An Evaluation of the Introduction of a Youth Inclusion Programme in Rural Wales

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Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

This small, independent research study provides an insight into the implementation and delivery of a Youth Inclusion Programme (YIP) in Penparcau, a semi-urban area and Tregaron Uplands, a rural area in Ceredigion. The research, which was largely qualitative in nature, involved 30 semi-structured interviews with a wide range of practitioners, managers, families and young people. The study also involved an element of participant observation and the in-depth analysis of eight case studies. The research explored interviewees' perceptions of the implementation of the YIP between October 2005 and March 2007; the study also examined in detail a small sample of young people's intervention plans and case files covering a nine-month period during this time frame.

The research outlines the variety of challenges encountered in the developmental phase of a YIP and highlights some of the lessons learnt during this formative period. The decision to concentrate the YIP service on a more localised area after March 2007, and the success in establishing a multi-agency group (the Request and Action Group) in the area, reflects this learning process. Whilst it is not within the remit of this study to analyse the impact of the YIP after its relocation to a localised area, the final stages of the fieldwork outline the implications this decision had for multi-agency practice in Penparcau.

The Youth Inclusion Programme in Ceredigion

- The Ceredigion Youth Offending Team (YOT) became an independent organisation in April 2005, six months before the inception of the YIP. Changes in staff, management structures and practices led to a temporary weakness in the infrastructure of the YOT team, this had negative consequences for the implementation of the YIP and the initial delivery of the programme. The first YI (Youth Inclusion) officer was in post from October 2005 until the end of March 2007.

- Staffing shortages within the YOT impacted on management workload. Senior staff did not have the capacity to plan ahead and conduct the necessary research across Ceredigion. This resulted in difficulties with defining the role of the first YI officer to ensure the new recruit had all the necessary experience and skills for effective programme delivery.

- In the early implementation stages of the YIP, prior to the publication of the YJB's (Youth Justice Board) revised guidance on YIP delivery, management and practitioners involved in the recruitment of the YI officer were conscious that there may be unknown challenges involved when adapting an urban model to a rural area. Whilst managers ensured the job specification prioritised the need for an individual with frontline experience, they were unaware of the level of strategic and administrative responsibilities required for the model to become operational.

- There were 46 referrals to the YIP during the period the first YI officer was involved in service delivery. Fifteen young people who were perceived to be the most 'at risk' of offending were chosen by the selection and review panel. Eight of the 15 young people successfully engaged with the YI officer. The YI officer worked closely with each YIP participant to develop an 'individual action plan' which involved interventions being clearly targeted to meet their needs.

- Outcome measures (i.e. school exclusion and offending behaviour) indicate that the low level of intervention (i.e. 'dosage') provided by the YIP had very little impact on reducing school exclusion and offending behaviour .The YIP interventions did not appear to facilitate access into mainstream services nor contribute to the integration of the young person into their local community.

- The following key factors can be attributed to the less than ideal 'dosage rate' (i.e. time each individual participant was involved in constructive activities): the very high proportion of the YI officer's working week spent driving (estimated at fifteen hours); limitations in terms of what the YIP could offer given the lack of affordable and accessible mainstream and specialist service provision in the area; very few trained frontline support staff available at that time to undertake the essential task of 'hand holding' participants when they attended new activities.

- Whilst transport difficulties and financial constraints served to exclude participants on a practical level, on an emotional level, participants often did not have the confidence to attend new activities by themselves. Interview participants felt that there needed to be more one-to-one support locally for vulnerable children and young people.

- The recruitment of support staff (sessional workers involved in programme delivery) should have been as robust as the recruitment of permanent staff with a clear induction programme involving child protection and ONSET training and regular programme of formal supervision. Given the administrative demands of assessment, support staff should also be able to contribute to the ONSET assessment process. Once the programme focussed the provision of the service on a more localised area it appeared that support staff resources were utilised more effectively.

- Travelling time also impacted considerably on the administrative requirements of the role of YI officer. Each participant was assessed using the referral and assessment framework 'ONSET' package. Whilst the 'ONSET' assessment and intervention plans were essential in ensuring the service was delivered consistently, it was estimated by the YI officer that each assessment took approximately fifteen hours to complete.

- Formalising referral pathways and providing a clearly structured outline of the service provided would have helped facilitate a more effective end product. Both potential/actual participants and partner agencies may have benefited from the provision of a clear outline of the referral criteria, an explanation of the content and duration of the programme with an approximate start and end point. It was also necessary to provide a thorough review procedure to identify whether the expectations of the young participant and the referrer have been met.

- There was very little evidence to suggest that the progress of the YIP participants was reviewed by the steering panel or the original YI officer on a regular basis during the phase of the study which focussed on the individual case studies.

- Disseminating regular feedback on the programme's performance and impact to strategic stakeholders and key partners, would have facilitated more involvement from the key agencies working with vulnerable young people i.e. schools, local police, youth and social services.

- All of the young people referred to the YIP had mental health needs that required long term intensive support. Whilst it was widely recognised that CAMHS provided an effective service and linked in well with local agents, participants felt that CAMHS, and other mental health support provision did not currently have the capacity to meet local needs. The perception of families, key practitioners and senior managers was that limited access to mental health provision for children and young people was a major concern both at a local and national level.

- Difficulties in recruiting a preventions team co-ordinator made supervision of the role problematic during the time the first YI officer was in post. In the period prior to the appointment of a part-time preventions co-ordinator, supervisors did not have the time to ensure programme integrity was maintained. A part-time preventions co-ordinator was recruited in August 2007 when the YIP was relocated to a localised semi-urban area. The preventions coordinator developed an appropriate system of supervision with the new YI officer. Referral criteria were also clarified at this stage. It is anticipated that these developments will contribute towards establishing greater programme integrity. Given time constraints and the original research remit, this study cannot comment on the extent to which the supervision of the second YI officer, and clarification of criteria for referrals, has impacted on YIP outcomes and levels of programme integrity. Consequently, the final stages of fieldwork observed the development of multi agency practice in Penparcau.

- The YIP did not have the capacity in terms of staffing and access to external agency resources to deliver the service countywide. The decision by the Youth Justice (YJ) manager to move to a semi-urban location led to the development of the Request and Action Group (RAG), which is a multi-agency meeting. The group meets to identify and address the needs of vulnerable children and young people. Although there has not been an independent evaluation of the RAG, those practitioners who regularly attended meetings were of the opinion that the improved information sharing had resulted in cases being dealt with more efficiently and effectively.

- Interviewees' *perceptions* were that there appeared to be a lack of commitment towards providing resources to support youth work. Funding for statutory youth services in Ceredigion accounts for 7.3 per cent of the Local Education Authority's budget, which is well below the national average of 16.6 per cent and makes it the lowest funded in Wales. The research findings suggest there is a need to radically improve access to 'after school' clubs and holiday activities for vulnerable children and young people. There is also a need to promote more 'inclusive' practices both in schools and in the community. The few services that do provide support for socially deprived groups are not able to meet with local demand. Whilst youth services have shown a willingness to support the YIP on a practical level, inadequate funding has resulted in youth workers having to 'shy away' from direct interaction with young people.

Introduction

Since the publication of the Audit Commission's report entitled 'Misspent Youth' (1996), there has been an increase in the number of targeted prevention programmes, which have been monitored by the Youth Justice Board's Prevention Performance Framework. The Youth Inclusion Programme (YIP) was launched by the Youth Justice Board in 2000 as part of a national strategy for tackling youth crime in England and Wales. The principal aim of the programme is to ensure that young people, between the ages of 13 and 16 years, who have offended or are deemed to be at greatest risk of future offending or social exclusion, are offered support to overcome a variety of social problems and encouraged to engage in mainstream community activities. The key targets of the programme are to achieve reductions in truancy, school exclusions, arrests and recorded youth crime.

Youth Inclusion projects have been established in a number of economically and socially deprived areas throughout England and Wales. In providing highly targeted support and promoting the principle of multi-agency working, the YIP model was informed by the 'Youth Works' initiative (Brown 1998). By focusing on disaffected and 'at risk' young people, the YIP aims to combat social exclusion by providing opportunities for them to engage in constructive activities. Participation in the programme is voluntary. Encouraging active participation helps to promote individual social well-being and increase feelings of self confidence and self worth. Ultimately, the YIP aims to involve the young person in learning and training opportunities tailored to meet their specific needs, with a view to improving their overall life chances.

In 2002 the focus on prevention and early intervention was extended with the introduction of at-risk panels, which were re-named Youth Inclusion Support Panels (YISPs) the following year (Youth Justice Board and Children and Young People's Unit, 2002). These multi-agency panels have the task of identifying and supporting young people, aged 8 to 13 years, who are at high risk of criminal offending and anti-social behaviour. Panels are responsible for assessing risk and constructing an 'integrated support plan' designed to deliver the kind of provision likely to prevent a young person becoming involved in crime or anti-social activity. Involvement by young people and their families is voluntary.

Both the YIP (Morgan Harris Burrows, 2003) and YISPs (Raws, 2006; Walker et al., 2007) have been subject to independent evaluation. These studies have examined programme design, implementation and impact and have informed the current research.

2.   Scope of the Study

Context and aims

In its strategic plan for 2005-2006 the Ceredigion Youth Offending Team (YOT) sought to develop preventative services by using a targeting mechanism to identify and engage children and young people in interventions designed to promote social inclusion and reduce the likelihood of offending behaviour. A key element in this process was the decision to establish a YIP, which would entail working through, and in partnership with, a number of key local organisations and agencies including Children's Services, Community Safety Partnerships and local Youth Services.

Following an evidence-led policy agenda, the research had two primary aims: to explore the implementation issues surrounding the development and management of a youth inclusion programme in a Welsh rural context and, from an impact perspective, to identify potential programme outcomes and any early signs of positive programme effects.

Initially, the study was designed to focus on two contrasting areas in Ceredigion, both designated as Communities First areas, namely, Penparcau and Aberystwyth West and the Tregaron Uplands. These two locations reflected the diversity that can be found within a predominantly rural county. Penparcau is a housing estate in Aberystwyth town and experiences many of the social problems characteristic of urban settings where YIP schemes operate. In contrast, the Tregaron Uplands has a smaller and more geographically disparate population and is predominately Welsh speaking. As a result of differences in geographical location, local social networks, community infrastructure and cultural ethos, these two communities present very different challenges when it comes to establishing and maintaining a youth inclusion initiative.

Research methodology

Initially it was envisaged that the evaluation study would concentrate on both programme processes and outcomes and be undertaken in two discrete stages. The first stage was designed as a formative evaluation. The aim was to concentrate on the development, organisation and administration of the YIP initiative, while paying particular attention to the difficulties posed when implementing such a programme in a rural setting.

The main research objectives during this phase of the study were to:

- describe the early development of the local YIP initiative and how its design was informed by local needs;
- ascertain the initial expectations of key personnel responsible for developing the local programme;
- identify programme outputs and the contribution made by the different partner agencies to the implementation and management of the local YIP;
- evaluate the relevance of the 'hub and spoke' mode of management and service delivery in this particular context;
- examine the procedures for identifying, recruiting and retaining young people, especially given the voluntary nature of programme participation;
- explore the type, nature and level of support offered to young people in each part of the programme.

In the second phase of the study the intention was to shift the focus of attention from *process* issues to programme *outcomes*. However, given the time frame and scale of the research exercise, it was not possible to conduct a systematic summative evaluation or rigorous impact assessment. The long-term generic aims of preventative measures (e.g. a reduction in the crime rate) are unlikely to manifest themselves to any significant degree in the short-term. Furthermore, desirable outcomes are the result of a myriad of influences and as such it is difficult to isolate the individual impact of a specific intervention. It was therefore felt necessary to supplement these indicators with intermediate outcome measures, which the research literature suggests contribute to lower crime rates through ensuring that young people become integrated into the communities in which they live.

The success of the YIP was studied by seeking to:

- describe how young people were targeted and recruited;
- establish the number of 'at risk' youths who participated in the YIP and how many completed the programme;
- ascertain how many of the young people who had taken part in the programme went on to re-offend;
- examine levels of community integration of those young people who had participated in the programme;
- establish the views of programme staff regarding the impact of the YIP on young people;
- explore the views held by representatives from the various partner organisations about local multi-agency practices and current 'inclusive' policies and practices;
- elicit the views of the young people themselves.

Combining formative and summative evaluation strategies made it possible to identify the factors that helped or hindered successful delivery of the YIP. Despite the limited opportunity for evaluating outcomes in a structured, quantitative way, we were able to identify elements of YIP practice which, we felt, were most likely to lead to positive outcomes.

Data collection methods

A multi-method research design was chosen, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection from both primary and secondary sources. Information was obtained from:

(1) **Documentary materials and official records:** Information regarding basic socio-demographic characteristics of the local area was obtained from a variety of agencies and organisations including Social Services, the Local Education Authority and the YOT. Data on individuals referred to the programme were also obtained from case records.

(2) **Interviews:** A total of 30 explorative and semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted. Interviewees were drawn from key practitioners and voluntary workers within the YOT, Dim Prob, CAMHS, Career Wales, Communities First and the Activity programme. Information was also obtained from both conversations with the young people themselves and their parents.

(3) **Focus groups:** Two focus groups with key youth workers and frontline practitioners.

(4) **Non-participant observation:** During the course of the study a member of the research team regularly attended meetings held by the YOT.

(5) **Case studies:** In consultation with members of the YOT seven young people were selected to form the case study element of the evaluation exercise. In choosing the cases, consideration was given to a range of factors including the risk of offending behaviour. Information on the young people was obtained from their case files and also from interviews with key workers who had experience of working on a one-to-one basis with the individuals concerned.

The research process

As described above, the study adopted a largely formative evaluation research strategy. The emphasis was on acquiring a contextualised and holistic understanding of the introduction of a YIP in two local areas. Consequently, the lead researcher worked closely with programme staff, not only to acquire an understanding of the design and delivery of the programme, but also to be able to provide early informal feedback, to senior managers, on any problems and issues surrounding the implementation of the programme. Providing feedback in this way facilitates informed decision-making and in this respect the evaluation can be described as 'action-oriented'.

Throughout the course of the study the research team was very well supported by the management and staff of the YOT. Despite their own work commitments, YOT personnel were extremely helpful and accommodating when it came to providing contact information, enabling access to various data sources, facilitating attendance at formal meetings and making themselves available to be interviewed.

Evaluating new programmes and interventions is always a challenging experience as changes occur during the implementation process. It was originally intended that the fieldwork would take place over a continuous 12-month period from November 2006 to October 2007. However, the YI officer resigned at the end of March 2007 and the post remained vacant until early August 2007. During this period the programme was not able to provide a service for young people in the area and consequently the research process was halted. Once a new YI officer was firmly in post the research recommenced and was conducted over a period from mid September 2007 to early April 2008. The fieldwork during this final stage was limited to 30 hours and focussed largely on the development of the Request and Action group. Fieldwork and data collection were undertaken at discrete stages during this time frame. In total the entire study accounted for 300 researcher hours.

3.   Local Context

The area

An understanding of the key social, economic and cultural characteristics of an area is essential when evaluating the impact of a planned intervention. These characteristics are particularly important when it comes to considering programme design and implementation strategies. A brief description of the areas targeted by the YIP is provided below. Key socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: A comparison of basic demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

Characteristics	Penparcau and West Aberystwyth	Tregaron Uplands	Wales
Percentage of:	%	%	%
Households with no cars or vans	40.7	13.2	26.0
Households living in Local Authority accommodation	28.8	7.5	17.9
Households which are lone parent households with dependent children	7.5	5.7	7.3
Households with dependent children which do not have an adult in employment	26.2	17.7	20.0
Persons aged three or over who speak Welsh	35.8	58.4	20.5
Persons ages 16-74 with no qualifications	21.6	29.8	33.0

Source: Adapted from Welsh Assembly Government (2006: pp. 332-333 and 421-422).

Locality

The study focused on two areas: Penparcau and West Aberystwyth (a semi urban area within the coastal town of Aberystwyth) and Tregaron Uplands (a rural area, south east of Aberystwyth), both in the County of Ceredigion. Ceredigion, which has a population of approximately 78,000 people, is a predominantly rural area on the west coast of Wales, covering an area of around 10,500 square kilometres. The county consists of six market towns and a number of small hamlets spread across a hilly terrain and linked by secondary roads. There is a recognised 'geographical access problem' which makes it difficult for some groups in the population to access certain services and facilities (Russell and Toft, 2007).

Penparcau and West Aberystwyth covers a relatively small area geographically and is situated on a hill outside the main shopping area of Aberystwyth town. Residential accommodation consists of mainly local authority housing. In contrast, Tregaron Uplands covers a larger geographical area. The land is primarily used for agricultural purposes, most of the villages and hamlets do not have a shop and Tregaron town is small and has very few shops and local amenities.

Socio-economic status and social deprivation

The economy is largely dependent on agriculture, tourism, education and public sector services. Just over a quarter of the county's working age adults are not in employment. Most employment is concentrated around the three main towns of Aberystwyth, Cardigan and Lampeter, however there are pockets of high unemployment in these towns, as well as in the more rural areas. The median annual income for full-time employees in Ceredigion is around £18,000 a year, which is below the median of £21,300 for Wales (Russell and Toft, 2007: 20).

Penparcau and West Aberystwyth is one of 32 smaller areas in Wales designated as 'pockets of deprivation' in the Communities First programme. Using the Townsend Deprivation Score, the district of Penparcau ranks among the six most deprived wards in Ceredigion and among the most deprived fifth of wards in Wales (Health Information Analysis Team, 2006). As regards child poverty, 26.2 per cent of households with dependent children under the age of 16 years do not have an adult member in paid employment. This is the second highest in the County.

The Tregaron Uplands was among one of the original 10 sectoral initiatives designated as 'imaginative proposals' in the Communities First programme. As illustrated in Table 1, although this area has a similar size population to Penparcau and West Aberystwyth, there are marked differences with regards to some key social and economic characteristics. For example, while only 7.5% of households in the Tregaron area reside in local authority housing, the comparable figure for Penparcau is nearer 29%. Car ownership is significantly *below* the national average for Wales in Penparcau but *above* the national average in the Tregaron region. Penparcau also has an above average proportion of households with dependent children and no adult member in employment; the comparable figure for Tregaron (17.7%) is below the average for Wales.

As regards education, skills and training, figures show that the proportion of Ceredigion residents aged between 16 and 74 years with formal qualifications is higher than the national

average. However, local information from the Young People's Partnership suggests that this figure conceals a relatively large group of 'hard to reach' young people aged between 16 and 18 years who are not actively engaged in education, employment or training.

Care needs to be taken when making comparisons between the two areas on the basis of the information contained in Table 1. The aggregate data can hide important variations within an area. The Tregaron Uplands is a rural area and such communities are heterogeneous with relatively socially deprived people living in close proximity to more affluent social groups. This means that the signs of poverty and deprivation are less visible than is the case in urban areas, where the socially disadvantaged can be found concentrated in specific neighbourhoods. Targeting and delivering interventions is much easier when potential service recipients and programme participants are clearly identifiable and easily accessible. (Russell and Toft, 2007: 25).

Providing easily accessible youth services in rural areas can have resource and funding implications. The situation is exacerbated in Ceredigion where the funding for statutory youth services accounts for only 7.3% of the Local Education Authority's annual budget. This is well below the national average of 16.6% and makes it the lowest funded youth service in Wales. A recent report on the quality of youth support services in Ceredigion stated that: 'This low level of investment by the Council means that the service is unable to adequately support its partners in the delivery and support of youth services' (Estyn, 2007: 17).

4. The Youth Inclusion Programme Model

As described in the Introduction, the YJB launched the YIP in 2000 as part of a strategy for dealing with youth crime. Individual schemes were given the task of identifying and working with the most difficult and hardest to reach young people, who were considered to be the most 'at risk' of offending. This section briefly describes the fundamental features of the process involved in the YIP model from initial referral to programme completion (see Figure 1 on page 16).

According to specific guidelines provided by the YJB, a young person can be referred to a YIP project by a statutory agency, a voluntary organisation or a parent or guardian. Partnership working is at the heart of the whole process and referrals are considered by a local steering panel composed of representatives from the local authority, police, schools, youth services and other community associations and neighbourhood groups. These panels employ a matrix scoring system, produced by the YJB, to help them identify which of the referrals are *most* at risk of offending. Once a young person is selected as a potential programme participant their consent, and that of a parent/guardian, is required before any further action is taken. Customary procedure is for the YI officer to develop a close relationship with the young person and observe them interacting in a variety of settings, so as to acquire information to help in conducting an individual needs assessment. Key agencies that have had contact with the young person are also accessed in order to construct a clear profile of the individual's family background, personal characteristics and social circumstances.

Assessing a young person's risk of offending or engaging in anti-social behaviour is an integral feature of the referral process. The YJB recommend the use of the ONSET tool, which was designed for use in monitoring early intervention and prevention programmes (YJB, 2006). This provides standard documentation for the referral and review process as follows: a referral form (which can be used to assess the suitability of the potential programme participant); a pro-forma for parental and child consent; a standardised assessment form; self-assessment questionnaires for the young people and parents/carers; forms for recording risk of serious harm (to self or others) and details of the 'intervention action plan'; mid-term review forms; and a closure review form.

The needs assessment framework provided by ONSET enables assessors to identity both risk and protective factors, which helps not only when it comes to the initial identification of potential programme recipients but also provides valuable information for selecting appropriate interventions in individual cases. By following ONSET guidelines, trained practitioners can use the assessment scoring system to assist them in building an in-depth, holistic picture of all the relevant factors in a particular young person's life that may protect against, or increase their propensity towards committing offences. Sections on the assessment form are scored to reflect a wide range of circumstances including: individual situation and family background; home life; educational status; details of the local community; friends and peer group relations; and personal interests. The scoring system is designed to enable the practitioner to ascertain what the strengths are in the young person's life and to identify aspects of their life that they wish to develop. This involves close collaboration between the assessor and the young person in order to establish mutually acceptable targets for the young person to achieve.

ONSET assessment and intervention plans are considered essential in ensuring the service is delivered consistently. The YIP worker is responsible for co-ordinating a range of constructive activities that address the young person's needs and contribute to the development of new skills. The ultimate objective of the personal 'individual action plan' is to reintegrate the young person back into education and training and involve them in positive youth activities in their community.

The model described in Figure 1 (see below) is adapted from YJB guidelines and provides a somewhat idealised version of the local referral and assessment process. As research suggests, individual YIP projects need to be responsive to the needs identified in the local community and organised in such a way as to make the most effective use of existing statutory and voluntary services (Morgan Harris Burrows, 2003). While schemes are encouraged to follow best practice guidelines, there is some evidence, from research into YISPs, of a lack of consistency between projects with regards to the use of ONSET assessments to decide key targets for intervention. Walker et al., (2007) found a variation in initial ONSET scores between pilot schemes, with key practitioners questioning the ultimate value of the scoring system.

Figure 1: Youth Inclusion Programme Model
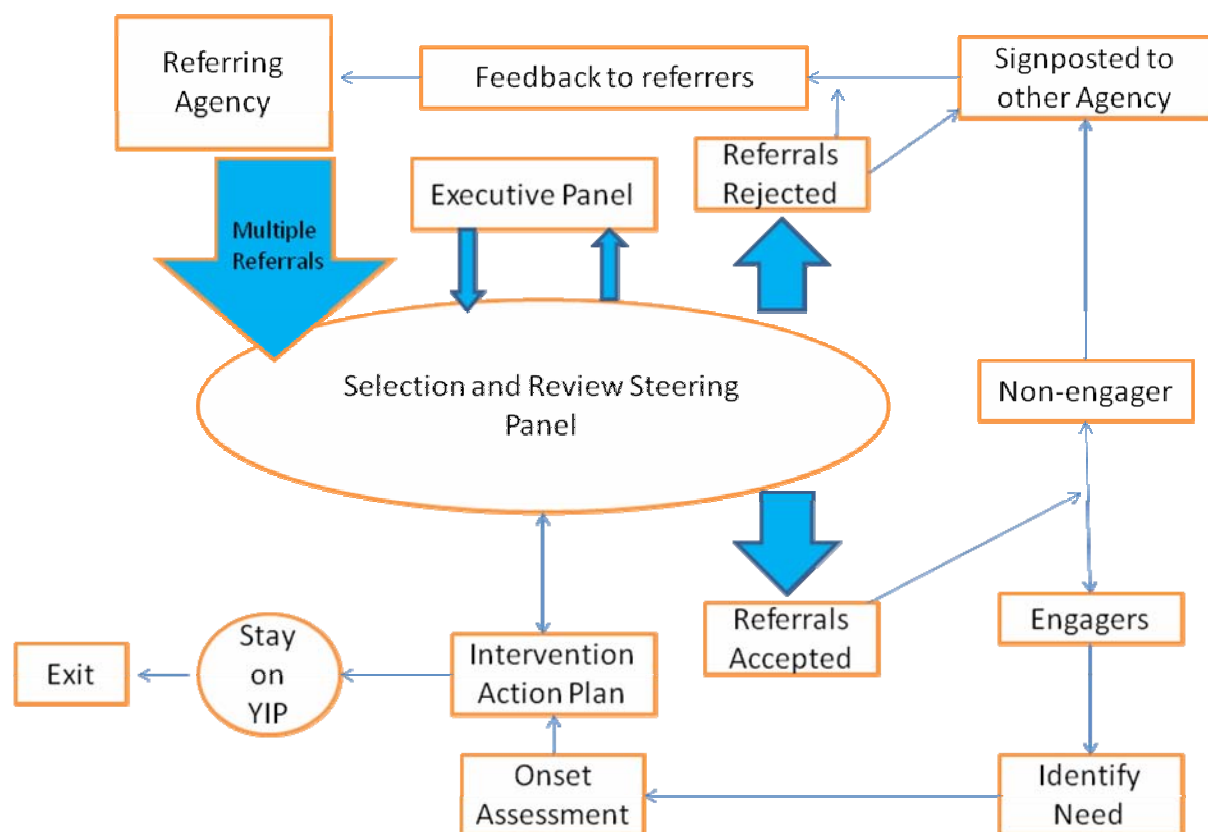
5. The Local Youth Inclusion Programme

Ceredigion Youth Offending Team

Background

The Ceredigion Youth Offending Team (YOT) is based in Aberystwyth Town and housed in the County Offices, along with the Local Education Authority, Youth Services and the Magistrates' Court. It was established in 2005, from the former Mid Wales YOT. An acting manager was in place for approximately the first six months. A new Youth Justice Manager was appointed in July of that year with a remit to build upon what were seen as existing strengths in terms of service provision namely, prevention work, early intervention initiatives and the establishment of Intensive Support Supervision Programmes. Some three months later a YI officer was appointed.

The YIP was introduced at a time when the YOT was newly established and going through a transformative phase. YOT practitioners sensed a reluctance from some sections of local government to accept the idea of the existence of young people who could be deemed to be 'at risk' of offending. As commented by one experienced practitioner:

"When we became independent we realised how difficult it would be to embed ourselves in the current strategic framework, the culture here is such that Ceredigion doesn't want to be seen as having those sort of problems, oh no , we look the other way, we don't see those young people…. Ceredigion is obviously comparably rich and succeeding , and perceived as prosperous, so trying to become central strategically was going to be difficult , so we had to tread carefully, it all felt quite loose and unstructured, but I think we have our foot in the back door now I feel. "

(Experienced Practitioner: 2)

Furthermore, at this stage in the development of the YOT, the local strategic framework necessary to prioritise resources for these vulnerable young people in the community was undergoing a period of re-structuring. This was felt necessary in order to facilitate a more coordinated approach to multi-agency working. The research suggests that since 2005 there was a growing recognition by key local agencies, at a strategic level, that more resources needed to be targeted toward the provision of services in areas of social deprivation.

Infrastructure

The research shows that the rapid influx of new staff and the changes in management structures and practices temporarily weakened the infrastructure of the YOT team. These observations were noted by the management board and reflected in the YOT Plan 2006/2007. The plan identified the need to review current staff structures, develop more structured procedures for staff supervision and promote the introduction of an induction programme for all members of staff including volunteers.

In order to understand the issues surrounding the implementation of the YIP it is necessary to appreciate internal developments within the YOT. The previous acting manager and the newly appointed manager were perceived by YOT staff to have quite different, yet

complimentary, approaches to managing the YOT. Staff felt that had the YOT infrastructure been well established, the considerable attributes of both individuals could have been utilised to better effect. Experienced practitioners suggested that there were various negative dynamics present in the organisation because of increased levels of uncertainty about the direction of the organisation which had implications for the effective development and delivery of a YIP.

In late 2006, when the research commenced, the YOT consisted of a large 'core' group, which conducted all the statutory work, and a preventions team, which was a smaller group of practitioners working with young people 'at risk' of offending. The preventions team was established six weeks before the research commenced. At this stage a 'preventions' coordinator had not been recruited and the YJB manager was coordinating the development of the group. The preventions team was composed of:

- Dewis ('choice') (Direct Engagement Work in Schools), a countywide 'in-schools' project conducting up to eight intensive sessions of one-to-one and/or group work programmes on self esteem, anger management and behaviour modification for pupils at risk of school exclusion.

- A Direct Interventions worker conducting one-to-one support work with young people.

- The Activities Project, an ongoing rolling programme offering a range of constructive activities for young people aged 10-17 years at risk of offending.

- A School Inclusion Officer, seconded for 3.5hours a week from the LEA, to support young people not in education, employment or training back into work (NEET-to-EET).

- The YI officer who had been in post for just over twelve months.

From August 2007, the preventions team expanded as a result of recruiting a part- time preventions co-ordinator and a parenting co-ordinator to compliment the work of the YI officer in the Penparcau area. As a result, the nature of the service provided by the YIP evolved from a core youth worker model to a more family focussed social work model. Feedback from the formative evaluation conducted as part of this research project contributed towards this decision.

Multi-agency working

It is a statutory requirement that local agencies work in partnership to develop and implement a crime reduction strategy. Research shows that the successful implementation of a YIP is partly dependent upon ensuring the effective co-operation of a number of local agencies and community groups working in partnership at both operational and strategic levels (Morgan Harris Burrows, 2003). Youth inclusion initiatives in general are more likely to produce positive outcomes where inter-agency working and co-operation is in evidence (Walker, et al., 2007). In the present study, there was a commonly expressed view that multi-agency working was far from commonplace. In the early developmental stages of the YIP, interviewees felt that there was a lack of enthusiasm amongst various professional groups to make a commitment to partnership working. This was seen to be illustrated by limited

attendance of representatives from key agencies at meetings to discuss the delivery of services to vulnerable children and young people. Consequently, this created difficulties when it came to establishing the Selection and Review Steering Panel, which formed an integral part of the YIP model. The limited amount of multi-agency working in this area during the period 2005-2007 was attributed by interviewees to the following:

- a tendency for many services to operate in isolation rather than a adopt a fully coordinated approach to supporting vulnerable children and young people;

- a *perceived* reluctance on the part of local government to recognise that more targeted prevention work with young people was necessary in the local area (this may have been due to a lack of comprehension by some individuals as to the nature of targeted preventions work);

- a *perceived* marginalisation of the YOT's prevention strategy in the wider local policy context;

- a reluctance by some agencies to formalise and adhere to joint service level agreements.

Amongst YOT personnel it was acknowledged that when the YIP was first introduced locally, the YOT itself was at an early stage of its development and therefore not in a strong position strategically to ensure that local agencies would commit to forming a multi-agency panel for selecting young people for the targeted prevention programme. However, since 2007 interviewees reported that multi-agency practice aimed at supporting vulnerable children and young people had improved. Nevertheless, they still felt that there was a need for more effective communication, both within and between agencies, to facilitate more efficient inter-agency working, to meet the needs of such a vulnerable section of the community.

Pre-conditions for initial implementation

The YI officer's initial role

The budget for the YIP provided funding to finance a lone worker responsible for service implementation and delivery countywide. In addition to this funding there was also the provision of twenty five hours a week to finance sessional workers. However, in the early stages of the development of the YIP, the induction and training of sessional workers did not occur and the YI officer was disappointed that he could not use the limited sessional staff and available volunteers to full effect. Consequently, from the outset, the role of YI officer was destined to be particularly demanding as Ceredigion is a predominantly rural area, which means that accessing youth services and facilities can be problematic for children and young people from less affluent families. Affordable recreational amenities tend to be in limited supply and concentrated in a small number of areas.

A YI officer was recruited in October 2005, on an initial six month contract. The job specification emphasised a background in youth work and an ability to work on a one-to-one level with young people. The person appointed was a qualified primary school teacher with considerable knowledge of working with young people with behavioural needs in a youth

setting. In addition to this, the YI officer also had experience in the organisation and delivery of a wide range of sporting activities for young people, both at team and individual levels.

The interview data illustrates that management and experienced practitioners involved in the recruitment of the YI officer were aware that there may be unknown challenges involved when attempting to adapt a YIP model from an urban context in a predominantly rural setting. Given the limited provision of youth services in the area, it was recognised that it was important to appoint a YI officer with some frontline experience of youth work. However, at such an early stage in the development of the YIP, there was an insufficient understanding of the level of strategic and administrative responsibilities required for the model to become operational across Ceredigion. As the following comment illustrates, there was a considerable degree of uncertainty as to what the service would actually be offering to young people.

"The worker had the skills at the frontline... (end) for the post but it required much more strategic building up (of) those relationships, we weren't sure of what we were actually offering at one point as a service, so we were very wary of making promises to services we could not keep."

(Experienced Practitioner: 2)

Given the circumstances, there was a recognised reluctance by senior managers to raise expectations before strategic planning had been finalised. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the initial contract was only for a period of six months which was a relatively short time in which to establish the pre-conditions necessary for successful service delivery. YOT staff perceived that the desire to produce an effective service within the time frame may have increased the rate of service development beyond the capacity of a lone worker. In addition to these considerations, staffing shortages impacted on management workload, and senior staff did not have the capacity to plan ahead and conduct the necessary research into the local areas targeted for YIP provision. Consequently, there were difficulties in defining the YI officer's role to ensure that the worker had all the necessary experience and skills for effective programme delivery. This is demonstrated in the following extract from an interview with an experienced practitioner external to the YOT:

"Clarity of role was a problem from the outset...because from the large geographical area with one worker...he felt burdened by the enormity of the task... I think with the YIP, you are trying to create this community feel with it, you are supposed to have a neighbourhood steering group, and with this rural YIP there was no neighbourhood steering group, the size of the place means that you need lots of input to build relations with other services, this takes time, and I don't know how it worked, it couldn't really."

(Experienced Practitioner: 3)

This example highlights the importance of the need to address key operational and strategic factors at the planning stage. Implementing a YIP over a large geographical area presented a daunting and somewhat overwhelming task for an individual worker whose previous experience had been as a frontline practitioner.

The YI officer felt that the job description and specification did not accurately convey a clear picture of the actual role required. He felt that he did not have enough strategic experience or local knowledge of service provision to undertake what was expected of him and he would

have preferred a role that involved more direct contact with young people. This situation was acknowledged by other practitioners.

"It (the job) was advertised really as a hands on, a frontline role, that is what (the YI officer) wanted. It didn't turn out to be a front line role; you just couldn't do it with one worker. It needed details of what was on, in what area, for you to send your clients (young people) to. We did not know these areas, and when we did, which took a long time, we found there was not enough of the right type of services there to attract the kids we worked with... We realised it couldn't really be (an) out house approach, you can only do that in a city I think, not with the youth work we have in Ceredigion, it is practically non existent."

(Practitioner: 5)

The dual demands created by the operational and strategic elements of the YI officer's role led to the perception that the implementation of the service lacked a clear focus and direction:

"The poor guy didn't know where he was supposed to be...he wasn't very happy... was he front line ... or managing? Or should he be setting up groups in different areas? I felt sorry for him; everyone was wanting him to do it (the YIP) their way."

(Practitioner: 5)

The following section looks at the next stage in the preparation for the implementation of the programme, which involved the YI officer developing an understanding of the YIP model and identifying the nature and extent of existing support services for young people in the local area.

Early planning stage

The research findings suggest that for the first few months in post the YI officer was uncertain as to how an urban YIP model could be applied in a predominantly rural area. Furthermore, as the ONSET assessment tool had yet to be developed, the YI officer did not have a clear set of guidelines or a structured framework for assessing the needs of potential programme participants.

YJB practice works on an evidence based approach to target services to meet the individual needs of the young person. The new YI officer had only had experience of generic based youth work, and as a result he was not trained to undertake the evidence based style of assessment characteristic of working with young people in youth justice settings.

For the first three months in post, the YI officer was instructed by his supervisor to conduct an audit of service provision in the targeted areas. After conducting this exercise he worked collaboratively with his supervisor to design and develop a working model for the YIP that could be utilised locally. The findings suggest that more preparatory work should have been conducted to both target key agencies and begin the development of neighbourhood steering groups during this period.

In order to familiarise himself with the YIP model, the YI officer consulted documentation provided by the Youth Justice Board and visited a fully operation YIP in an urban location in Wales. At this stage there were very few YIPs that incorporated a rural element in Wales and those that were, were at a similar stage of development to the Ceredigion YIP. Thus, it was

felt that visiting a well established YIP would prove more instructive and facilitate the development of contacts with other YIP workers. The experience proved to be beneficial for the YI officer as he had come to feel quite isolated in his role as a lone worker in the YOT. The demands of the role, both operationally and strategically, and the challenges it presented were summed up by one Experienced practitioner as follows:

"It had to have a core cluster of people working together in those areas. The bit we underestimated was the degree to which those services worked together, either we didn't access those services working together or services just weren't working together. It was too difficult for one worker to develop without excellent skills at the operational/frontline for the post... He couldn't do that (strategic planning) yet...he seemed a bit low, and we felt he was beginning to question the role, the trip inspired him, he was much more motivated... "

(Experienced Practitioner: 2)

Although the YI officer returned from the field visit with a clearer idea of the YIP model, there continued to be a degree of uncertainty and confusion, between him and his supervisor, as to how the model could be adapted to work in a rural setting. As one experienced practitioner observed:

"I think from what I saw and from speaking with A and B, both separately and together, I ... got a very different picture from each really. B was trying to keep to the model as best he could, given the situation; whereas perhaps A was perhaps not as au fait with the guidance as B was, or maybe they had a different idea of what B wanted to achieve..."

(Experienced Practitioner: 3)

As a way of focusing the work of the YI officer, the YOT worked with the YJB advisor to devise a 'hub and spoke' system of operation to provide a degree of structure to support the implementation of the YIP across the county. This entailed identifying two towns in Ceredigion, namely Cardigan and Lampeter, that would operate alongside Aberystwyth as satellites towns. This had major implications for the role of the YI officer as it involved more strategic co-ordination and required considerable administrative expertise and time to generate multi-agency commitment and establish neighbourhood steering panels in the satellite areas. The role now embraced not only planning the delivery of sessions of constructive activities in the areas but also the training and managing of sessional workers and volunteers (support staff) to deliver these activities and monitor the progress of individual young people.

Four months after the inception of the YIP initiative there appeared to be a degree of uncertainty surrounding the provision of future funding. To address this issue the Youth Justice Board recommended adopting a new model (the YISP) targeting a younger age group (8-13years). The YOT acted upon this advice and began to tailor the service for a young age group. This proved to be too difficult to implement as the YOT had only just begun to cultivate contacts with primary schools in the area. After considerable negotiation between the YOT and the YJB, the latter subsequently agreed to continue to support the development of the YIP. Consequently, the YIP was reinstated after a short period of eight weeks. On a personal level, this temporary change in focus, and the uncertainty surrounding the future employment of the YI officer, had a negative effect on his morale. From a programme

perspective, this produced a period of 'project drift' resulting in referral and partner agencies requiring re-clarification as to the nature and level of service provision.

It was envisaged that the nature and level of available local services would determine whether the YIP worker would be primarily engaged with front-end provision and concentrate on utilising and expanding in-house activities, or concentrate on accessing external services. A key to the success of the hub and spoke model was the development of effective joint working arrangements between partner agencies. Ideally the selection and review steering panel should have had representatives from key agencies in each of the three satellite areas to help identify young people in the vicinity who were most at risk. However, two main reasons were identified as to why key agencies failed to commit to the YIP initiative. First, it was acknowledged that there had not been adequate promotion or marketing of the YIP to generate interest and involvement from potential partner agencies. As one interviewee observed:

"We didn't have a clear marketing plan, or we took a long time to work one out and we weren't sure of what the climate was that we were marketing in some areas. We also underestimated enormously the number of activities people of that age could tap into and feel supported by other agencies other than ourselves."

(Experienced Practitioner: 1)

Second, there was a feeling that none of the satellite towns had key agencies that were prepared to devote time and resources to the YIP initiative. From a strategic point of view multi-agency input was considered essential. When asked about the possibility of generating partnership working in the satellite towns, one senior manager commented:

"That was not going to happen in these towns. For a YIP in particular, you must not underestimate the effort needed to recruit partners to the table. There is not enough money from YJB and WAG to do the job alone, so you need those partners to invest their money and their time around the table. You will need them to have the right young people identified and again that depends on strong partnerships and trust amongst agencies. You need to have the right staff; again it's reliant on other agencies to a certain extent."

(Senior Manager: 3)

This stage of the planning process appeared to be characterised by the following: a lack of clarity surrounding the conceptualisation of the YIP model; a limited appreciation of the strategic (as opposed to operational) dimension of the YI officer's role; confusion surrounding the balance to be achieved between the operational and strategic functions of the role; and a failure to identify and make initial contacts with some potential local partner agencies.

Relocation of the YIP to a semi-urban area

The research process was halted temporarily due to the departure from post of the YI officer at the end of March 2007. The YOT manager made the decision based on advice from a range of sources including feedback from the research to relocate the YIP. It was felt that the core objectives and the integrity of the YIP programme could be measured more effectively if the

YIP was targeted at a smaller geographical area. As a lone worker the YI officer's impact within Ceredigion had been diluted due to the fact that a very high proportion of his working week was spent travelling between clients and agencies. Given the recent staff changes it was felt more prudent to meet with the partner agencies after the new YI officer was appointed in August. Interviews with representatives from key agencies provided an insight into their initial impressions of the new YIP service provision. The findings suggest that external agencies felt that the new targeted service was more likely to meet the needs of the young people involved than the previous countywide service. The Youth Offending Team manager decided to target Penparcau and Aberystwyth West, a designated Communities First area in Aberystwyth, for the implementation of the Youth Inclusion Programme.

The move to a semi-urban area resulted in the development of a multi- agency group meeting, the Request and Action Group (RAG), which meets to identify and address the needs of vulnerable children and young people. The RAG works collaboratively to produce a multi-dimensional package for each individual young person. RAG meetings are attended by representatives and key workers drawn from a wide variety of agencies. Representatives from primary and secondary schools, the Local Education Authority, the police and the YOT preventions team regularly attend meetings. Key personnel from other agencies such as Communities First and the Young People's Partnership attend as and when necessary. Members of the RAG found the attendance of representatives from housing services particularly useful and welcomed their continued involvement in future RAG meetings. They also expressed the view that they would like to see both the Surestart service and the local family centre become more actively involved, as the RAG becomes more established in the local area. Although the work of the RAG has not been independently evaluated, representatives from the different agencies felt that it was a good example of joint working. The meetings have led to a greater sharing of information, which has resulted in a more efficient and effective approach to addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable children and young people.

6.   Selection, Participation and Outcomes

The selection process

A key feature of the YIP model is that young people who are selected to participate in the programme do so on a voluntary basis. Indeed, the voluntary nature of participation serves to distinguish the programme from many other interventions managed by the YOT where young people are obliged by the courts to become involved. While there is no specified management structure for YIPs, the YJB provide specific guidelines and make recommendations with regards to establishing steering groups to oversee strategic planning and assist in the design, delivery and monitoring of interventions. Nationally, each individual YIP schemes was expected to identify and target 50 of the 'most at risk' young people in their local area. Given that the Ceredigion YIP covered a relatively large rural area, the YOT negotiated a reduced target of 30 young people with the YJB.

As illustrated in Figure 1, a total of 46 young people were referred to the YIP during the 18 month period from the beginning of October 2005 to the end of March 2007. Of these, 15 were accepted on to the programme and 31 were considered to be unsuitable. Of the latter, some remained with their initial key referring agency or were referred to other agencies as appropriate. Thus, the reduced target of 30 recruits was not met. In fact, it was seen by some practitioners to have been an unrealistic expectation in the first place, given that there was only a partial understanding as to how the YIP model could be adapted to operate in a rural area. One dedicated worker did not have the capacity to develop a new service at both strategic and operational levels, and undertake assessments of, and provide interventions for, 30 cases. The situation was summed up by one experienced practitioner as follows:

"We didn't really have the infrastructure together ... staffing shortages in some areas meant management hadn't the time to think through the logistics, we promised the YJB thirty cases, which was wildly ambitious, it felt like a bit of an experiment really, we went for a very vague remit on the job description, too much to expect of him, to do thirty... (the YI officer's caseload)... "

(Experienced Practitioner: 1)

A steering panel, comprised solely of members from the YOT, was responsible for selecting programme participants. Despite their endeavours, panel members felt that they did not really have a comprehensive understanding of the young person's needs in individual cases. There was a feeling that they had insufficient information to make informed decisions about which individuals they should accept onto the YIP and which young people they should direct to other types of service provision. In this sense, the selection process was not rigorous enough. Of the 31 individuals who were originally deemed to be unsuitable for the YIP, just under one third went on to commit an offence (see Table 7, page 33). As one practitioner observed:

"We just didn't really have enough info' on them, we didn't have a rounded picture of them, and as a result some fell through the net and ended up in statutory (YOT) when we had had a referral onto the YIP, we needed services in these areas to meet and talk to us, way too ambitious really"

(Practitioner: 1)

Figure 2: Flow chart to show referral outcomes
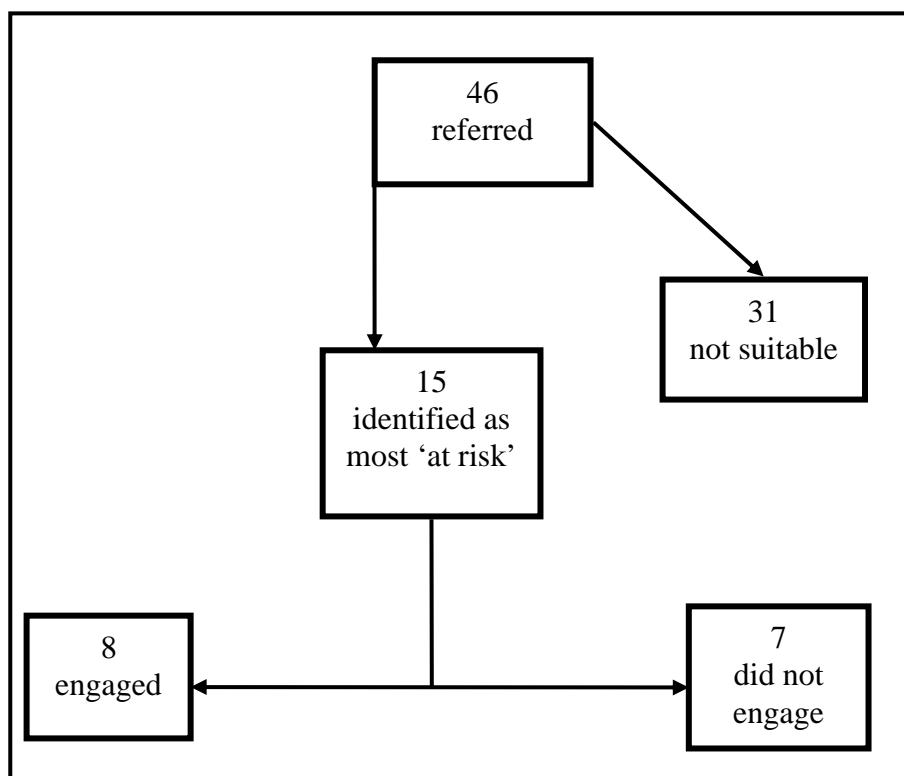
A breakdown of the key referring agencies is provided in Table 2. One half of the referrals came from the Social Services and the YOT preventions team. Of the total number of referrals, 67% (31) were rejected by the selection steering panel as unsuitable. There were three main reasons identified for the high number of unsuitable referrals:

- a large proportion of referrers were uncertain as to the referral criteria;

- services tended to make opportunistic or speculative referrals for young people they considered to be in need but for whom alternative provision was unavailable because of the limited capacity of existing local services.

- a proportion of those referred were not considered to be amongst 'the most' at risk at the time of selection.

Table 2: Outcome of referrals to the YIP from key agencies

Agency *	Referrals	Accepted	Not accepted
Social Services	13	5	8
YOT Preventions	10	3	7
Dim Prob	7	2	5
LINCS mentoring service	5	2	3
Police	4	1	3
School	4	1	3
Parent	1	1	0
Fire Service	2	0	2
Youth Service	-	-	-
Communities First Worker	-	-	-
Total	**46**	**15**	**31**

* For a young person to be eligible for YIP provision they needed to be perceived to be 'at risk' by a number of different agencies, however the main referring agency in this instance was the agency that had the most contact with the young person prior to referral.

Table 3 shows what action was taken with regards to the 31 young people who were referred to the YOT but not admitted to the programme. Just over half of these cases were forwarded on to the YOT Preventions Team by the YIP selection panel. In five instances the Preventions Team had been the main referring agent. Six young people's cases were passed to other agencies and there were nine examples were there was no evidence of any onward referral.

Table 3: Actions taken in relation to those young people who were referred to the YIP but not accepted

Main referring agent	Signposted to external agency by YIP	Referred by YIP to YOT Preventions Team	No evidence of onward referral	Number
Social Services	2	2	4	8
YOT Preventions	2	5	0	7
Dim Prob	2	3	0	5
Mentoring Service	0	3	0	3
Police	0	3	0	3
School	0	0	3	3
Parent	0	0	0	0
Fire Service	0	0	2	2
Youth Service	0	0	0	0
Communities First	0	0	0	0
Total	**6**	**16**	**9**	**31**

There was evidence from the interviews that some external agencies which referred young people to the scheme were not always kept informed as to how the referral was progressing or indeed if a decision had in fact been taken. As one external practitioner noted:

" we made the referral, four months on we didn't know what was happening… at the 'child in need' meeting at social services nine months later we still weren't sure what was going on… whether he (the young person) was still waiting or not…it was frustrating for everyone…"

(External Practitioner: 6)

The research findings suggest that there were occasions when there were breaks in the referral pathway and signposting to other services was inefficient.

Participation

Fifteen young people were considered suitable for the YIP intervention, of these eight engaged with the programme and participated in the organised activities. Reasons for non-engagement in the remaining seven cases included:

- failure to make contact with the young person and gain their consent and that of their parents;
- the young person not interested in participating;
- the referral process had taken too long and the family and young person were no longer interested in the service.

With regards to the latter, the process of referral could, depending on the time it was instigated, involve the potential participant waiting for a period of up to three months for the selection steering panel to meet and a decision to be made. Some YIP schemes have a policy of referring young people without their prior knowledge in order to avoid disappointment if they are not considered suitable. The selection procedure operated by the Ceredigion YOT was that referrals were only made with the knowledge of the family and young person concerned. However, young people and parents did not always have a clear understanding of the process involved.

Mrs S said that she was 'less than satisfied' with the service. She and her son were not aware that the referral process could last a few months. She claimed that if they had been informed that there was a fairly lengthy waiting period they could have 'lived with it'. Not being kept up to date with what was going on was a 'frustrating and annoying' experience.

(reported by an outreach worker)

Characteristics of participants

Of the eight young people who started the programme one left prematurely when his family moved from the area. The individual progress of the remaining seven participants was monitored as part of the case study element of the study. Six participants were male and one was female. Their ages ranged from 11 years to 17 years (four were under 12 and three were

in the 14 to 17 year age group (see Table 4). In terms of family background, four were living with their mothers in one parent households, three were living in two-parent households (one of which was living with both birth parents). With regards to ethnicity they all described themselves as British.

Table 4: Age and gender of YIP participants

Case Number	Age	Gender
1	11	Male
2	15	Male
3	11	Male
4	11	Male
5	14	Male
6	17	Male
7	12	Female

Reasons for referral

The main reasons recorded for the referral of each young person to the YIP were as follows (the numbers correspond to individual cases):

1. to help the young person engage in constructive group activity in conjunction with current mentoring;
2. to help the young person manage his anger and boost his self-esteem through one-to-one constructive activity;
3. to avoid continued involvement in a negative peer group and channel activity in a positive and meaningful way;
4. to be involved in a positive peer group that would lead to more constructive activity;
5. child gets easily bored and cannot wait for things; he is developing signs of anti-social behaviour, is introverted and gets frustrated due to an inability to make friends;
6. needs as much support emotionally as possible;
7. gets very angry, has physically injured his mother and needs emotional support programmes.

How young people described their problems

During the course of their initial assessment by the YI officer the young people described their problems as follows (the numbers correspond to individual cases):

1. 'I get worried sometimes when being in a group.'
2. 'I would like to be able to control my temper when other people "wind me up".'
3. 'I lose my temper and stay out too late.'
4. 'I get really bored and start messing about.'
5. 'I get upset because I haven't got many mates.'
6. 'I have nothing to do where I live.'
7. 'I get angry and don't have much to do where I live.'

Interventions

In constructing individual action plans, the YI officer successfully identified the needs of each young person on the programme. However, the participants did not always appear to be offered services that gave them the opportunities they required to fulfil the targets outlined in their individual action plans.

In only two of the case studies was the young person offered constructive activities *in addition* to those they were already receiving at the time of their initial referral. The remaining young people continued to engage with the 'activities project'. This offered a range of activities including the following: sport and physical recreation (both at individual and team levels); arts, culture and drama; group development work and various environmental projects

 Although the standardised ONSET assessment forms were completed, the information was not used constructively to target identified need. In effect, the form was used as an administrative tool to record each young person's degree of involvement in various activities over time.

As outlined in Figure 3, the time period between being accepted onto the programme and engaging in constructive activities varied from just over four weeks to twelve weeks. The figures show the number of activities per month and indicate a marked reduction in participation towards the end of the nine month period. There is no evidence to suggest that this trend was the result of a structured exit strategy.

Figure 3: Assessment and activities: an outline of the seven case studies over a nine month period.

Referral accepted

Case Study	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
7	Assessment		2	3	1	2	2	1		11 Activities 2 Offences
6	Assessment			3	9	7	5	2	1	31 Activities No Offences
5	Assessment			4	7	3	5	2		21 Activities No Offences
4	Assessment			0	6	6	2	2	1	17 Activities No Offences
3	Assessment		2	6	3	2	1	2		16 Activities No Offences
2	Assessment	1	3	0	1					5 Activities 3 Offences
1	Assessment		5	1	1	2	2			11 Activities 1 Offence

Number of Months

30

One of the main areas of concern highlighted by referring agencies was the need to address the mental health needs of the young people who engaged with the YIP. All agencies commented on the lack of mental health provision for children and young people across the county. Whilst some of the schools attended by the YIP participants provided a counselling service, this tended to be on a part-time basis and was often over-subscribed.

An in-schools preventions service, Dewis, designed to reduce school exclusion through structured early intervention programmes, provided regular support in all seven of the secondary schools in Ceredigion. The service consisted of one-to-one consultation sessions, anger management and self esteem courses. The young males involved in the study said that they used Dewis but would not consider counselling as an option, because they felt that counselling was "for girls". They liked Dewis because they saw it as a more structured intervention than counselling, with a recognisable beginning and end point which incorporated regular feedback on their progress. Furthermore, because the programme addressed *anger* management, for them it did not have the stigma associated with counselling and indeed appealed to their notions of masculinity. Three of the seven young people who engaged with the YIP had been excluded from mainstream education prior to joining the programme. Unfortunately, once excluded young people could not access any mental health service, including Dewis, provided within school. The fact that mental health support did not continue for those excluded from school was a key concern raised by numerous practitioners interviewed as part of the study. They pointed out that young people required *even more* mental health support once they were no longer in mainstream education. In one of the case studies, where a young person had been excluded from school, his physical and mental deterioration was commented on by one of his friends.

> "B is really gone strange now, since he was excluded. He looks scruffy and doesn't wash and he used to keep his hair smart. Now he hasn't had it cut, he doesn't gel it up, he just doesn't care anymore…."
>
> (young person interviewed at a local youth group)

The mental health needs of YIP participants varied in terms of the level of severity, from low level mental health needs through to more specialised clinical support. However, despite identifying the need to address these issues in the individual action plans, the YI officer did not appear to utilise appropriate service provision locally.

Outcomes

Initially the intention was to track two groups of young people: those who engaged with the YIP programme and those who were invited to join the programme but chose not to take up the offer. It was felt that young people in the latter category would constitute an ideal comparison group, as they would have a similar needs profile to the programme participants. It was envisaged that the main difference between the two groups would be that only those individuals in the YIP group would receive the interventions. However, it soon became clear that many of the young people who chose not to join the programme did in fact access, through other referral pathways, some of the organised activities enjoyed by programme participants. Consequently, there were sound methodological reasons for not comparing the outcomes of programme engagers and non-engagers as a way of ascertaining the effectiveness of the programme.

As research shows, measuring the outcomes of interventions of this type has its difficulties (Morgan Harris Burrows, 2003; Walker et al., 2007). However, given that the principal objectives of the YIP were to reduce youth offending and anti-social behaviour, school exclusion and offences committed were identified as two possible outcome measures. Programme engagers were tracked over a period of approximately nine months from the date their initial referral was received. As shown in Figure 3 above, in most cases, for two-thirds of this time young people were engaged in programme activities. Of the seven young people for whom follow-up data were available (see Table 5), three committed an offence during the tracking period and one was permanently excluded from the Pupil Referral Unit (having previously been permanently excluded from school prior to being assessed for the YIP).

Table 5: Outcomes for young people who engaged with the YIP

Main referring agent	Engaged with YIP	Excluded from school only	Committed an offence only	Committed an offence and excluded from school
Social Services	2	1	1	0
YOT Preventions	1	0	1	0
Mentoring Service	1	0	1	0
Police	1	1	0	0
School	1	0	0	1
Parent	1	0	0	0
Total	**7**	**2**	**3**	**1**

Table 6 presents outcome information for the non-engagers. A cursory glance reveals very little difference between the two groups. However, it is not possible to draw any conclusions from these figures given the small sample size.

Table 6: Outcomes for young people who did not engage with the YIP

Main referring agent	Did not Engage with YIP	Excluded from school only	Committed an offence only	Committed an offence and excluded from school
Social Services	3	2	1	0
YOT Preventions	2	0	1	1
Dim Prob	2	0	0	1
Total	**7**	**2**	**2**	**2**

The young people who were not selected for the YIP programme were also tracked over the research period. The outcomes for this group are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Outcomes for young people who were not selected for the YIP

Main referring agent	No recorded school exclusion or offending	Exclusion from school only	Committed an offence only	Committed an offence and excluded from school	Total
Social Services	3	1	1	3	8
YOT Preventions	4	1	1	1	7
Dim Prob activities	4	0	1	0	5
Mentoring Service	2	1	0	0	3
Police	0	2	0	1	3
School	0	1	1	1	3
Fire Service	1	1	0	0	2
Total	**14**	**7**	**4**	**6**	**31**

Of those young people not accepted onto the programme 45% (14) had no recorded school exclusion or offence at the end of the data collection period. In 55% (17) of cases there was evidence of school exclusion and/or offending behaviour. Six young people in this latter group had been excluded from school and committed an offence.

Outcome measures (levels of school exclusion and offending behaviour) indicate that the low level of interventions 'dosage rate' provided by the YIP had very little impact on reducing school exclusion, offending behaviour and facilitating access into mainstream services and the local community.

In conclusion, the following factors appeared to have an influence on the success of service delivery and overall programme integrity:

- On most occasions, representatives from referring agencies were not present when the YI officer made the initial contact with the young person and their family. Having a practitioner present who is known to the young person at the first meeting with a new service provider helps to establish trust, build rapport and may facilitative the process of engagement.

- In the majority of cases the assessment process identified the needs of the young person. However, the planned interventions did not adequately address the needs identified in the individual action plans.

- There were very few existing facilities provided by external agencies to support the programme, especially in rural areas. Also, there were limited resources available for accessing the most 'hard to reach' groups.

- At the inception of the YIP, support staff had not received any systematic programme of induction and therefore were not sufficiently trained to undertake assessments, provide activities and sustain relationships with young people 'at risk' of offending.

- Very limited information was fed back to the steering panel, referring agencies and families, regarding project engagement and participation and the degree of success in achieving personal targets as set out in individual actions plans.

- A robust exit strategy was not planned in the majority of cases.

7.   Community Integration

Penparcau and Aberystwyth West

Four of the seven young people who engaged with the programme lived in Penparcau and Aberystwyth West, the semi urban area chosen for the study. During the course of the research, Penparcau was subject to a dispersal order. Research findings show that the dispersal order further exacerbated the risk of social exclusion for some young people on the programme.

Individual details on YIP participants provided by key referrers, parents and the young people themselves emphasised the need to be involved in constructive activities that facilitated involvement with a pro-social peer group within their local community. Feedback from parents and young people from the community suggests that there did not appear to be a structured plan of support. The interventions did not address the young persons' request to develop more positive friendships in the areas in which they lived, nor did the interventions involve activities that would enable them to become more integrated into the community. As the example below demonstrates, parents were afraid that their children were withdrawing from interaction with other people and they felt they did not get the input from the programme given the impact of the dispersal order on local community.

> Parents of one boy commented to other youth workers that their son was not getting on very well in the activity group. They felt that he needed more 'one to one' support. They liked the YI officer and thought he was 'nice to talk to', but they felt their son was not getting any additional provision on top of the activities he was already going to. They were of the opinion that the curfew had created a difficult situation and he was becoming more reclusive. For them, the YIP service had not met their initial expectations.
>
> (case discussed in focus group with local outreach workers)

The perception of frontline practitioners, families and young people interviewed was that the dispersal order in Penparcau had had a negative effect on inter-generational relationships and community cohesion. This resulted in young people having fewer opportunities than previously to build social networks and be involved in constructive activities within their local area. A youth worker commented that the action was significant in increasing the divisions in the community. Interview participants felt that the dispersal order not only increased the sense of alienation experienced by young people, it also served to ostracise young people and make them feel physically constrained within their own environment at certain times in the day. Outreach youth practitioners and managers stated that as a direct consequence of the order, young people were drawn together in a way which further segregated them from the wider community. Interviewees commented that they had noticed that this had led to a further deterioration in the relationships between local youth and the police. Furthermore, the imposition of a curfew meant that the young people tended to travel to Aberystwyth town centre. Here, it was suggested, they were more likely to encounter young adults who were involved in a wider range of criminal and anti-social activities, than they had experienced in their local area. Particular concern was expressed about the possibility that the young people from Penparcau would be attracted to more serious forms of drug taking in the town centre as the next example illustrates:

"There was this insane hope that the neighbourhood police, who were new, they were going to come in and work with these young people to improve things, there was a real split in the community, you needed some real good agency worker bringing these groups together, what happened? Well local political pressure happened rather than good common sense, the police wanted to be seen to be acting in the best interests of the community, count young people out then, exclude them, the dispersal order was a bloody joke, all the young people united together... this time in resentment understandably when people and police said 'we don't want you here' and (the young person) went into town, so instead of the local agencies developing healthy activities to bring everyone together, these young people ended up in town involved in unhealthier, activities with a more dangerous drug taking criminal loutish group than they had been in with(before)."

<div align="right">(Youth Worker: 2)</div>

During the final stages of the fieldwork the police and local youth practitioners were of the opinion that there had been an improvement in relations between the police and young people locally. Youth workers and police officers had worked together to organise visits to the local police station to enable young people and police officers to meet informally. Youth workers commented that these visits had well received by the young people and helped to develop more positive relations between the two groups. The police have also been in regular attendance at the Request and Action group, the multi-agency group meeting in Penparcau that works to address the needs of vulnerable children and young people.

Tregaron Uplands

Three of the seven YIP participants lived in a rural location either in or near the area known as Tregaron Uplands. The primary reason the young people gave for joining the programme was that they wanted to be involved in activities which gave them an opportunity to form friendships and develop social networks.

The research team visited Tregaron Uplands and the town of Tregaron on several occasions and spoke with 'Communities First' workers, practitioners working in schools and young people and families living in the area. There is evidence that the YI officer had met with the 'Communities First' worker, however interviews with practitioners in the area suggested that the YIP had not been marketed sufficiently. Practitioners had very little knowledge of referral procedures, programme content and service delivery.

Given that such small numbers of young people engaged with the programme it was not possible to explore perceptions of the impact of the YIP. Therefore, attention was focused on exploring the work undertaken by local agencies in providing both generic and targeted youth work and the impact this was felt to have on youth inclusion and community cohesion.

Evidence from the research suggests that, within certain sections of the community, there has been a problem with social cohesion for many years particularly amongst specific groups of young men. A local support worker in the area commented that local schools and other agencies in the vicinity should work in collaboration to address the tension that appeared to exist between these groups. He emphasised that the problem did not stem from cultural

differences between the English, who had moved into the area, and the indigenous Welsh population. He expressed the view that the existence of cultural and linguistic differences had been used as a device to create social divisions:

"it is area where there are a lot of Welsh speakers, that shouldn't be a bad thing, but it has (been) used, for a long time, by some, to divide the community between Welsh born and English outsiders, there is always trouble… fighting and intimidation, the local schools could have been a force for building cohesion …"

(Practitioner: 8)

Practitioners identified that the wealthier sections of the community had the resources necessary to access recreational facilities outside the immediate area. The less affluent inhabitants felt isolated by the constraints imposed by their environment. The YIP participants stated that they felt "trapped" by their local surroundings and the lack of available, affordable transport to the main town Aberystwyth. One local resident, who had grown up in the area, felt that the lack of youth provision resulted in less affluent groups feeling a sense of frustration because of the limited recreational facilities available:

"Some feel more isolated than others because they can't get out, can't escape the area. I don't think that (the) social divide affects the middle classes. They can jump in their four wheelers and drive their kids about, but for others without money, it is depressing. It can be frustrating and really suffocating for these youngsters, they don't have much money, they feel powerless, that is part of the reason you see fighting, it is boredom, and anger there is a real sense of hopelessness in some young people here, there is nothing for them."

(Local Resident: 3)

Youth workers felt that much of the work in the area with young people was catering towards the affluent sectors of society rather than providing opportunities for more disadvantaged young people. Many practitioners and local residents felt that problems for socially deprived young people could largely be resolved by the provision of a youth service.

"There isn't any generic youth service around really. It would be nice to have a normal youth service. There was no youth service to work with kids and in some ways many of the problems are normal problems for young kids growing up , but with no youth service these problems just mount up…"

(Practitioner: 9)

Given that public transport was expensive and infrequent, some youth workers said that any service for young people needed to resolve transport issues. Youth workers suggested a Youth Café bus, which would visit different locations in the area at different times of the week, may be a solution to current transport and service issues. However, youth workers were aware that both targeted youth provision for vulnerable young people and more generic youth provision were severely under funded.

Outreach workers and frontline practitioners felt that the service provided should reflect the ethnic diversity within the community. There was a view that certain sections of the rural

youth population would be less likely to engage with services if they thought that they would not be able to relate to the worker:

"…some might not relate, it needs to be representative, it is not currently. I think that stuff like the Urdd and the Young Farmers serve a section of the community which is probably a kind of hierarchy. The kind of the 'haves' at the end of the day, the upper class really, the middle and the ones in between and others that we try to cater for the 'have nots'…

(Experienced Practitioner: 3)

The research findings suggest that more community development work is necessary in order to address the needs of *all* members of the community and improve relations generally.

8.   Recommendations

This research has provided a detailed evaluation of the implementation of a Youth Inclusion Programme (from October 2005 to March 2007), essentially observing the application of an urban model in Ceredigion, a predominantly rural area. On the basis of this research the following recommendations are made:

Countywide

There is a need to prioritise resources at a local level to expand the provision of both generic and targeted youth work for children and young people in Ceredigion, in order to ensure the less affluent and hard to reach groups have the same *access to opportunities* as the rest of the population.

The research identified the main areas where senior managers, practitioners, families and young people felt current provision for children and young people could be improved:

- There is a need to develop more one-to-one support locally for vulnerable children and young people, particularly in socially deprived and rural areas. Mentoring services have an excellent reputation in the local area; however current provision does not meet with the very high demand for this service.

- The research findings also suggest there is a need to improve access and affordability to 'after school' clubs and holiday activities for children and young people. The development of a mobile youth service, a 'youth café bus', across Ceredigion, was perceived to be one solution to this problem. Another suggestion was a youth drop-in centre providing careers advice and information on local recreational activities and support. The drop-in centre would be attached to local schools. The service would be then be rotated around the seven secondary schools.

- Dewis, (part of YOT preventions), the countywide in-schools project offering courses in self esteem and anger management is an excellent example of an early intervention approach targeting the needs of children and young people at risk of school exclusion. Parents, young people and schools praised the service delivery and the interpersonal skills of the Dewis practitioners. The young men interviewed preferred to use this very structured and intensive approach in addressing their issues rather than accessing counsellors. The findings suggest that Dewis practitioners should complete their package of support with the young person even if they are excluded from school.

- There is also a need to promote more 'inclusive' practices both in schools and in the community. Whilst some schools are currently developing inclusive practices within school, aimed at supporting those 'at risk' of exclusion, schools require more specialist support from external agencies to address the underlying causes that are having a negative effect on behaviour and overall academic success for some young people. The few services that do provide 'inclusive' support for vulnerable children and young people within the community are severely under- resourced.

- CAMHS provision, counselling and high level specialist mental health support is limited countywide. The lack of available mental health provision for children and young people was raised as a major concern by families, key practitioners, teachers and senior managers in the local area. More intra-agency and inter-agency training is necessary to make better use of skills already existing within some services (e.g. behavioural training at a whole school level).

- Practitioners felt that all agencies should commit a proportion of their funding to developing an A-Z website for practitioners that outlined all services that provided specific support for vulnerable children and young people and highlighted key skill-sharing and training opportunities. Given that short term contracts are prevalent in youth and community development services, it was felt that valuable knowledge was lost every time contracts ended. Interviewees felt that the development of an interactive archive or directory would enable employees leaving a role to update any useful information gathered during their period in post.

Community Integration and Young People

The research findings suggest that there needs to be considerably more focus on improving levels of community integration for vulnerable children and young people in the two areas that were covered by this study. This could be achieved by:

- re-directing resources to ensure more opportunities are provided for children and young people to access constructive activities, particularly those in rural areas.

- using schools and community development workers as vehicles to promote social cohesion and to encourage the development of a range of community projects to improve inter–generational relationships and increase levels of community integration.

- the local Police continue to develop positive community relations by holding periodic public relations events aimed specifically at young people.

- improving multi–agency working to increase information sharing between key agencies, not only in terms of support services but also in terms of promoting more co-ordinated service provision to avoid duplication.

Youth Offending Team

The YOT have made a significant contribution to the development of targeted youth prevention work in Ceredigion through numerous initiatives such as 'Dewis', the activities project, and the development of a multi- agency panel the 'Request and Action Group' in Penparcau and Aberystwyth West .

- Prevention services need the full commitment of local partnership agencies to work together to develop early intervention programmes that provide support to vulnerable children and young people and their families. Formal service level agreements with

practitioners involved in targeted prevention work need to be developed further to ensure a more inclusive agenda countywide

- In the interests of early intervention, there is an opportunity for the Local Education Authority to adopt a more pro-active role in identifying and referring those children and young people deemed to be 'at risk' of school exclusion. More co-ordinated support from external agencies would enable schools to engage more effectively in supporting preventions work.

The YIP

The decision by the YOT manager to move the Youth Inclusion Programme to a semi-urban localised area resulted in the development of a multi-agency panel, the Request and Action Group (RAG), which meets to identify and address the needs of children and young people deemed 'at risk' of offending or excluding behaviours. The research suggests that the following areas require further attention:

- The development of a generic youth prevention referral form for use by all the key agencies.

- Formalising referral pathways and providing a clearly structured outline of the service provided to help facilitate the delivery of a more effective end product.

- Both potential/actual participants and partner agencies would benefit from an explanation of programme content and duration.

- The establishment of a thorough review procedure to identify whether the expectations of the young participant and the referring agency are met.

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