workers for example, the teachers tended to feel that the verbal feedback which took place after sessions was sufficient, while the Head complained that it was inadequate. However, where the main link was through the

year head, it was the individual form teachers' felt that the links and feedback were inadequate. It may be therefore, that the project would benefit from establishing slightly more formal feedback mechanisms within schools, or to other agencies that might refer in future. If teachers do not find out how people they have referred previously have done, they cannot know whether it is worth referring in the future or whether to recommend the project to other teachers and schools.

Detached work

The other principal way in which the youth workers come into contact with young people is through the detached work. The primary intention with this aspect of the project is not to get the young people to come to youth centres, but rather to work with the young people within the context of their own environment. Although the youth workers did encourage the young people to attend youth centres if they felt it was appropriate, they feel their work is likely to have a greater impact on behaviour and attitudes if they work with the young people 'on the streets'. They suggest that it is, for example, easier to get someone to think about the reasons for their behaviour and to address their behaviour in the circumstances where it arises, rather than within a more artificial or centre based environment. However, young people are not discouraged from attending centres, and centres provide youth workers with the opportunity to engage young people in individual and group based work and to give young people an opportunity to participate in new, and different, activities. By creating positive alternatives, workers aim to increase the aspirations of the young people and to become actively involved in planning and organising events and activities. Among the young people interviewed for this research, eleven of them had been referred to the project by the youth workers, probably through detached work, and had participated in activities taking place at youth centres as well as interacting with the workers on the street.

The observations of the youth sessions highlighted how the workers seek to work with the young people they come into contact with, chatting with them informally and non-judgementally, constructively challenging inappropriate attitudes and behaviour, offering advice and support where it is sought. The workers tend to move around the south Leytonstone area for three hours in the evening, talking to groups of young people they encounter.

The observations also indicated that among many of the young people, who are out in the evening, the youth workers are well known and are generally well liked. The young people the researcher met obviously trusted and respected the youth workers, who were consistently enthusiastically welcomed into the groups who knew them. The young people tended to ask for advice and the workers used the opportunity to get up to date about what the young people had been doing since their last encounter. The workers interacted effectively with the young people, utilising similar language, and the young people seem to see them as 'non-threatening advisors'.

While the workers do appear to have a positive effect on the young people with whom they come into contact, there is some question about the scale of the detached work's impact, partly because its effectiveness is quite heavily dependant on the dedication and aptitude of individual workers. With only three workers, the scale is therefore necessarily limited. Furthermore, there may be some question about the level of need in the area, as at each of the three sessions which were

observed, the area was very quiet, and on one occasion the youth workers encountered some young people, but did not interact with anyone on the street. It was only on returning to a youth centre that interaction with young people took place.

The findings

This section presents findings from the evaluation, which indicate the effectiveness of the project on the young people with whom it works.

Effect on the young people

In general, the young people seemed to enjoy the activities they participated in. Using the proportion of participants whom 'really enjoyed' each activity as a measure of its popularity, the residential activity was the most popular and one-to-one was the least. However, in spite of being the least enjoyable, the role play and the one to one were rated as the most useful activities, and conversely, the residential was counted as among the least useful (Table 5).

TABLE 5
Respondents' rating of activities

| Activity | Number of participants who 'really' enjoyed the activity (% in brackets) | Number of participants who found the activity useful (% in brackets) |
|-------------|--|--|
| Group work | 9 (47) | 16 (84) |
| Role play | 3 (14) | 11 (100) |
| One to one | 1 (11) | 9 (100) |
| Sports | 6 (50) | 9 (75) |
| Residential | 5 (63) | 6 (75) |

Note: Respondents were able to give more than one response and therefore percentages total more than 100.

The reasons why the young people found the different activities useful varied, but many of them are in line with the youth workers' aims of helping the young people to think about their behaviour and to make choices about ways of behaving and things to do with their time. The young people found the one-to-one sessions useful because, for example, they helped them think about their behaviour (3), calm down their temper (2) and communicate better (2). The role-play also helped the young people communicate better with others and this was seen as the overriding benefit of the group work (10). The residential activities were seen as giving the young people 'a new perspective on life' (3) and giving them something else to do other than 'hanging out' (2).

The young people were asked about changes to a range of personal attributes, and whether these changes could be ascribed to their participation in the project. The project seems to have most impact on the following attributes:

- **Confidence and self-esteem:** the project seems to have had a positive effect on self-confidence and self esteem. Thirteen young people said they felt more self-confident since participating in the project, and eleven said they felt better

about themselves generally. In the majority of cases, the improvement was attributed to the project. The most common reason given for feeling more confident was the group work, which helped the young person to express him or her self in front of others, while having someone who empathises to talk to also helped the young people's self esteem.

- **The future:** participation also seems to have positively effected many of the young peoples' optimism, twelve said they felt more confident about their future job prospects since participating. Ten attributed this change directly to the project, although the reasons for this improvement are not clear: four young people said the project had helped them set realistic goals or helped them get a 'direction'.
- **Behaviour:** Sixteen young people felt their behaviour had improved, and fourteen attributed the change to the project, because it helped them to calm their temper (7), or to respect others (7):

*'I used to talk in class and now I don't so much because the youth workers explain to me why my behaviour is not good and how to change it. They talk to you and understand you and this has helped me to change'
'[He] has helped me to calm down my temper. I used to be really bad but now my temper is much better. He made me understand why I need to calm down'.*

Nine young people also felt that they did things that would get them in trouble with the police less often, and all of these credited the project with helping bring about the change. However, two people said this aspect of their behaviour had got worse.

- **Personal relationships:** Six young people felt they got on better with their friends, and nine said they got on better with their family. Six said their relationship with their parents had improved because of the project. Reasons for these improvements included helping the young people to respect others' viewpoints and listen to other people, and helping to calm their temper.
- **Attitude and behaviour of young people within school:** The majority of respondents still attending school (9) said they behaved better in class since attending the project (5) and six said they were getting better marks. Only two pupils said they attended school more. A number of teachers felt that the measure of the project's success with the young people was in terms of improving attendance and keeping them in school, and several interviewees felt that the project had been a success in this regard for the young people they had referred:

'They have both really improved, they have come back and they have really improved in terms of attendance, in terms of attitude in lessons. We were working on maybe finding them other stuff to give them outside of school like the motor mechanic course... but to be honest I don't want to offer it to them now that things are going well in school (Year Head).

Criminal and anti-social behaviour

The project seems to have had a marginal effect on young people's attitudes towards and participation in anti-social and criminal behaviour. The majority of

young people thought that it was 'definitely not OK' to carry out a range of anti-social or criminal acts (Table 6), with the exception of insulting someone who insults you, about which most of the interviewees were less certain, and getting drunk, which more than a third of the respondents thought it was OK to do.

TABLE 6
Young people's views on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour

| Anti-social behaviour | Definitely ok (% in brackets) | It depends (% in brackets) | Definitely not ok (% in brackets) | Don't know (% in brackets) |
|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Insult someone who insults you | 4 (19) | 15 (71) | 1 (5) | 1 (5) |
| Carry a knife | 1 (5) | 5 (24) | 14 (67) | 1 (5) |
| Treat someone differently because of their race or ethnic background | 0 | 1(5) | 20 (95) | 0 |
| Bully someone | 0 | 2 (10) | 19 (91) | 0 |
| Graffiti | 1 (5) | 4 (19) | 15 (71) | 1(5) |
| Get drunk | 8 (38) | 3 (14) | 9 (43) | 1(5) |
| Take drugs | 4(19) | 2 (10) | 15 (71) | 0 |
| Sell drugs | 2 9(10) | 1 9(5) | 18 (86) | 0 |

Furthermore, the young people reported that there had been little change in these opinions: one person stated that they had thought it was OK to insult someone who insulted you, but that his parents, teachers and the youth worker had made him realise it is not right. Two young people stated that as they got older they realised it was wrong to carry a knife, and three young people no longer thought bullying was OK because the youth worker had made them realise that they 'need to respect others'.

Although involvement in crime and anti social behaviour was generally minimal prior to involvement with the project, there does seem to have been a generally positive effect on what was observed, with a general decline in involvement during and after the project (Table 6) compared with before (Table 3, above).

Only four young people felt that they had done things, which could be considered as breaking the law less, since they had been on the scheme. However, the young people felt that the project had helped bring about positive changes in their behaviour and attitudes for various reasons, the most common reason cited was that the youth workers had taught them to respect others around them (12). For those attending school, six respondents thought the project helped them to improve their disruptive behaviour and two thought it helped not to back chat teachers. A number of the young people commented on how the youth workers had helped them improve their confidence and change their behaviour:

'It helped me to come out of myself, given me more confidence and communicate with other people better. Gave me something to do other than sitting around getting into trouble with local people and the police'

'It helped my confidence and I can talk with other young people my age easier. The youth workers are patient and I can contact them anytime'

'Taught us how to be assertive and not aggressive'

One important aspect of detached work is to encourage young people to use their time constructively, and channel their energies into activities that can help to raise self-esteem and realise their true potential. Many of the interviewees (12) commented that there was a lack of activities and facilities on offer in the area for young people and that this encouraged them to spend time hanging out on the street in pursuit of excitement. This could potentially lead to behaviour that put them into conflict with the local neighbourhood or the police, with this being the case for ten respondents.

*'Boring. There is nothing to do. I'm not surprised that people get into trouble, you need Excitement'.
'It's really boring, there is nothing to do. Pastures is OK, but you can't fit the whole of Leytonstone in there. Before we met the workers we used to walk around the streets and the Police would hassle us. We'd go out looking for fights and vandalise things'.
'There is nothing to do apart from cause or get into trouble'.*

Case Study

A group of mainly young men hung out on the steps of Leytonstone Station. Local residents and police knew the group through their re-occurring anti-social behaviour. This included drinking, smoking cannabis, running across the railway lines, and according to two group members, fighting and vandalism. Workers explored, challenged and discussed the impact of the groups' behaviour on themselves and local people that it affected. According to the group boredom was the main factor for their behaviour. Initially workers tried to give the young people a space that was theirs, by applying for access to the railway arches. Permission was not granted however and the work continued to be undertaken through detached sessions, and centre based work that allowed the young people to access activities, working on individual and group based levels.

These group members welcomed the intervention of the youth workers and felt it had a positive effect in their lives. One member who had contact with the project for two to three years, stated that work undertaken with the workers '*sorted me out*' and '*saved me from the going the wrong way*'. He reflected that if he had not met the workers then he could easily have become involved in '*all sorts*' and been in and out of prison.

*'The project was excellent...it sorted me out and if it could access more people at a young age it Would save them too before it got past it for them'.
'The youth workers were like friends, it felt like they were on our level and respected us and this made us respect them. You knew that they really cared about what happened and gave us a lot of their time and tried to get us the railway arch. This made me want to do better for them and myself cause I felt I owed it to them. We all had a lot of respect for them, I didn't want to be seen getting into trouble after the time we spent with them, it was embarrassing...I wanted to make them proud of me'.*

Other changes in the young peoples' lives

None of the young people were on any other schemes or projects while working with the youth workers. More than half of them said that they had changed in ways independent of the project the majority (8) feeling that they had got more mature. Few of the young people cited other changes happening in parallel with the project:

three respondents said they had met new friends, while two had split up with friends and two had split up with their partner.

Understanding the change

The way in which the youth workers work with the young people, encouraging them to question and understand the consequences of their behaviour, thereby helping them make 'informed choices' about how to behave, seems to be crucial in terms of having an effect. The young people themselves testify to how the youth workers help them reach this understanding and change their behaviour. The teachers also noted this aspect of the work, helping them gain 'an insight into why they behave like they do, to try and get them to realise what they are throwing away in terms of their future and shutting down their options'. The police officer also noted the value of the project in demonstrating to the young people that there are alternatives:

'Some of them can still be reached before it's too late and they spend their whole lives in and out of prison or engaging in a life of crime, not realising that there is something else out there for them' (Police officer)

She found the project offered a particularly useful alternative to Police involvement for young people who were demonstrating what she termed 'cocky behaviour' and were starting to become involved in comparatively petty criminal activity.

The development of relationships based on trust and mutual respect is one crucial factor required for the project to work effectively. Such relationships enable workers to act as advisors to young people, helping them to make 'informed choices' about how they spend their everyday lives and the plans they make for the future. The effectiveness of the project is therefore dependent on a dedicated and skilled team, who allow young people to contact them after hours, if necessary.

The intensive nature of the work seems to be important. The youth workers worked intensively with a group of young people at a local residential home, which the young people found extremely beneficial and enjoyable. The workers looked at issues of self-esteem and identity as well as working through difficulties they were experiencing at school. The manager of the home noticed a very positive difference in the young people, and expressed disappointment when the workers stopped coming to the home, as she saw it, rather prematurely:

'There was a noticeable difference in them, their attitudes and they had something to look forward to, people that they felt they could communicate with, it was so important for them. But the impact was not long enough and certainly them not pulling out like that, it could have made a long term difference I am sure, they certainly seemed at the time to be learning the importance of respecting each other and those around them'.

One of the teachers interviewed also stressed the importance of sustaining the contact, suggesting that the time the project spent in the school was not sufficient, as the work is good, but needs constant reinforcement. She saw changes in attitude and behaviour, but the young people easily slip back into 'old ways'.

Age may also be a factor in facilitating change, and certainly the teachers who reported least impact on the young people were those who had referred pupils from Year 11. The numbers in our sample were very small, and the analysis does not

reveal any major differences according to age among those who had said they offended less or more since the scheme, and those who attributed changes to the project. However, several of the teachers and the youth worker suggested that Year 11 is a little too old, and that it is optimal to work with younger pupils.

The teachers were particularly keen that the project gave the young people an adult to talk to who was neither parent nor teacher, an 'outside ear', who could help the young people see the value of school, or seek alternatives. One teacher suggested that the youth workers were good 'role models'. It seems that the young people also value the distance the youth workers have from school, and therefore often from the problems being experienced, and also feel that youth workers listen and understand.

Conclusions

This evaluation has examined the effectiveness of the South Leytonstone Crime prevention project, drawing on the opinions and experiences of the young people themselves, and of the adults involved in the project, including teachers, police and the youth workers. It is unfortunate that we were not given access to more young people to interview, as the small numbers in this study have limited the analysis, which is possible. It is nonetheless possible to draw some conclusions about the extent to which the project is meeting its aims and objectives.

It appears that the project has a generally positive effect on the behaviour and attitudes of the young people with whom it works, who testify to more confidence, better behaviour and improved personal relationships, and attribute at least some of the change to involvement in the project. It is however, difficult to be certain that none of these changes would have happened anyway, and we must rely on the subjective testimony and judgement of the young people, teachers and so on to attribute credit for any improvement. The nature of the work is such that maximum effect is probably achieved when the project works intensively over a sustained period of time, as it is aiming for a gradual but sustainable improvement. It also appears likely that it is most effective when working with younger people. The observations of the detached work in particular highlighted the positive relationship of mutual trust and respect built up between the youth workers and the young people, which this research indicates is important in terms of addressing the young people's behaviour.

There are however questions about the scale of the project, and the collation of project data and the difficulties accessing large numbers of young people to interview suggest that it is not working with as many people as anticipated, despite making allowances for the difficulties in accessing young people whose contact with the project was through detached work. The nature of the SRB process is such that success is usually measured in terms of large number, which encourages projects to aim for ambitious targets, and there is little flexibility to reflect the work of projects, which aim to work more intensively with fewer people. In addition, the workers delivering the project are often not the same people who compile bids for funding, so they can find themselves under pressure to deliver targets they had no say in setting. However, the comparatively low levels of contact with young people, and the continuing incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour, suggests that the project may not be accessing the young people appropriately and may need to reassess the nature of the problem it is seeking to address.

It is also not clear that the project is effectively targeting those most at risk of crime, and on a series of measures, the young people in this study did not overwhelmingly demonstrate multiple indicators of risk. However it is important to note that project workers considered that all young people were potentially 'at risk'. In particular, detached work required workers to carry out an immediate risk assessment with no prior knowledge of the young person(s) encountered. The project workers have also encountered difficulties in securing the co-operation of other agencies such as the police. Furthermore the 'crime prevention' label has negative connotations and this has adversely affected the participation of at least one school in the project. Whilst there does seem to have been some effect on some young people's offending and anti-social behaviour patterns, the number of young people for whom it was an issue was comparatively small. The problems in gaining the co-operation of agencies such as the police and EWOs, who might be expected to particularly refer young people at risk of criminal activity, may help explain this shortfall. Furthermore although teachers understood the aims of the project to be associated with crime prevention, they did not necessarily refer those young people they felt to be the most at risk of crime. Clearly, in order to stick with the programme some degree of motivation is required on the part of the young people. Therefore, although one teacher saw it as a 'last resort' it is likely to have the most effect on those people who have some desire, albeit small, to change, but conversely, may not be most 'at risk'.

Recommendations

On the basis of this research, the Urban Regeneration Evaluation Team makes the following recommendations for the on-going development of the project (While this one maybe coming to an end, much of the work continues and therefore there are lessons to learn and take forward:

- Address the lack of co-operation from agencies, particularly the police, perhaps through a series of presentations or workshops with community liaison officers to explain the project and increase referrals
- Explore ways of increasing the number of young people they work with, through more publicity within schools, for example, and possibly widening the remit to go beyond just crime prevention
- Provide the resources for some dedicated administrative support
- Review output measures so they more accurately reflect the work of the project

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ISBN 1-902494-41-5