

Wales Youth Agency – Newslines

**YOUTH WORK AND CRIME PREVENTION
(Policy Guidelines)**

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SUMMARY

This paper will establish the case that an adequately resourced youth service, able to adopt a range of approaches, is of inherent benefit to society. Youth work is able to offer positive experiences which address the needs and aspirations of young people and enable them to develop as responsible citizens, able to make positive contributions to their communities.

Whilst the primary purpose of youth work has never been crime prevention it has an important contribution to make to this process. This paper will refer to recent report from the Princes Trust, based on research undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand, which demonstrates the relationship between youth work and youth crime prevention. (Coopers and Lybrand: 'Preventative Strategy for Young People in Trouble' 1994)

The document presents the argument that projects developed to work with young offenders, could at the same time, be used to provide a broad range of services for other young people in the wider community. This would serve to divert some young people from situations or behaviour which may lead to them committing offences.

The document makes the following recommendations:

1. The youth service should be adequately resourced to adopt a range of approaches which address the needs and aspirations of young people in their area and to tackle the issues confronting their lives. This may include targeting work at particular communities or groups of young people, or on particular issues. Thus those communities where young people are potentially at risk of offending, may be identified and supported through the opportunities offered by youth work

Such decisions should be based on research which draws upon a range of statistics and other information relating to young people, and an audit of services for young people.

2. Services for young people should adopt the following characteristics:
 - (i) They should be based upon well defined sets of aims and objectives which are linked to annual action plans and have a means of monitoring the delivery of the service and evaluating its effectiveness.
 - (ii) They should be well resourced in order to provide for an intense long term process. If Youth Work is to either enhance or change the behaviour and motivations of young people, then a sustained and intense commitment must be made.
 - (iii) They must be challenging and educational. Challenging in that

activities should be attractive to young people and maintain their attention and educational in that young people are able to acquire the skills, knowledge and personal qualities which enable them to take charge of their own lives.

- (iv) They must involve young people in the planning and management of initiatives and service development should work towards this goal.
3. Local authorities should establish an multi-agency group to develop integrated policies addressing the needs of young people. This group should comprise senior officers from services which impact upon the lives of young people, and should involve young people. For example Youth Service, Social Services, Community Safety, Housing, Leisure, Health, Probation, Education, the police and the voluntary sector.

Multi-agency groups would recommend policy to the appropriate committees

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is intended to provide guidance to local authorities and other organisations who have a remit to develop services for young people, in order that they may develop their understanding of the range of issues which arise from concerns regarding young people and crime.
- 1.2 The paper highlights a dichotomy in current policy and provision. On the one hand emphasis is increasingly placed upon the development of schemes, which focus upon young offenders and their behaviour. These schemes are often community based and are often well resourced. On the other hand general services to young people which are intended to facilitate their personal and social development, increasingly have resources taken away from them. Such services, which are also community based, have the potential for diverting young people from situations or behaviour which may lead to offending by providing a broad range of facilities which offer positive experiences.

2.0 POLICY AND PRACTICE: A SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 Following a period of 10 to 15 years where policy emphasised the importance of diverting young people away from the formal criminal justice system (an approach endorsed by both the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and the Children Act 1989), a sharp move in the opposite direction has occurred over the last two years.
- 2.2 A number of steps have been taken which combine to produce a noticeably harsher climate within the youth justice system. Revised cautioning guidance has been issued to the Police, in order to reduce the use of repeated cautions; revised National Standards for the supervision of offenders in the Community have emphasised the importance of punishment, and a series of new and increased custodial powers have been given to the courts, by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.
- 2.3 The rate of legislative change shows little sign of slowing down. The recently published Government green paper 'Strengthening Punishment in the Community' (1995) makes the case for a single community sentence, where the sentencing court would '...have available to it, singly or in combination, all the ingredients of existing community orders.' The single community sentence would replace existing community orders and abolish all of them with the possible exception of supervision orders and the attendance centre order.
- 2.4 The effect of this shift in policy has been the development of projects which focus upon young offenders and their behaviour. Examples of

this kind of work include:

- individually designed programmes of supervision in the community.
- motor projects
- alcohol/Substance misuse groups.
- mediation and reparation schemes.
- community service projects.
- counselling courses for young people who sexually abuse.

2.5 Additionally in Wales, as in England, extra secure accommodation is being developed to meet the needs of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which provides for the eventual abolition of remands into prison custody for 15 to 16 year olds awaiting trial. At the moment the number of young people held in prison custody, who are not guilty until proven otherwise, appears to be rising. The latest figures for custodial remand for 15 and 16 year olds in Wales show a 25% increase during a period from 1st April 1992 to 30th September 1994. (A Crisis in Custody, 1995, ACOP and NACRO).

2.6 The development of effective community based sentence provision is very important for young people who offend, and for their victims and the wider community, as such measures do appear to be more productive and more likely to prevent re-offending, than an increase in the use of custody.

3.0 YOUTH CRIME: A STATISTICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 *Young people as offenders*

- Youth crime accounts for approximately 45% of crimes resulting in a conviction or formal caution.
- Most recorded crimes known to have been committed by young people are property offences
- In 1992, 80% of young people cautioned or found guilty of offences were male, though some recent survey data has suggested that offending rates of young men and young women are much closer.
- The age of known offenders peaks for young men at the age of 17/18 and for young women at the age of 14/15.
- Official statistics show a recent decline in the number of juvenile offenders (by 17%). However, it is not clear whether the number of youth crimes has changed.

(Information taken from Coopers and Lybrand: "Preventative Strategy for Young People in Trouble")

- “Offending is predominantly a young male occupation to a large extent carried out during a relatively short period in a person’s life” (Home Office: ‘Information on Criminal Justice System in England and Wales 1993’ From the Youth Service and Youth Crime: Standing Conference of Principal Youth and Community Officers).
- However, Crime Concern note that 5% of young offenders commit 50% of all solved crimes. This points to a minority of young people involved in offending activity.

3.2 Young people as victims of crime

- The most frequent victims of violence are young men. (British Crime Survey 1992)
- 5% of children are thought to be the victim of sexual or physical abuse
- A recent survey found that 60% of young women are very worried about sexual harassment and assault - 60% of actual assaults are never reported.

3.3 Other problems like child abuse, bullying and sexual and racial harassment of children are substantially under-reported, but figures suggest that:

- 68% of children are victims of bullying at some time in their school careers.
- 10% of primary/middle school children are bullied every week.

4.0 ISSUES RAISED BY THE STATISTICS

- 4.1 Offending is predominantly a young male occupation. However, resources allocated to work with young women will also have a crime prevention effect.
- 4.2 The peak ages for male and female offenders suggest that young people ‘grow out’ of offending behaviour and that the majority are not hardened offenders. Therefore the provision of a broad range of activities and positive experiences offered by a youth service, during what is a short lived period in young people’s lives, can be an effective diversion from crime. (See Rutherford A., 1992 Growing Out of Crime - The New Era)
- 4.3 What response is required to meet the needs of young people who are or who may be victims of crime, to enable them to develop the skills, knowledge and personal qualities to deal positively with these experiences?

- 4.4 These issues need to be considered by a local authority when it is strategically planning services for young people. Services should be planned to address the needs of the wider group of young people, as well as those who offend. Such an approach would serve to divert those young people on the margins of offending behaviour.

5.0 THE YOUTH SERVICE IN WALES

- 5.1 The Youth Service in Wales is a partnership between statutory and voluntary youth organisations which combine to provide a diverse range of services to young people. The purposes of youth work derive from The Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales (see Appendix 1).
- 5.2 LEAs provide services to young people through a network of youth clubs, projects and detached youth work operations. Programmes are often based around activities which challenge young people, broaden their horizons and extend their skills and knowledge.
- 5.2.1 Local authorities also provide a range of facilities via leisure; closer collaboration with the youth service could result in local authorities developing more appropriate and cost effective provision to young people.
- 5.3 Voluntary youth organisations are often more specific in their focus and activity and include uniformed organisations, Young Farmers Clubs, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, YMCA etc. However, the youth service is a fruitful partnership in that it ensures that young people are able to choose from a diverse range of activities which they consider are appropriate to their needs.
- 5.4 Coopers and Lybrand note that it is more often the statutory sector which address issues of crime prevention, normally via project or detached work.
- 5.5 The youth service is open to all young people within the specified age range 11-25, but gives priority to transition to adulthood in the 13-19 age group. It should be noted that this coincides with the statistics relating to the peak ages for offending.
- 5.6 Coopers and Lybrand note that other organisations also adopt youth work approaches in the services they provide. For example, drug agencies, housing departments, social services, and other voluntary bodies whose primary mission is not youth work. This increases the potential for inter agency work to make a significant and effective contribution to the lives of young people, by adopting a co-ordinated approach to meeting their needs.
- 5.7 It is important to recognise the role that general services for young

people play in improving the quality of young people's lives, which in turn will have an effect on the rate of youth crime. There is a need to acknowledge the importance of what a youth service does and can achieve and to resource it adequately.

- 5.8 An adequately resourced youth service, able to adopt a range of approaches, is of inherent benefit to society. Youth work is able to offer positive experiences which address the needs and aspirations of young people and enable them to develop as responsible citizens, able to make positive contributions to their communities.
- 5.9 Whilst the primary purpose of youth work has never been crime prevention it has an important contribution to make to this process. This paper will refer to recent report from the Princes Trust, based on research undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand, which demonstrates the relationship between youth work and youth crime prevention. (Coopers and Lybrand: Preventative Strategy for Young People in Trouble. 1994)

6.0 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUTH WORK AND CRIME PREVENTION

- 6.1 Youth work aims to enable young people to gain greater control over their lives and to contribute to the well being of others by developing their skills, knowledge and personal qualities. The purposes and process of youth work are not necessarily intended to either reduce the level of youth crime or to change the behaviour of young people who offend. The youth service is not a crime prevention agency.
- 6.2 However, given its role in contributing to young people's development, it is a valuable partner in the crime prevention process. The activities, which facilitate the youth work process, divert young people from situations or behaviour which place them at risk of offending. The recent study by Coopers and Lybrand confirms this.

“There is little objective evidence to demonstrate a causal relationship between youth work and crime diversion. However there is a large body of subjective evidence which convinces us that there is a linkage. It has not been possible to estimate the strength of this linkage, but it appears to be strongest for youth work which is carefully targeted at young people ‘at risk’, has clearly defined objectives, offers an intense and long-term process and provides a challenging and educational experience”

(Coopers and Lybrand:
'Preventative Strategy for Young People in Trouble')

- 6.3 The same report highlights the distinction between Primary and Secondary Crime Prevention Work.

Primary crime prevention work seeks to change young people's environment so that the opportunity for them to become involved in activities that may lead to offending are reduced.

Secondary Crime Prevention Work seeks to change the behaviour and motivation of young people.

- 6.4 It is clear from the description of the purposes and processes of youth work, that youth work can contribute to both Primary and particularly Secondary Prevention.

- 6.5 The provision of a range of challenging and educational experiences, through activities and professional support, is a means of diverting young people away from activities which may lead to their offending and clearly contributes to primary crime prevention work.

- 6.6 The purposes of youth work are concerned with enabling young people to develop knowledge, skills and personal qualities and seek to enhance or change the behaviour and motivations of young people. Youth work is an excellent exemplar of secondary prevention.

7.0 YOUNG PEOPLE: "AT RISK" OR "IN NEED"?

- 7.1 Coopers and Lybrand suggest that young people "at risk" of offending are those individuals who are most in need; having been identified by social services departments, schools, the police or the probation service. Thus it is appropriate to consider the concept of young people "in need". The Children Act 1989 provides a clear definition of the term "in need" and includes young people up to, and including, the age of 18.

- 7.2 A Child is "in need" if s/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain or have opportunity to do so, a reasonable standard of health or development without provision of services by the local authority. The Children Act provides local authorities with guidance concerning the range of indicators, which they may use to assess young people in need.

- 7.3 The Children Act places a general duty on local authorities to promote the welfare of young people and children in need by providing a range and level of services appropriate to their needs. Specifically the act

places a duty on local authorities to make arrangements for the prevention of crime by young people and the diversion from prosecution of young offenders in their area.

- 7.4 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides clear guidance on the range of services, which promote the well being of young people and children, and which are in their best interests.
- 7.5 Article 40 provides guidance that a child in conflict with the law has the right to treatment which promotes the child's sense of dignity and worth, takes the child's age into account and aims at his or her reintegration into society.
- 7.6 The preceding paragraphs provide definitions of need but levels of social deprivation impact upon the quality of young people's lives and would also affect levels of crime. Indicators of social deprivation may include:
- the number of available opportunities for stable employment.
 - the standard and availability of housing.
 - the range and type of family relationships and support.
 - the range and level of services available to local communities
 - the level and nature of substance misuse.
- 7.7 The process of youth work can equip young people with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities to deal with and resolve these issues. Youth Workers also develop initiatives on issues which affect young peoples lives including housing, unemployment, health, poverty and crime.
- 7.8 Importantly effective multi-agency working which brings together agencies who tackle the kind of issues raised above, can also make a significant impact on the quality of young people's lives.

8.0 A WAY FORWARD

- 8.1 It is clear from this debate that the youth service has an important role to play in the crime prevention process, as well as the valuable contribution it makes to the personal and social development of young people.
- 8.2 In order to enable these objectives to be achieved we recommend the following:

The youth service should be adequately resourced to adopt a range of approaches, which address the needs and aspirations of young people in their area and to tackle the issues confronting their lives. This may include targeting work at particular communities or groups of young people, or on particular issues.

Thus those communities where young people are potentially at risk of offending, may be identified and supported through the opportunities offered by youth work

Such decisions should be based on research, which draws upon a range of statistics and other information relating to young people, and an audit of services for young people.

8.3 Services for young people should adopt the following characteristics:

- (i) They should be based upon well defined sets of aims and objectives, which are linked to annual action plans and have a means of monitoring the delivery of the service and evaluating its effectiveness
- (ii) They should be well resourced in order to provide for an intense long term process. If Youth Work is to either enhance or change the behaviour and motivations of young people, then we must make a sustained and concentrated commitment, in terms of the level of provision available to young people per week.
- (iii) They must be challenging and educational. Challenging in that activities should be attractive to young people and maintain their attention and educational in that young people are able to acquire the skills, knowledge and personal qualities which enable them to take charge of their own lives.
- (iv) They must involve young people in the planning and management of initiatives and service development should work towards this goal.
- (v) Providers should monitor the range of services available to young people and their accessibility

8.4 Local authorities should establish a multi-agency group to develop integrated policies addressing the needs of young people. This group should comprise a central core of senior officers from services which impact upon the lives of young people, and should involve young people. For example Youth Service, Social Services, Community Safety, Housing, Leisure, Health, Probation, Education, the police and the voluntary sector.

8.4.1 Consideration should also be given to how services and organisations who fall outside this central core can be brought together, in order to address the needs of young people.

8.5 Multi-agency groups would recommend policy to the appropriate committees

9.0 MULTI-AGENCY WORK

9.1 In order to develop these recommendations we have the following ideas to offer:

9.2 The effective delivery of services to young people has three central elements:

- A clear corporate policy statement.
- A means for empowering local communities.
- Mechanisms for multi-agency working.

9.3 All local authorities should establish a youth policy group comprising senior officers from those services which impact upon the lives of young people. This group would also seek ways of involving young people and recruit representatives of the voluntary sector and other agencies working with young people.

9.4 The role of this group would be to recommend general policy for the development of services for young people and encourage the establishment of inter-agency forums, based on local communities. These local forums would empower workers to implement policy in the local context in order to tackle the issues which impact upon the quality of young peoples' lives.

9.4.1 This corporate policy would also delineate lines of accountability and enable local forums to prepare work programmes and submit monitoring and evaluation returns.

9.4.2 This framework should allow for the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation processes to inform the development of corporate policy.

9.5 Local inter-agency forums would need to address the following issues in order to be successful.

- Agencies should demonstrate their commitment to the approach by ensuring representation and regular attendance at a sufficiently senior level to be able to commit resources.
- The local community and young people must be in close contact with the consortium.
- All the agencies involved should pay an active role and work in consortia with each other.
- A consortium should establish a clear identity and purpose through the agreement of a joint statement of objectives and for each of the individual participating agencies to understand the contribution they will be making to the joint approach. The decision making process of a consortium should be informed by research and consultation.

- Multi-agency groups should prepare strategic plans which outline their intended areas of activity, on an annual basis. They should also devise frameworks for monitoring and evaluation which identify criteria against which to collect information.
- A consortium should seek to share resources of: finance, staff, equipment. It may be that a consortium is able to enter into service level agreements with each of the participating agencies which address, the role and contribution of each agency to the consortium; The resources that agencies will commit to the consortium and each agency's expectations of what the consortium will achieve on their behalf.
- A consortium committee should be established and serviced by a co-ordinator whose role would be to facilitate participation and co-ordinate activities. This may be an appointment funded jointly by all the agencies involved or by a single agency as part of its commitment to the project. In this case the Co-ordinator should be empowered by their employer to undertake the work as a normal part of their duties, rather than on top of them.

10.0 TARGETING YOUTH WORK

- 10.1 Maintained youth work in Wales is currently characterised by a dependence on networks of youth clubs as the main way of delivering youth work. Outreach and detached youth work has been found to be very effective in targeting young people in need, and engaging them in a challenging and educational process (see Coopers and Lybrand).
- 10.2 Local authorities are recommended to develop a complimentary range of services, focusing on young people aged 13 to 19, which include:
- Club work
 - Detached Work
 - Outreach work

11.0 INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

- 11.1 This document places a great emphasis upon the involvement of young people in service development. Young people require services which address their needs and are relevant to the context of their everyday lives. Therefore, local authorities should seek ways of involving young people in service development.
- 11.2 This involvement may be achieved in a number of ways, including:
- 11.3 **Market Research:** Surveying young people to determine needs and strategies at both local and unitary authority level. Market research

has been most effective when unstructured approaches have been made to young people to canvas their views and opinions. Questionnaires and other quantitative methods should not be used in isolation.

Young people have much to offer the market research process, not only as contributors, but also as workers employed to undertake research.

- 11.4 **Youth Forums:** A number of local authorities have supported the establishment of a youth forum or council in their area. Such forums comment on service development and take a pro-active role in ensuring that services are relevant and accessible to young people.

Local authorities should give due consideration to the establishment of youth forums in order to ensure a broad representative base.

- 11.5 **Issue/Interest based groups:** Young people have a range of interests and also become involved in a range of issues which concern them. Some of these activities may be best supported by local authorities providing finances and facilities which enable young people to develop activities or tackle issues themselves.

Such initiatives would harness the creative potential of young people and given them the responsibility for making decisions which affect their lives.

- 11.6 **Training:** A number of local authorities in Wales have supported training initiatives which enable young people to identify issues of concern and develop the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed to address them. Such initiatives have included conferences, workshops, training courses and residential experiences.

- 11.7 These examples should not be considered in isolation. They are often complimentary and some may be a pre-requisite of others. For example, market research may identify the need to set up an issue or interest based group, or training to establish a youth forum. Whilst these examples represent practice which has been developed in some areas, they are not the only way to proceed. Local authorities should approach the involvement of young people with an open mind to ensure that any pre-conceived ideas do not dictate the final outcome. Using an approach which relies totally on listening and responding to young people is more likely to promote a variety of ways to engage, interest and involve them in service delivery.

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