

New Deal for Communities

The National Evaluation

Research Reports

Youth Crime: Diversionary Approaches to Reduction

Research Report 5

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit is currently sponsoring the 2002-2005 national evaluation of New Deal for Communities. This evaluation is being undertaken by a consortium of organisations co-ordinated by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

Those wishing to know more about the evaluation should consult the evaluation's web site in the first instance
<http://ndcevaluation.adc.shu.ac.uk/ndcevaluation/home.asp>



Sheffield Hallam University

**Youth Crime:
Diversionary Approaches to Reduction**

Research Report 5

Author:

Sue Adamson

Northern Crime Consortium

July 2003

ISBN: 184387 030 4

Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology	1
3. The nature of the problem	1
4. Causes of the problem	4
5. Youth Diversion as a solution to the problem	7
a) What is youth diversion and what does it do?	7
b) What has it achieved?	9
c) Does it work?.....	11
6. Conclusion	13
Checklist for tackling youth crime.....	13
Contacts	14
Further reading.....	15
References.....	15
Website links	16

List of tables

Table 1	Offenders found guilty at all courts or cautioned by type of offence, sex and age group	2
Table 2	Victimisation risk in 2000	3

List of boxes

Box 1	Hackney NDC Young people's offences	2
Box 2	Perceptions of youth crime in NDCs.....	3
Box 3	Youth victimisation perceptions in Hackney NDC	4
Box 4	Causes of the problem in NDCs	4
Box 5	Risk factors which predict offending and anti-social behaviour	5
Box 6	Range of Youth Diversionary Projects.....	8
Box 7	Youth engagement in NDC youth diversionary projects	9
Box 8	Reduction of offending in NDC youth diversionary projects.....	10
Box 9	Common problems in NDC youth diversionary projects	11
Box 10	Youth Diversion – factors which may help to achieve success.....	12

Executive Summary

Youth Crime, which is a significant national problem particularly common in socially deprived areas, has been identified as an issue in 34 of the 39 regeneration schemes established under the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme.

Offences committed by young people in the NDCs were most frequently perceived to be theft and handling, particularly vehicle theft, and violent crime, particularly fighting. Disorder is also a large problem in NDCs where teenagers hanging around on the streets are seen as an issue by 25% more residents than the national average. In addition, young people have higher risks of victimisation than older people, a problem which impacts on their behaviour.

The most common motives generally given by young people for their offending are material gain and boredom. Young people from NDCs were emphatic that boredom is a key factor in young people's involvement in crime.

A wide range of risk factors predict offending and anti-social behaviour but no one factor can be said to "cause" youth crime. Risk factors cluster in the lives of some children while protective factors are absent. **Risk factors identified in NDCs were lack of education and employment opportunities and of parental support, and drugs problems.**

Youth Diversion is one of a number of approaches to tackling youth crime. **NDC is currently funding youth diversion projects in 22 of the 39 partnerships using a wide range of interventions including youth clubs, music, dance, holiday activities, education and skills training, provision of places for young people to meet and activities aimed at improving relationships with the police.**

NDC diversionary projects have reached a broad section of young people including those on ASBOs, repeat offenders and self excluders and are popular with the young people themselves. One case study NDC can offer evidence of reduced offending by young people and both case study NDCs anecdotally highlight improved behaviour.

Some effects of youth diversion are likely to be immediate, in providing alternative occupation for young people. Others however, for example those providing education and skills training, will only impact in the longer term.

Problems with youth diversion have included difficulties arising from the community led nature of the NDC programme, lack of management experience and weak data recording systems. There have also been problems in funding uncertainties and with premises.

Factors which may help to achieve success in youth diversionary projects include:

- **Clearly defined outcomes and mechanisms** for reduction of offending.
- Use of **multi-agency working** between both statutory and voluntary agencies.
- **Integration** of schemes with other aspects of young people's lives.
- Consideration of the **needs and capabilities** of young people
- Building on **existing resources**.
- Implementation by **qualified youth workers**
- Use of **staff who already have contacts with the young people**.
- **Consistency** in dealings with young people and **continuity** in workers.
- Use of **local people** as staff.
- **Careful targeting** of young people and identification of contact methods.
- **Involvement of the young people themselves**.
- **Flexibility** of approach.
- Including **follow-up work** with participants in their communities.

1. Introduction

Youth crime is a significant problem throughout the country but particularly in areas of socio-economic deprivation. The problem is recognised in most of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas, 34 of the 39 NDCs having identified some kind of youth crime problem in the delivery plans. Youth diversion is being used in more than half the NDCs with the intent of reducing crime committed by young people.

This report will consider the nature and causes of the problem of youth crime as identified in the literature and in the NDCs. It will review youth diversion as an intervention to tackle the problem, with particular reference to projects implemented in two case study NDCs. It will discuss problems encountered in implementing NDC youth diversionary projects to date and preliminary results achieved. It will point to key messages and lessons learned and offer a check list for those considering tackling youth crime problems using youth diversion.

2. Methodology

Preliminary telephone interviews have been carried out with representatives of the majority of the 34 NDCs which have identified a youth crime problem and from these four NDCs selected for more detailed study in the first year of the national NDC evaluation, two implementing youth diversionary schemes and two offender based projects which are the subject of a separate report (Adamson, 2003). The case study NDCs selected for youth diversion are:

- Shoreditch (Hackney)
- Norwich

Each of these NDCs is implementing two main youth diversion projects; the Crib and Sky in Shoreditch and NR5 and Earlham Youth in Norwich. Shoreditch has been able to provide crime data including a breakdown by age for the NDC area but these have been unavailable for Norwich. Systematic output data has been lacking although both NDCs studied have been able to produce some output figures. Information has also been derived from in house reports and interviews with managers, workers and stakeholders. Young people themselves have been consulted by means of interviews, focus groups and their views expressed on project produced video.

3. The nature of the problem

In 2001/02 25% of persons arrested nationally were aged under 18. While the rate of known offending for indictable offences for all ages has fallen across all age groups between 1991 and 2001, offending by young people continues to be at higher rates than for the population as a whole. In 2001 males aged 15-17 found guilty or cautioned for indictable offences were 5,891 per 100,000 population, more than three times the figure for males of all ages (1,666). For females aged 15-17 the figure was 1,541 compared with 371 for all ages. The peak age of known offending for males in 2001 was 18 having remained the same since 1988, while that for females was 15. The peak age for females has fluctuated over the past 10 years mainly between 14 and 15 but briefly rising to 18 in 1997 (Home Office, 2001). Studies of self reported offending show that the real figure for youth crime is higher than shown by recorded crime statistics. Research shows that between one quarter and one half of young people commit offences at some time in their lives, with more males than females admitting to crime. Crime is particularly high among those excluded from school.

Box 1: Hackney NDC Young People's Offences

Hackney can show figures for the period April 1998 to December 2002 for young people aged 10-17 accused of crimes. The largest proportion of the total 553 offences for which young people have been charged is for theft and handling offences, of which theft of motor vehicles accounts for more than half. Violence against the person and drug offences are next most important.

	% of all aged 10-17 accused
Violence against the person	18
Robbery	12
Burglary	7
Theft and handling	30
Criminal damage	9
Drugs	16

Although 34 of the NDCs have identified a youth crime problem, this is seldom quantified in the delivery plans. A few NDCs have described the problem in terms of young people resident in the area going through the criminal justice system or involved in specific types of crime. Some have produced figures for the proportion of crime committed by those aged 10-17 in the area. In Southwark 26% of reported crime was said to be committed by those aged 10-17 compared with 20% in the borough as a whole. In Hackney, one of the case study NDCs, a crime audit in 2001 revealed that 15.6% of crime suspects were aged between 11 and 17 and 12.3% of victims of violent crime were of the same age. In East Brighton NDC 84 young offenders were resident in the area in 2000/2001. In Bradford NDC between October 2001 and March 2002 over 140 offences were caused by young people aged 17 and under. From the limited evidence presented, youth crime appears to be at least as great a problem as the national average and in many NDCs a significantly larger one.

The types of offences committed by young people vary with age and gender. As can be seen from Table 1 the largest proportions nationally of known offenders at all ages are guilty of theft and handling stolen goods but this proportion is much greater for females and very young males. Male offenders aged 15-17 are more likely to be guilty of violence against the person and drug offences than either females or younger males. Burglary and criminal damage are particularly common among boys aged 10-11. Research in self-reported offending confirms these differences in age and gender.

Table 1: Offenders found guilty at all courts or cautioned by type of offence, sex and age group

	Percentages							
	Males				Females			
	All ages	Aged 10-11	Aged 12-14	Aged 15-17	All ages	Aged 10-11	Aged 12-14	Aged 15-17
Violence against the person	12	11	13	15	9	5	11	12
Burglary	8	18	15	11	2	7	4	3
Theft and handling stolen goods	36	55	50	38	60	84	76	66
Criminal damage	3	10	7	4	2	3	3	2
Drug offences	20	1	6	17	10	0	2	6
Total offenders all types of offences (thousands)	379.3	3.7	25.0	58.9	87.5	0.9	10.8	14.5

(Criminal Statistics England and Wales, Home Office 2001)

Box 2: Perceptions of Youth Crime in NDCs

- Young people commit all kinds of crime but major problems in all NDCs studied were theft of cars and joy riding and fighting and public order offences
- There were some differences between NDCs, Brighton and Norwich seeing shoplifting as important while theft of mobile phones was a particular issue in Hackney
- Both boys and girls are involved. Boys tend to commit crime in groups, girls alone or with a companion. Boys commit vehicle crime, girls shoplifting

Evidence for the types of crime committed by young people in the NDCs has largely been based on the perceptions of residents, and those involved with the projects. Some NDCs have been able to produce figures to support these perceptions. For example Derby's delivery plan showed numbers of young people involved in burglary, criminal damage and violent crime and Hackney figures are shown in Box 1. Perceptions in four case study NDCs show a wide range of crime committed by young people but with an emphasis on theft and handling and on violent crime as shown in Box 2. The evidence available from a few NDCs therefore suggests that the types of youth crime are similar to those identified nationally and therefore the situation is likely to be similar across most NDCs.

Disorder is even more closely associated by most people with young people. Teenagers hanging around on the streets was seen to be a very or fairly big problem by 32% of respondents to the British Crime Survey of 2001/02, a proportion which has increased from 20% in 1992 (Simmons et al, 2002). The problem is even greater in the NDCs. The NDC average in the MORI survey of 2002 was 41% seeing teenagers hanging around on the street as a serious problem in the area and many of the NDCs identified youth anti-social behaviour, youth disturbance, juvenile nuisance or youths causing annoyance as severe problems in the delivery plans. In some NDCs such as Hackney the figure rose to 43% where it is felt that children and young people are the main perpetrators of a range of unacceptable behaviour ranging from noise pollution to victimisation of specific tenants. In Brighton it was felt that anti-social behaviour is a bigger issue for some of the young people than actual offending, a view which was endorsed by many of those interviewed in the NDCs. As will be seen below, young people who hang around on the streets are more likely to commit criminal offences. However it was felt in several NDCs that adult fear of gangs of young people is often not justified and the gangs may be intimidating but are not actually linked to crime although, as the young people in Hackney said, "old people look at us like we're criminals". The point was also made that the vast majority of young people are not engaged in crime but a few high profile youngsters cause most of the problems.

Young people also have significantly higher risks of victimisation than older people. Analysis by the 2001 British Crime Survey showed that risks are greater for a variety of types of crime as shown in Table 2 (Kershaw et al, 2001).

Table 2: Victimization risk in 2000

	Average England and Wales	Head of household aged 16-24	Men 16-24
Households most at risk of burglary	3.4%	7.6%	
Households most at risk of vehicle related theft	10.9%	19.3%	
Adults most at risk of violence	3.9%		18.8%

The British Crime Survey has also found that young people are particularly likely to say that they had experienced anti-social behaviour, 50% more of those aged 16-24 than adults perceiving that they are in areas with high levels of disorder (Budd & Sims, 2001). The problem of youth victimisation has been recognised in the NDCs. The MORI Survey found that 16% of 16-24 year olds had suffered assault in the last 12 months compared to 5% of all age groups. Middlesbrough specifically identified youth victimisation as a problem in its delivery plan and in Hackney interviews emphasised that young people were at least as likely to be victims as perpetrators and that fear of crime restricts young people's activities and their access to youth facilities which could support their personal development.

The neighbourhood context of youth crime is important. Areas with a high proportion of youth, such as student areas, may provide an attractive concentration of opportunities for crime. There may also be a development of a criminal sub-culture among the youth population. Where the two are combined or are in close proximity, the incidence of crime is likely to be high and fear of crime or fear of youth a powerful element of neighbourhood life.

Box 3: Youth victimisation perceptions in Hackney NDC

Young people described their fear of attack and gave that as a reason why they spend their time in groups. "We feel safe in a group." "I go with friends to be safe." They also discussed the problem of bullying – of older young people picking on younger ones, of bullying because of colour or just simply "because you have more things than the other person".

4. Causes of the problem

Why do young people offend? The most common motive given by young people has been found by research to be material gain, followed by for excitement, for enjoyment or to relieve boredom. Material gain is more important for most property offences such as burglary or theft but other reasons more common for vandalism and motor vehicle theft and reasons for shop lifting being partly economic and partly for excitement. Offences at younger ages are more likely to be committed for hedonistic reasons (Farrington, 1996). In the NDCs several of the delivery plans describe a lack of activities and facilities for young people as a major issue in the area, implying a problem with youth boredom. In

Box 4: Causes of the problem in NDCs

- Little statutory youth provision and therefore few places to go but the streets
- Boredom and peer pressure leads those hanging about on the streets to anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Crime provides excitement, a buzz which is otherwise absent from young people's lives

"I think that youths commit these crimes simply because they are bored and there's nothing else to do."

Hackney Young Person

People commit crime because they are "on drugs or if they are bored. Even if you i'nt on drugs you just get bored. It's something to do."

Norwich Young Person

two of the NDCs studied, while poverty and the desire for status symbol goods was mentioned, boredom was felt by those interviewed to be the most important factor as shown in Box 4.

It has been found that offending behaviour is part of a larger syndrome of anti-social behaviour, being associated with drinking, smoking, gambling, motoring offences, drug taking and precocious sexual activity. Young offenders frequently do not get on with their parents, think their parents sometimes do not know where they are or who they are with or have run away from home. They spend time hanging around on the streets and often have friends who offend. They often have anti-establishments attitudes and a history of school trouble making, bullying and truanting (Farrington, 1996, Flood-Page et al, 2000). Risk factors which predict offending and anti-social behaviour are therefore many and varied but no one factor can be said to “cause” youth crime. Rather, a number of risk factors frequently cluster and interact in the lives of some children while protective factors are absent (Youth Justice Board, 2001). The principal risk factors identified are shown in Box 5. Young people are protected from involvement in crime not only by absence of these factors but by the presence of others which moderate the effects of exposure to risk. These help to explain why some children exposed to clusters of risk factors do not grow up to commit criminal offences. Preventative strategies cannot alter some risk factors. For example, females are less likely to become serious offenders or to have a long offending career. Others, such as social bonding, quality of relationships with positive role models and opportunities for involvement in the lives of families, schools and communities, can be amended.

The root causes seen behind the crime problems in the NDCs studied generally support the theory outlined above and can probably be regarded as applying to most NDCs. These causes are perceived as including the absence of education, chances of getting into jobs and facilities. 40% of those aged 16-59 in Norwich have no qualifications and there is second and third generation illiteracy as well as unemployment. Those

Box 5: Risk factors which predict offending and anti-social behaviour

(Farrington, 1996, Youth Justice Board, 2001 and others)

- Teenage pregnancy
- Smoking, drinking or drug taking in pregnancy affecting low birth weight, small height and low school attainment
- Early hyperactivity and impulsivity and aggressive behaviour
- Low intelligence possibly affecting through inability to manipulate abstract concepts or through school failure
- Poor parental supervision, harsh or erratic parental discipline and passive or neglectful parental attitude
- Broken homes, especially where mother is not affectionate, and parental conflict, unstable living conditions
- Family history of criminality and attitudes that condone offending
- Socio-economic deprivation – low family income and poor housing
- Peer influences – co-offending and association with delinquent friends
- School influences – going to high delinquency rate schools is a predictor of later convictions but the mechanism is not clear. Truancy and exclusion
- Community influences – socially disadvantaged areas may have a breakdown of community ties and neighbourhood patterns of mutual support and produce anonymity
- Situational influences – opportunities for crime
- Lack of training and employment
- Drugs and alcohol abuse

interviewed in Hackney perceived that older young people with educational difficulties see crime as an easier option than struggling through the system. Young men who are performing badly at school feel a need to show their peers that they can be successful at something producing an aggressive attitude and leading to crime and drug taking. There is no culture of achievement and aspiration, horizons are limited and social deprivation is high. In both projects parents are felt to spend insufficient time with their children and take little interest in their activities, using money as a substitute for care. In Hackney there is felt to be little parental support – no parents at all attending any of the three nights of a recent football competition and the MORI survey showing that parents who help their children with homework are few. Parents fail to set boundaries between right and wrong so that young people do not perceive their behaviour as bad. Many parents work shifts and leave children in the care of older siblings and there are high numbers of lone parent families. There is little parenting support, a point that was also made by parents talking on video. Many parents are drugs or alcohol abusers and young people on the streets may be vulnerable to approaches by drug dealers who are a big problem in the area. Many of the young people take drugs although these are not generally hard drugs. In Brighton a manager commented “I have yet to meet a young person who has never smoked cannabis on the estate” while young people in Norwich admitted to taking drugs and 80% of the 60 young offenders attending one project were using drugs recreationally. In Hackney there is a problem with crack cocaine.

As was seen previously the peak age of offending is late teens for boys and mid teens for girls. Why should offending increase through teen years and then reduce? A number of theories have been proposed to explain this, including changes in hormone levels in males, changes in physical abilities and opportunities for crime, adolescent uncertainties and needs to establish independence, changes in values including testing boundaries between right and wrong as moves are made away from parental influence and pursuit of status with peers. Penalties for initial offences are not seen as severe and not regarded as deterrents. Where risk factors discussed above predispose young people to anti-social behaviour this results in offending. It would seem that young people then grow out of crime as their progress towards adulthood continues. Graham and Bowling (1995) found that of respondents who had previously committed crime, one quarter would not do so again simply because “It’s childish”. Additionally behavioural influences change as, with leaving school and developing adult relationships with the opposite sex, peer groups split up. For various reasons the risks involved in offending begin to outweigh the benefits, for example in terms of criticism by partners or more severe penalties in the criminal justice system. For girls social development factors such as leaving full time education or home, economic independence, marrying or living together and looking after children are important. For young men influences are rather having no delinquent peers and an above average standard of schoolwork. Also important were acquiring a sense of direction, for example from religion, voluntary work or employment training, and fear of the consequences of repeated offending, penalties being perceived as more severe with age and number of offences. Some also simply felt more mature, able to see others’ point of view and to take responsibility for themselves and others.

Various theories have been suggested as to why boys offend more than girls and why they offend in different ways. Girls are generally more closely supervised but Graham & Bowling (1995) found that even controlling for supervision, attachment to family and school and association with delinquent peers, offending was still twice as common among males as females. Other research suggests that it may simply be that boys are more susceptible to risk factors for offending as they are to biological hazards such as malnutrition and infection. Darwinian theories suggest that behavioural differences of boys and girls originate in differences in their roles in mating and parenting. Campbell’s discussion of riots in the early 90’s (1993) showed that boys got into trouble in violent and attention grabbing ways, proving their masculinity to each other and to girls. The

girls got pregnant or commit offences which appear not to have direct impact on people, but give a buzz while providing material gain.

5. Youth Diversion as a solution to the problem

Approaches to tackling youth crime are many and varied, some attempting to reduce opportunities for crime (situational crime prevention). This includes target hardening (e.g. physical security of properties), increased surveillance (e.g. CCTV, improved lighting, neighbourhood wardens etc.), making stolen goods more easily traceable (property marking), and eliminating situations in which crimes occur (e.g. paying wages by cheque rather than cash). These methods have been shown to reduce crime using 'before' and 'after' measures. Although these methods are directed at the whole criminal population, because they are also directed at crimes which are commonly committed by young people, they can be said to tackle youth crime. Other approaches tackle underlying risk factors, the variety and complexity of which means that any strategy to reduce youth crime must consider a wide variety of interventions and requires partnership across a number of agencies in any area. Combinations of interventions very early in a young person's life probably are the most effective in the long term – tackling factors identified in the development of youth offending. These include early home visiting, parent education, pre-school programmes, child care provision, school based programmes, anti-bullying projects and peer influence strategies. Although evaluation has been limited, some success has been shown particularly in the United States. A third set of approaches concerning work with young offenders to help them to desist is reviewed in another paper in this series (Adamson, 2003) and includes programmes such as the Youth Justice Board's Youth Inclusion Programme and Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme and measures introduced under the Crime And Disorder Act 1998. Approaches to divert young people from offending are considered in the remainder of this paper. The fourth and last main category of youth crime interventions is work with young people who have been victims of crime. Some of the more successful approaches are reviewed by Utting (1999). The Youth Justice Board (2001) includes chapters on "Reducing levels of risk – what works?" and "Effective risk focussed interventions with young offenders."

a. What is youth diversion and what does it do?

Youth diversion attempts to prevent offending by providing alternative activities and facilities for young people. The theory is that they will be encouraged to more profitably occupy their time which might be otherwise spent hanging around on street corners or in criminal behaviour. Research has shown that hanging around on street corners is predictive of offending behaviour (Flood-Page et al, 2000). The accompanying programmes of education and skills training will provide opportunities for future employment as well as occupying young people's current time and projects to improve relations with the police will improve young people's knowledge of the justice system and defuse antagonism. Diversionary programmes may be aimed at the general youth population in an area or targeted at those who have already offended or who are at most at risk of offending. A number of schemes of the latter type are run under the Youth Justice Board Youth Inclusion Programme which is considered in the separate paper on interventions with young offenders (Adamson, 2003). Although the focus of these schemes is "at risk" young people, all young people in the community may benefit.

Activities undertaken under the umbrella of youth diversion are extremely varied as shown in Box 6. Most programmes include a variety of separate interventions. New Deal for Communities is currently funding youth diversion projects in 22 partnerships. Of

Box 6: Range of Youth Diversionary Projects (Various sources)

- Youth Clubs
- Provision of places for young people to meet - youth centres, youth domes, cyber cafes, or simply specific areas in the neighbourhood where groups of young people will be tolerated.
- Sport
- Music, dance and performing arts activities
- Activities specifically in summer and other holidays
- After school activities/clubs
- Development of youth fora where young people can have a say in the community
- Residential weekends/weeks
- Day trips and outings
- Education and skills training
- One to one sessions and support work
- Issue based workshops e.g. drug abuse
- Mentoring
- Provision of facilities for children
- Drugs projects
- Activities aimed at improving relationships with the police
- Street based work
- Outdoor pursuits such as outward bound programmes, outdoor ventures and expeditions
- Work towards awards such as Duke of Edinburgh, Princes Trust

these some are still at very early stages but others have made significant progress. The range of interventions is very wide, including most of the types listed above, and the range in funding amount is also considerable. Youth Clubs are being started in several NDCs, and some are attempting to provide other, less formal, venues for young people to meet such as Rochdale's planned Youth Tolerance Zones for young people to meet in public places. Sport is frequently a component and includes soccer schools and teams, canoeing, abseiling, boat clubs, and swimming. Music and the performing arts are other features, for example a theatre school and dance group in Norwich, dance in Hackney and an academy of music and the performing arts in Luton. Summer holiday activities are provided in many NDCs, often, although not always, connected with the Summer Splash programme of the Youth Justice Board. Several of the programmes are holistic and include one to one sessions, support work, education and training, issue base workshops and mentoring as well as the more "fun" leisure activities. A number of NDCs have projects aiming to improve relationships with the police. For example Hackney has successfully conducted a project consisting of role play by police officers and young people with their normal roles reversed. Newcastle has been actively encouraging communication between police and youths on the streets, handing out free passes to the swimming pool as an incentive, and has ascribed a reduced rate of youth crime to the project. Provision is being made for younger children by a few partnerships, for example an adventure playground and play park at Hackney.

Besides varying in the number and type of interventions employed, the NDC partnerships are targeting different sections of youth. Some schemes are for all young people while others are specifically targeting those who are more disaffected, either being already offenders or thought to be at greatest risk. Some NDCs are working with Youth Justice Board Youth Inclusion Projects. Others regard their remit as keeping young people active so that they do not start to commit crime and moving problem individuals towards separate YIPs. Lambeth is targeting young women, because of a

prior lack of provision, and black young men because of especially high rates of victimisation and offenders in this group.

Four projects in two NDCs have been the subject of case studies. Although three of these run youth clubs, this provision is regarded as only part of the projects. In Norwich, NR5 emphasise their role in full time education, training and support with an ultimate goal of employment. The education, training and support part of the project offers specialist arts based skill training programmes, Princes Trust xl clubs within Earlham High School, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, one to one support, information, advice and guidance, summer activities programmes and work experience. The emphasis is on developing base level social skills such as reasoning, time keeping, concentration and listening without which young people cannot achieve mainstream provision and paper qualifications. The other project in Norwich operates mainly by running youth clubs and sport and leisure activities but these activities are intended provide a focus for young people as an alternative to crime, provide role models and opportunities to obtain qualifications, raise aspirations, increase self worth, and set boundaries for behaviour. In Hackney work is carried out with Social Services, young people are accompanied to Housing if there is an issue, referrals may be made to the teenage pregnancy unit and attempts are made to build relationships by working with parents or entire families. A study group is planned which will use the national curriculum but work in a less structured manner than formal schooling, using computers. Group discussions centre on issues of housing, employment and sexual health and there are also one to one confidential sessions. The second project in Hackney takes a different approach by identifying gaps in youth provision in the area and attempting to fill them by working with other youth projects in the area. It runs an information service for young people and supports them to run projects which are of benefit to the community.

b. What has it achieved?

There has been little rigorous evaluation of youth diversionary projects and there is as yet little evidence other than anecdotal as to the effectiveness of such projects in reducing crime and disorder. Some work in the United States has shown impacts on self reported offending, arrest rates and drug use and a few UK projects, described by Utting (1996), have showed statistical or anecdotal evidence of reduction or cessation of criminal activity by participants. A youth diversion project carried out in Hartlepool in 1999/2000, funded by the Home Office Burglary Reduction Initiative was regarded by the project staff as a success. There were high levels of participation by young people, local people felt that the behaviour of young people in the area improved and the police

Box 7: Youth Engagement in NDC Youth Diversionary Projects

- Successful engagement of young people of a wide range of ages and ethnic groups. Inclusion of those on ASBOs, repeat offenders and self excluders, all with behaviour and attitudinal issues
- Young people have achieved educational qualifications and employment, have engaged in workshops on drug and alcohol awareness, smoking and healthy lifestyle education and accessed anti-bullying schemes
- Projects well received by young people - the only bad thing that a focus group in Norwich could find to say about the project was that the youth club was not open enough. It was reported that young people had said that a dance workshop in the anti-bullying project in Norwich was “wicked”. In Hackney the young people enjoy the Crib to the extent that a group aged 12-15 broke in on a night when the project was not open just to use the premises. Young people feel safe at the project and may go there when in trouble rather than go home

Box 8: Reduction of offending in NDC Youth Diversionary Projects

There is anecdotal evidence in both case study NDCs of individuals who have improved their behaviour and stopped offending or reduced the seriousness of their offences.

In addition Hackney can offer evidence of reduced offending by young people in the area. Comparison of a period two years before the NDC began with two years after showed a reduction of 20 (8%) in the numbers of those aged 10-17 charged. At the same time crime figures in the area increased slightly. Some caution must be used with these figures as no account has been taken of trends in the area.

	Accused aged 10-17			Accused aged 18-24	Offences
	Apr 1998 - Mar 2000	Apr 2000 - Mar 2002	Percentage change	Percentage change	Percentage change
Burglary	19	11	-42	-29	-10
Theft & handling	77	60	-22	+19	+16
Criminal Damage	36	8	-77	-3	-5
Robbery	9	40	+355	+35	+32
Drugs	31	39	+26	-24	-14
Total	238	218	-8	+3	+6

There is a large decrease for criminal damage particularly and lesser ones for burglary and theft and handling. There is a very large increase in robbery, probably reflecting the upsurge in mobile phone theft in London, and a lesser increase for drug offences. The decreases in burglary and theft and handling may be the result of crime switch to robbery, all these being types of acquisitive crime. However criminal damage is not acquisitive crime and its reduction can then be seen as an independent improvement. Older young people (18-24) show a slight increase in those charged but have less considerable increases or decreases for individual types of crime. Criminal damage and burglary offences show percentage decreases less than those for 10-17 year olds charged.

felt that levels of disorder had reduced. It was also felt that relationships had been built between the young people and the police, relationships which the police are keen to maintain by remaining involved with the young people (Sturgeon-Adams, Adamson and Davidson, in progress). Humberside Police have been running an initiative called Lifestyle since 1989 in which young people become involved in community projects during the summer holidays, providing occupation for themselves and benefit to the community in some way. The scheme has proved popular with 90,000 young people taking part over the years and anecdotal evidence from some police officers concerned that these have included young people known to have been involved in crime or disorder. A recent best value review by Humberside Police showed that opinions of the general public and schools were generally good, the scheme being thought worthwhile, contributing positively to the community and introducing children to the police on a positive basis. However there was less agreement concerning the impact on crime and disorder.

There have been considerable successes in the two case study NDCs operating youth diversionary projects as shown in Boxes 7 and 8. The projects have also resulted in

improved partnership working among statutory and voluntary agencies providing for young people. Common problems identified are shown in Box 9.

c. Does it work?

Box 9: Common problems in NDC youth diversionary projects

- Inexperience of members of management committees for youth projects in committee working, management, finance and legal requirements. Community representatives may not have this experience and require training. It is important to have a strong chairperson
- Poor management and data recording systems. It is important to set these in place at the outset in order to be able to monitor the project and assess its effectiveness
- Lengthy set up processes. Establishing management and data recording systems, charity and company registration and employment of staff may take considerable time. This should be taken into consideration at the planning stage
- Premises problems. It is important to secure long term premises for centre based youth work. "In kind" donated premises can be withdrawn and therefore it may be better to go for rented accommodation
- Good youth workers are not necessarily good managers. It may be necessary to provide training and guidance in setting up projects and management systems.
- Short term funding creates pressures on project staff and can result in negative effects such as loss of staff because of insecurity of their employment

Reviews of work in this area suggest that merely introducing young people at risk of offending to sport or leisure activities is unlikely to reduce criminality (Utting, 1996). Initiatives need to be part of a wider programme that addresses other aspects of their lives at home, in school or in the community. Their effectiveness is likely to depend on whether they achieve at least some of the following:

- improvements in cognitive and social skills
- reductions in impulsiveness and risk-taking behaviour
- raised self-esteem and self-confidence
- improvements in education and employment prospects

All the NDC projects considered in case studies have attempted to intervene in at least some of these areas and there are preliminary indications of success with at least some individuals. Projects are providing opportunities for training and employment and raising young people's aspirations and using a range of work with young people to contribute to their effectiveness. This may include provision of information and support, in depth one to one work, group discussions, youth clubs and various sport and leisure activities. Research in the United States suggests that the value of diversionary schemes is different for girls and for boys. Girls' problems of declining self esteem are mitigated by supportive relationships with peers and adults but activities are less important. Externalising behaviour problems for boys are lessened and self esteem increased by access to structured activities and household rules, although bonds with staff can also help to prevent older boys' getting into trouble.

Youth diversion schemes are becoming a frequently used way of tackling youth crime. There is a need for work to investigate what types of activity are most effective with

Box 10: Youth Diversion - factors which may help to achieve success
(Utting, 1996 and NDCs)

- Ensuring that schemes have **clearly defined outcomes and clear mechanisms** by which it is intended offending by young people will be reduced
- Use of **multi-agency working** between both statutory and voluntary agencies
- **Integration** of schemes with other aspects of young people's lives, including school attendance, training opportunities and job-search
- Considering the **needs and capabilities** of young people when drawing up educational programmes. Problem young people frequently do not react well to structured training courses but can be engaged in alternative curriculum schemes
- Building on **existing resources**. Where there is an existing resource such as a sports centre or youth club, diversionary schemes can tap into existing pools of young people who can be encouraged to undertake new activities
- Implementation by **qualified youth workers** with the skills to build relationships of trust with young people. It is important that staff understand the problems faced by young people, and are willing to spend time in trying to solve them. However staff, while relating well to young people, should nevertheless be able to maintain a distance in the relationship and set boundaries
- Use of **staff who already have contacts with the young people**. Where there are staff attached to pre-existing facilities, these may have already built up a relationship of trust with young people and be in a position to encourage participation in new activities. Voluntary staff in pre-existing organisations may have a fund of useful expertise
- **Consistency** in dealings with young people and to maintain continuity in workers
- Use of **local people** as staff. Schemes have felt benefits where local people have been trained as youth workers to work on the projects because of their knowledge of and contacts in the area
- **Careful targeting** of young people and identification of contact methods
- **Involvement of the young people themselves**. This may take the form of setting up of a youth forum to ascertain what the young people really want and need and whereby young people can have a say in the running of activities and in setting rules for behaviour. It may also involve giving young people paid work on the projects as assistants to the youth workers or getting young people to design and build their own youth shelters
- **Flexibility** of approach. Norwich for example, when premises were not available for youth work, developed a travelling road show
- Including **follow-up work** with participants in their communities

particular age groups and with young people of different offending histories. The same scheme may have different success rates when directed to those who are hardened offenders than to young people in general. Programmes may have different effects when young offenders are mixed with others from the general youth population than when groups are segregated. Effects may be beneficial or not to both groups. There may be combinations of activities which are more beneficial. Some indications from research (Utting, 1996) and from the schemes described above of factors which may help to achieve success are outlined in Box 10.

6. Conclusion

Under the New Deal for Communities programme more than half the partnerships are implementing youth diversionary projects. Consideration of a small number of case studies has confirmed findings from the limited previous research and provided some insight into problems and factors which may help to achieve success. Limited availability of data and the time frame of this study have however prevented rigorous evaluation. Project managers need to recognise that some projects will take time for their true effects to be seen and that there is a need for assessment of the long term impact of the projects, which will require detailed collection and recording of data.

Issues which may benefit from further research include:

- Differences in the requirements for effectiveness of projects between those for males and for females and between those targeting young people of different ages.
- Differences in the attractiveness of projects to young people of different ethnic groups within age bands.
- Differences in effectiveness of projects between young people with different offending histories, or between those who have already offended and those who have not.
- The balance of advantages to projects in community leadership and community based personnel with the need for professional expertise and long term planning.
- The frequently restricted geographic horizons of youth groups and the need to break down such barriers to accessing of available facilities.

Checklist for youth diversionary approaches to tackling youth crime

An assessment of the nature and scale of the youth crime problem is a necessary first step in forming a strategy to deal with the problem.

- What is the scale of the problem? What is the nature of the problem? What kind of crime is involved? Or is it a problem of disorder – youths causing annoyance rather than actual crime?
- Is the problem one of perception by residents? If so, how is that measured?
- Can it be backed up by statistics? Are statistics available for the area in which you are working?
- Is it concentrated in particular areas?
- Has the nature and the scale of the problem changed in recent years? ...
- how has it changed?
- ... and why has it changed?

Youth Diversion is likely to require input from a variety of agencies and other partners. You therefore need to consider:

- Which statutory bodies may have an input? These may include those involved with young offenders such as the police and the Youth Offending Team and also those otherwise involved with young people such as the Youth Service and Education.
- Are there voluntary bodies who could also be involved? Examples involved in NDCs are Save the Children and YMCA.

- How might it be best to engage the interest and commitment of these organisations?
- Is there already a forum for the meeting of these organisations?
- Do they have different approaches to the problem?
- Are there other groups who can help, or should be consulted? For example, what role do local communities have to play? What do young people themselves have to say?

When developing your approach to dealing with youth crime you may need to be flexible, innovative, and prepared to learn from other organisations.

- Have you tailored your approach to the particular nature of the problem in your area?
- How is the intervention you propose intended to impact on the problem?
- Are there lessons you could learn from initiatives undertaken elsewhere? If your planned intervention is part of a national scheme, such as YIP, have you consulted the appropriate guidance material?

In planning youth activities you need to consider how you will engage the young people. You may need premises and you will need staff who can relate to the young people.

- Can you build on existing facilities/organisations?
- Are there existing staff attached to existing facilities or in voluntary organisations whose experience and skills could be tapped?
- Are there people in the local community who could be trained to work with young people?
- Are there suitable premises/venues available for planned activities?
- If premises are not available, can alternative methods of working be developed?

It is vital that you know whether your approach to tackling youth crime is working or not.

- Have you drawn-up clearly defined and measurable objectives?
- Has a system been put in place to monitor the effectiveness of your approach?...
- and are you able to track the costs of your approach?
- Have you considered the question of displacement?
- Has sufficient time been allowed to undertake evaluative work?
- Do partners need to be involved in the evaluation process?

Contacts

The Home Office
 Research Development Statistics
 Room 275, Home Office
 50 Queen Anne's Gate
 London SW1H 9AT
 Tel: 020 7273 2084
 Fax: 020 7222 0211
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm>

Youth Justice Board
 11 Carteret Street
 London SW1H 9DL
 Tel: 020 7271 3033
<http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/index.cfm>

Further reading

There is no one work that provides a total overview of youth crime and there is little writing on youth diversion. The Audit Commission's Report of 1996 and update in 1998 form a starting point concerning the extent of the problem and its prevention. Farrington (1996) provides a useful summary of the reasons for youth crime and of the ways in which those underlying reasons have been tackled. The Youth Justice Board (2002) reviews risk and protective factors associated with youth crime and effective interventions to prevent it. Graham and Bowling (1995) and Flood-Page et al (2000) discuss self reported offending, underlying risk factors and reasons for desistance. Utting (1996) reviews a number of preventative programmes in the U.K including diversionary schemes.

References

- Adamson, S. (2003) *Youth Crime – Offender based approaches to reduction*. Interim Research Report, New Deal For Communities National Evaluation. CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University.
- Audit Commission. (1996). *Misspent Youth - young people and crime*. London: Audit Commission.
- Audit Commission. (1998). *Misspent Youth '98 The challenge for Youth Justice*. London: Audit Commission.
- Budd, T., & Sims, L. (2001). *Anti-social behaviour and disorder: findings from the 2000 British Crime Survey*. London: Home Office.
- Campbell, B. (1993). *Goliath Britain's dangerous places*. London: Methuen.
- Farrington, D. P. (1996). *Understanding and preventing youth crime*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation/ York Publishing Services.
- Flood-Page, C., Campbell, S., Harrington, V., & Miller, J. (2000). *Youth Crime: Findings from the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyles Survey*. London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate Crime and Criminal Justice Unit.
- Graham, J., & Bowling, B. (1995). *Young people and crime* (Vol. 145). London: Research and Planning Unit, Home Office.
- Home Office (2001) *Criminal Statistics England and Wales*
- Kershaw, C., Chivite-Matthews, N., Thomas, C., & Aust, R. (2001). *The 2001 British Crime Survey*. London: Home Office.
- Simmons, J. et al (2002). *Crime in England and Wales*. London: Home Office.
- Sturgeon-Adams, L, Adamson, S, & Davidson N (in progress) *Hartlepool: a case study in burglary reduction*. Hull: Centre for Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Hull
- Utting, D. (1996) *Reducing criminality among young people: a sample of relevant programmes in the United Kingdom*. Home Office Research Study 161. London: Home Office
- Utting, D (1999) 'What works in the UK' Presentation to 'Catching them early' Youth Justice Board Conference March 1999
- Youth Justice Board (2001) Risk and protective factors associated with youth crime and effective interventions to prevent it

Website links

The Home Office

Research Development Statistics

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm>

US Department of Justice

<http://www.usdoj.gov/>

US National Criminal Justice Reference Service

<http://www.ncjrs.org>

Crime Reduction website. This has a knowledgebase, toolkits and down loadable publications

<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk>