Youth Inclusion and Support Panels: Preventing Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

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Foreword

Research Task

In 2003, we were commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to evaluate Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs), which were being developed to identify and support young people aged 8–13 who are at high risk of offending and antisocial behaviour. The evaluation was extended by the DfES and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) in 2005 to enable us to secure a larger throughput of YISP cases for analysis as the pilots had been slower to reach their targets than originally anticipated.

The evaluation has taken place at a time of considerable policy development and transformation in the areas of youth justice and children's services in England and Wales, as part of the Government's campaign to prevent crime, combat antisocial behaviour and tackle child poverty. This rapidly changing context has influenced the development of YISPs and promoted a new vision for children and young people. It is important, therefore, to situate this evaluation within the wider policy context.

Throughout the evaluation, we have worked closely with our sponsors in the DfES and the YJB to ensure that the research is addressing the policy and practice questions which can inform future developments in preventative and early intervention services for children and young people at risk of offending and antisocial behaviour. We have presented interim findings and provided regular feedback to the DfES, and discussed the difficulties securing appropriate and sufficient data. The YISP pilots faced a number of challenges and had to embrace the demands of a national evaluation as they were evolving their approach and establishing their panels. We have been privileged to observe the developments, tensions and transitions within the pilots and to use our understanding of the processes to delineate elements of practice which appear to conform most closely to the policy intent and promote a preventative approach to youth crime. As a result, this report says more about implementation and YISP processes than it does about outcomes. In our view, the insights are important in adding to the evidence base which can underpin future policies and new programme initiatives.

The Research Team

The evaluation has been multi-faceted and complex. In order to ensure that all the varying aspects of YISPs could be investigated carefully we assembled a highly experienced multi-disciplinary team which brought together academic experts from several disciplines within Newcastle University. The study was co-ordinated within the Newcastle Centre for Family Studies under my direction. Two of my colleagues contributed to the evaluation: Karen Laing has been responsible for profiling the case study areas and analysing data relating to their YISP cases; Dr Christine Thompson has conducted the qualitative interviews with children, young people, parents/carers and YISP staff, and has taken responsibility for data analysis. Professor Mike Coombes and Dr Simon Raybould, from the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies, orchestrated the management and analyses of the quantitative data from the YISP management information system, advised on the selection of case study areas, and considered the generalisability of the findings. Two members of the Newcastle University Business School provided specific expertise: Professor Stephen Procter conducted the study of multi-agency working, and Professor Colin Wren advised on the costs study. Several of us have observed YISPs in action during the evaluation. The research team has been unchanging throughout the period in which the research has taken place.

We have been supported in our work by the senior secretary, Janette Pounder, and the secretary, Jane Tilbrook, within the Newcastle Centre for Family Studies. Latterly, they painstakingly prepared successive drafts of a highly detailed final evaluation report which was presented to the DfES in December 2006. Michael Ayton, our copy-editor, has ensured that our outputs are both accessible and meaningful.

No one could describe the research as easy or straightforward. It created many challenges, and we have had to work with data which have been variously flawed, thereby compromising our ability to undertake all the planned analyses. Nevertheless, the research is inevitably richer for the breadth of research experience which has been brought to bear on it.

Research Outputs

Throughout the evaluation, we have provided a number of progress reports. Our final evaluation report was submitted in December 2006. It was written for policymakers and we endeavoured to render it accessible and informative for policy colleagues in the DfES and the YJB and other government departments. That report is deliberately very detailed and will retain Restricted-Policy status. We agreed to write a shorter version of our final report for publication which tells the story of the development of YISPs, describes the processes which have been developed and their initial impacts, and which considers the implications for further initiatives within the preventative youth justice agenda. We agreed to limit the discussion of methodological issues here since these are included in the

Annexes to the Restricted-Policy report and are unlikely to be of major interest to a wider audience. They can be made available by the research team on request. This report is structured in such a way as to take the reader through the YISP process. Chapter 1 sets the context and the final chapter discusses the findings and their implications for the future development of YISPs.

The report represents the views of the research team, which are not necessarily those of either the DfES or the YJB. We have approached the evaluation and the preparation of the outputs as independent academics with no vested interests in the findings. We took the policy intent of YISPs as our starting point and developed a theory of change approach to guide our evaluation. As a team, we are in accord about the messages which emerge from the evaluation and our conclusions reflect common understandings of the issues, and of the challenges for the future.

Emeritus Professor Janet Walker
Research Director

April 2007

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Executive Summary

Research Context – Every Child Matters

In 2002, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) set out its commitment to develop and pilot pre-crime at-risk panels, later renamed Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs). The new panels were designed to identify and support young people aged 8–13 who are at high risk of offending and antisocial behaviour before they enter the youth justice system, and were regarded as a key component of the Government's campaign to prevent crime and combat antisocial behaviour. The YISPs were described as multi-agency planning groups which seek to prevent offending and antisocial behaviour by offering voluntary support services and other complementary interventions for high risk children and their families. Pilots were established to test the development of YISPs, paid for by the Children's Fund under the auspices of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).[1] In 2003 we were commissioned by the DfES to evaluate thirteen new pilot YISPs, located in Barking & Dagenham, Birmingham, Ealing, Greenwich, Knowsley, Lancashire, Liverpool, Nottingham, Salford, Sheffield, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Walsall, and Wigan. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) provided detailed guidance to the pilots relating to implementation and operation of YISPs. It was assumed that, in most cases, the Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) would act as the lead agency for the YISP on behalf of the Children's Fund and the local authority.

Providing high-quality services for children and for their families has been regarded as an essential step in preparing young people for the challenges and stresses of everyday life and giving them opportunities to achieve their full potential and thereby contribute positively within diverse, multicultural communities. Increasingly, in recent years, the focus has been on prevention and early intervention, particularly with respect to children deemed to be at high risk. The Government has set out five outcomes for children which now provide the core outcomes framework for all government policy relating to families and to youth justice, including YISPs. They are that children and young people should: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being. Youth justice agencies are important partners in the delivery of children's services which focus on early prevention of antisocial and criminal behaviour. The emphasis is on multi-agency approaches which tackle the risks associated with offending. Clearly, the key to prevention lies in being able to target effectively children and young people most at risk of becoming involved in crime and antisocial behaviour. Using a matrix of the risk and protective factors which may lead young people into, or protect them from, crime, the YISPs were tasked with constructing a personally tailored package of support and interventions, summarised in an integrated support plan (ISP) designed to facilitate the kind of provision which will prevent the young person moving further

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[1] The DfES was renamed the Department for Children, Schools and Families in July 2007.

towards crime. Central to the concept was the role of keyworkers, who are responsible for assessing risk and co-ordinating and monitoring the package of interventions, thereby ensuring that children and their families receive mainstream public services at the earliest opportunity. It was considered essential that the YISPs should provide accessible services which reflect the diversity of the local population and which take account of ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, age and race.

Involvement in YISPs is voluntary. Children and their families are asked to consent to referral and assessment for consideration by a panel, and to co-operate with the ISP. One of the core principles of YISPs is that children and their parents/carers should be involved as much as possible in each stage of the process. At the centre of YISPs is the multi-agency panel, which should include representatives from a wide range of agencies. The expectation is that the panel will be involved in prioritising cases, considering detailed assessments and designing ISPs. Panels are not specifically required to oversee compliance with ISPs but are expected to monitor and review the child's progress and satisfaction with the interventions offered.

Evaluating the YISPs

The key problem faced by any evaluation of a particular initiative such as YISPs is the tendency for outcomes to result from a myriad of influences. It was essential, therefore, for us to understand how YISPs targeted children and young people, assessed the risk and protective factors, developed integrated support plans and delivered multi-agency interventions, and then to consider how YISP interventions might interact with other initiatives designed to prevent criminal activity and to support children and families. We regarded a scoping phase as an essential first step which would help us decide how to meet these requirements. There was a considerable degree of flexibility in the way in which YISPs were being implemented locally, with some pilots starting from scratch in developing panels while others were building on existing initiatives. We noted that the pilot YISPs were not all targeting the same groups of children, making overall comparison problematic. We regarded the variations in practice as potentially very interesting on the one hand, and as a potential threat to a robust research design on the other. These variations underscored the importance of capturing as robust data as we could about process, outputs and outcomes both quantitatively and qualitatively through *in situ* fieldwork. Specifically, we needed to examine the implementation and operation of YISP panels, models of practice, outputs, activities and outcomes, and contextual issues. We adopted an action-research framework and delineated two complementary strands to the evaluation: a quantitative micro-level element, including a study of costs, and a qualitative case study element. Our aim was to collect quantitative data from all 13 pilots and to focus our qualitative work in four pilot areas.

The Quantitative Micro-Level Element

We wanted to gather information from all the YISPs about each new referral in a given time period (February 2003 to October 2005). A management information system, known as YISPMIS, had been developed for the YJB for use by the pilots, and we were encouraged to use it as the means for data capture for the evaluation. Unfortunately, YISPMIS proved to be far more problematic than helpful for the evaluation and many pilots were frustrated by its complexity. As a result, there were ongoing problems relating to the extraction of data throughout the evaluation. When we were eventually able to access the data, the file consisted of 2,235 referral records. Many of these fell outside our evaluation time-range and many children were outside the YISP age-range of 8 to 13. Stripping the data set of these cases reduced it to 1,642 records. We discovered, also, that there was a considerable amount of missing data for many of these cases, the most serious gaps relating to data about assessments which we had expected to rely on to give us a picture of the impact of YISP intervention. In only 403 cases were initial, midway and closure assessment scores available for calculating changes in a child's risk

scores during YISP intervention but other missing data meant that not all these cases were useable for our analysis of outcomes. The extent of the quantitative analyses we were able to undertake was severely compromised by the poor quality of YISPMIS data. Nevertheless, we have drawn on the quantitative data wherever possible, to provide a wider context for the in-depth qualitative work, but caution must be used in interpreting the results. We were asked to consider the costs of YISPs, and this proved to be one of the most difficult elements in the evaluation. Pilots found it difficult to provide the data we needed, so our analysis of costs must be read with considerable caution as to its generalisability.

In-Depth Qualitative Case Studies

Our in-depth qualitative work provided a rich tapestry of information about how the YISPs operated and about the more subtle impacts on children and parents. We selected four pilots as case-study sites: Birmingham, Ealing, Lancashire and Nottingham. During the evaluation, however, it became clear that Nottingham was receiving very few YISP referrals and we switched our attention to Wigan, which had high numbers of referrals and was using an innovative family group conferencing approach. Our in-depth work involved us in the examination of seven separate panels in four pilot areas (three in Lancashire, two in Birmingham), all of which are very different. We used a range of methods to study these, including observations, interviews with professionals, exploratory interviews at different points in time with children and parents, discourse and narrative analysis, and documentary analysis. The primary purpose was to identify the factors which might contribute to successful and unsuccessful delivery of interventions, identify the outcomes as perceived by the providers and receivers of the interventions, and explore the organisational aspects of service delivery.

Representativeness

Measuring the effects of YISPs across such a diverse landscape presented many challenges. We have addressed the question of representativeness, particularly in light of the inadequacies of the YISPMIS data set. Our multiple assessments of generalisability indicate that the social conditions across all the pilots combined were substantially more challenging than those faced in most of the country as a whole. In this sense, the pilots have been a tough proving ground for the implementation of YISPs. This may have given them more chance to appear effective because there was more scope for YISP intervention to have an impact, or it may be that local conditions have made making any impact at all more challenging. Our findings relating to short-term outcomes must be considered with a high degree of caution, however. We simply cannot know what the longer-term outcomes might be or whether YISP interventions 'work' to prevent children becoming involved in antisocial behaviour and criminal activities. The extent to which the pilot YISPs contributed to the *Every Child Matters* outcomes is a matter for conjecture primarily because the findings represent an evaluation of a new initiative in its early stages, enabling us to consider only the potential YISPs have to play a major role in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. Wherever possible, we identified those elements of YISP practice which, in our view, are most likely to contribute to positive outcomes, and those which seem to be less helpful.

We believe that the evaluation has highlighted the difficulties many agencies face when tasked with implementing a new initiative, the delays in getting new approaches accepted and established, unrealistic predictions about target numbers, the challenges inherent in multi-agency partnership and the importance of grounding new initiatives within existing structures and local conditions while simultaneously responding to a wider national agenda for change in the delivery of children's services, particularly those focused on prevention and early intervention.

Troubled and Troublesome: Targeting High Risk Children

In order for children to be referred to a YISP, an assessment must indicate that four or more risk factors are present in their life. Furthermore, the child's behaviour should be of concern to two or more of the partner agencies and/or the child's parents/carers, all of whom consider that a multi-agency response is called for. Children and young people should not have passed the police reprimand stage; should not be known to the criminal justice system (although they may be offending and 'known' to the police); and should be judged to be at very high risk of offending.

Across the thirteen pilots, referrals tended to come from several statutory sources, including education, social work, health, and criminal justice agencies such as the police and youth offending teams. Referrals from education were received in every pilot area, and were the most common referral source. Some 10 per cent of referrals were in respect of children who were not in full-time education and nearly 30 per cent of children were regularly truanting from school. By far the most common factor relating to education was difficulty with schoolwork. Several pilots received considerable numbers of referrals from the police while other pilots received hardly any. Pilots varied considerably in their throughputs. Lancashire recorded the highest number of referrals, and Nottingham received the least. The vast majority of the children and young people referred to the YISPs were male and half of all children referred were aged 11 or 12. Eighty per cent of the children were categorised as 'white', with higher percentages of non-white children recorded in the London boroughs.

Parents and carers interviewed usually believed that their child's worsening behaviour at school, at home or in the community had triggered the YISP referral. Prior to the referral, many parents had been asking for help for some time with a variety of often complex and interrelated problems relating to the child's education, family relationships, antisocial behaviour, or emotional and mental health. Indeed, many parents had been at their wits' end, trying to cope with a child who was causing a variety of stresses, and desperate for someone to do something which could help them as well as help the child. Some parents had tried to access mainstream services such as CAMHS and frequently felt let down by their apparent failure to respond. The children and young people themselves were usually aware that they had been referred to the YISP because they had been naughty in some way, but most had little idea what to expect. The YISP staff acknowledged that parents and children were not always given accurate information about what YISPs could offer and parents were inclined to regard YISP as an agency which would take children off their hands for a while. Some children were worried that they might be taken away from their families.

In some areas, YISP staff felt that they had been used as a 'dumping ground' for hard cases which the statutory agencies had not been able to handle. On occasion, the YISP had been used as a 'back-up' service or as a 'bolt-on' to other services, and some agencies had referred children to YISP as part of their own exit strategy from a family. The YISPs felt that dealing with these inappropriate referrals had at times made relationships with some statutory agencies quite difficult. As YISPs have evolved they have tended to become more selective about which referrals are appropriate, tightening their gatekeeping and verification procedures. While a number of strategies were in place in many YISPs to increase referrals and reduce inappropriate referrals, keyworkers recognised that it is very difficult to identify, target and predict the young people who are at most risk of offending and for whom YISP intervention is most appropriate.

Assessing Risk

A new referral and assessment process was developed for use in the pilot YISPs by a team in the Centre for Criminology at Oxford University. Known as ONSET, the new tool has been used by pilot YISPs since autumn 2003, and research has been conducted by the Oxford team in order to validate ONSET in parallel with our national evaluation of YISPs. The ONSET is the only specifically designed tool in use in early intervention/prevention programmes. In order to fit with the YISP process, ONSET includes: a referral form (which can aid verification of suitability); a pro-forma for parental and child consent; a standardised assessment form; a self-assessment questionnaire for children, entitled *Over To You*; a self-assessment *Over To You* questionnaire for parents/carers; mid-way review; and a closure review.

The referral form seeks information about the child being referred, the child's family, the child's educational details, the involvement of statutory services, the child's criminal or offending history, and reasons for the referral. It contains a list of potential risk and protective factors that might apply to the child being referred. When a referral has been verified, the referral form should be passed to a keyworker for detailed ONSET assessment. The assessment document is more substantive: fuller details are required about behaviour and other aspects of the child's life. Each section has to be given a rating which indicates the extent to which there is a likelihood of offending or antisocial behaviour on the part of the child in the future. In other words, the keyworker has to make a judgement about the link between the problems identified and the child's future offending behaviour. This is very important because it draws the distinction between the existence of risk factors and problems *per se* and the likelihood of them leading to criminal behaviour. A scale of 0–4 is used to rate each section in terms of its relevance to further offending, with 4 indicating a strong association.

Keyworkers have the option of using the *Over To You* self-completion questionnaires, which allow an opportunity for parents and the child to answer questions from their own point of view. Pilots varied in terms of how often they used these. Some used them very infrequently whereas others used them in the majority of cases**.** A further form which documents the child's risk of serious harm should be completed by the keyworker if a child is thought to pose a risk of serious harm to another person. The ONSET referral form, and to a greater extent the assessment document, were designed to provide evidence about each child accepted by a YISP, which could both guide subsequent panel discussions and the development of a tailored ISP and enable measures of change to be recorded at a later stage in the intervention. Clearly, the assessment can stand alone as a working tool, but its primary use is in measuring and assessing outcomes. We had expected to base our quantitative study of outcomes on changes in ONSET scores, but the numbers of cases in which initial and repeat ONSET assessments were recorded was a relatively small proportion of the total number of cases recorded on YISPMIS during our study period. In respect of 1,440 children referred to YISPs over the period 1 February 2004 to 31 October 2005, 552 closure forms were completed and recorded, relating to approximately 40 per cent of children and a third of all referrals to YISPs in the thirteen pilots. Again, there was much variation between panel areas in respect of their use. Unfortunately, not all these cases had an initial ONSET score recorded, rendering them unusable for analyses relating to change in risk factors.

Analysis of the available data has shown that education, neighbourhood, lifestyle and emotional and mental health were the most serious risk factors recorded at the beginning of YISP intervention. Initial ONSET scores varied between pilots. While keyworkers regarded ONSET as a useful tool to clarify their thinking and highlight risk and protective factors, they have been less convinced about the ultimate value of the scoring system. Inevitably, professionals from different backgrounds and with varying degrees of experience in working with children at risk of offending are likely to score from their own perspective. There was a perception that keyworkers with a social services or YOT background might score risks of offending lower than those with youth work or education backgrounds

because the former are used to dealing with much more difficult cases. It is clear from our analyses that some pilots were working with lower-risk children than others.

Assessing a young person's risk of offending or antisocial behaviour is at the heart of the YISP referral process. Unfortunately, the lack of consistency across the pilot YISPs relating to the recording of ONSET assessments has rendered it difficult to be certain that we have captured a true picture of how assessments have been undertaken with children and young people referred to the YISPs. Many YISPs had not embraced the notion of conducting follow-up assessments in order to examine change over time. It seems essential that assessments should be undertaken by fully trained staff, irrespective of the agency in which they work, who approach the task with a clear understanding of the purpose of the assessment and the uses to which it might be put.

Youth Inclusion and Support Panels in Action

Panels have several responsibilities: first, to ensure that the most appropriate services are available at the earliest opportunity to each child/family referred to a YISP; second, to monitor changes in risk and protective factors during YISP intervention; third, to ensure that the children and their families are satisfied with the help they receive; and fourth, to make sure that children are maintained in full-time education. When establishing panels, YISPs were advised to consider a number of factors, including: the catchment area to be served; the anticipated workload; the roles and responsibilities of panel members; how children and families will be involved in panel decision-making; the strength and efficacy of relevant local strategic partnerships; and information exchange and confidentiality. The YJB argued that, because of the specific remit of YISPs, certain agencies (YOTs, the police, social services, health (CAMHS), Children's Fund, and schools/education) should form the core membership of every panel, with additional specialist and other agencies invited to join according to local circumstances (youth service, housing, Connexions, and voluntary and community groups). This inclusive approach to panel membership suggests that each YISP panel is likely to have a minimum of eight members, and most will probably have rather more. Attendance is expected to be regular and panels are expected to meet at least once a month. Pilot YISPs have had to strike a balance between keeping panels effective and having representatives of sufficient seniority to commit resources, and ensuring that panels are not unwieldy and potentially intimidating. The maximum number of invitations issued for any one panel meeting was 41. The agencies most frequently invited were YOTs, followed by schools. Pilots were often critical of the poor attendance record of some agencies, particularly social services. Each panel has to appoint a chair, and while many YISPs selected the chair from within their own structure (e.g. the YOT manager or YISP co-ordinator), others appointed the chair from a local service (such as the police or education).

Securing agency representatives at the right level – able to commit resources but with sufficient local knowledge to inform decision-making – has presented a challenge for some YISPs. Not all, for example, found it easy to engage police representatives in the early months and others struggled to involve headteachers. Nevertheless, the panels we have observed in action have managed, for the most part, to secure appropriate membership, although attendance has sometimes been sporadic in some areas. Inevitably, panels which take place in more rural or smaller catchment areas are likely to have smaller numbers of regular members and involve staff who work at an operational rather than a strategic level.

Involving the local community in the development, delivery and operation of YISPs has presented another challenge. Some YISPs decided not to involve community representatives, citing confidentiality as the main reason for their decision. Where members of the community have been regular members of a panel, they have contributed a good deal of local knowledge both about specific neighbourhoods and about individual families living in them. Although the YJB expected that children,

young people and their parents would be included in panel meetings, in practice most pilots have not invited families to the panel. The exception is Wigan, where a family group conferencing model was adopted in which children, parents and other family members are central participants in the decision-making. It was evident from our observations in Wigan that while families were fully involved in the family group meeting, rarely, however, were many professionals present. As Wigan did not hold a YISP panel meeting as such, the lack of outside involvement could be seen as a disadvantage. It appeared that some of the real benefits associated with panels in other areas might have been lost in Wigan.

Each panel developed its own *modus vivendi* and there were considerable variations in approach. Some adhered more closely than others to YJB guidelines while others tended to largely ignore ONSET assessments and expectations that YISP intervention would be intensive but relatively brief. Some panels lost sight of the focus on preventing crime and antisocial behaviour and adopted a more welfare-oriented approach to long-term care and support of vulnerable children and young people.

Planning, Delivering and Receiving Preventative Services

In considering the type of early intervention that might be appropriate for a child, YISPs were expected to focus on the provision of mainstream services. The YISPs do not have a substantive role as commissioning bodies or, directly, as service providers, but they do look to ensure that a holistic service is made available. This is a challenging remit, and the pilot YISPs varied considerably in their approach to service provision. In order for YISPs to execute their role effectively they undoubtedly need the support and commitment of a range of statutory and voluntary services.

The ONSET assessment was designed to help panels and keyworkers decide the key targets for intervention, and the ISP should set out the expectations for the child, the family and the service providers. Although relatively few data were available about ISPs on YISPMIS, we were able to see from the quantitative and qualitative information that a range of interventions were offered. These tended to fall into two distinct categories: direct work with children and indirect work on behalf of children. The former included activities for children, one-to-one support, mentoring, and issues-based sessions/programmes. Structured activities such as sports, art, media and computing were popular. Most activities had developmental and social learning aims as well as providing fun and diversion. Keyworkers regarded them as helping to build self-esteem, improve social skills, offer one-to-one attention and enhance the social inclusion of YISP children. Direct one-to-one work was offered in most pilots by the YISP keyworker. All the keyworkers believed that a one-to-one relationship is crucial to the success or failure of most ISPs. However, differences of approach emerged within and between YISPs regarding what were considered to be appropriate interventions. Many keyworkers made use of programmes for addressing risk factors, which they had bought in (e.g. Teen Talk), downloaded from the internet or designed themselves. Some keyworkers stressed that the 'crime and consequences' work, as it was often termed, was only of value when integrated into an ISP which addressed deeper issues, such as family functioning. Deciding whether, and how, keyworkers should be involved in direct service delivery to children and families was an issue with which many pilots had to grapple. Resource and workload considerations resulted in some keyworkers being unable to devote much time to direct work with YISP children. Furthermore, the professional qualifications and practice skills of keyworkers were variable.

The indirect work on behalf of children often included referrals to other agencies. On occasion, keyworkers could fast-track children into services such as CAMHS and parents were delighted that their children were able to access services in this way. Another important keyworker role was that of mediating between home and school. Throughout our evaluation of YISPs we became increasingly aware of the difficulties that can arise between parents and educational institutions. Although most

parents emphasised that schools had been supportive, they often did not understand why a school had taken particular courses of action. Parents described how they could feel powerless, patronised and harassed by teachers. In addition to liaising with schools, the YISP keyworkers had also liaised with other agencies such as the police, housing authorities and social services departments, on behalf of families. Keyworkers saw this as important in helping parents deal with situations which were clearly adding to the risks for children.

Occasionally, keyworkers had perceived the need for parents to access help for themselves. Keyworkers often gave information or advice to parents about a variety of relevant services such as domestic violence, bereavement, debt counselling, college courses, support groups and local activities for their children. Many parents reported that YISP keyworkers had, in addition to helping them access other services, provided them with emotional support, 'a listening ear'. Although some keyworkers had received specialised training to work with parents, most described themselves as offering informal parenting advice and support.

Although ISPs were individualised, it was not always easy to identify the links between interventions offered and the perceived risks articulated in the ONSET assessments. Frequently, the interventions were not structured in terms of dosage, duration and order of delivery. It was rarely easy to discern which interventions were focused on specific targets for change. Furthermore, not all issues and risks identified as key factors in the initial ONSET assessment were addressed in the ISPs. There may be legitimate reasons for this gap, such as a lack of appropriate services, but our findings suggest that there is some disjunction between assessment and intervention. Only those risks which could be addressed seemed to be noted in the ISPs. Others were simply left to one side and not addressed. It should be stressed, however, that our interviews with keyworkers indicated that they were usually very aware of the risks faced by each child and had a very good understanding of each case, irrespective of what was contained in the ISP.

Facilitating Engagement

We wanted to tease out which factors encouraged and which inhibited successful engagement with YISP interventions. A number of key themes emerged from our interviews with families and keyworkers: parental support, the enthusiasm of the child, and the relationship with the keyworker. Conversely, the lack of parental support, the child's lack of interest and ongoing disruptive behaviour, and a lack of local resources on which keyworkers could draw inhibited families' engagement with YISPs. It was clear that some children and young people had engaged fully with their ISP, while others had not. Keyworkers regarded the support and encouragement of parents as absolutely essential to the engagement of their children. Clearly, it was also important that the young person was motivated to engage with the YISP. A successful relationship with a keyworker can enhance motivation to comply with an ISP and make changes in behaviour. Other factors which keyworkers from all the YISPs highlighted as impinging on service delivery included staff absences, staff shortages and heavy caseloads. Most YISPs had experienced these problems in some measure.

Closing Cases

If children and families are committed to getting help, and if keyworkers establish positive relationships with the children, compliance is likely to be higher than if motivation is low. Dilemmas still exist, however, for some YISPs in respect of the length of involvement with YISP children. Some YISPs limited intervention to about three months. Others kept cases open for anything up to two years. There was a tendency for some panels to want to keep cases open and to review them periodically even if little intervention was being offered. Some keyworkers were reluctant to offer too much support for

fear of creating a sense of dependency in the family. Nevertheless, all our case study YISPs felt that it was important to develop an exit strategy for each case. This might include an onward referral to another agency or to a mentor. Leaving families without support is not acceptable and could undo all the positive impacts of YISP intervention. Where there was no one to continue the work begun by YISPs this was frustrating for keyworkers and for the families. In these circumstances, there is a real danger that cases may simply drift, either when they are kept open for long periods or when there is no clear exit strategy in place. Such a strategy requires strong multi-agency collaboration, and, to be effective, YISPs need to be located within a continuum of support and/or preventative services. Keyworkers told us that they found it challenging, when they were undertaking case closure, to have to focus on issues which might lead to a risk of offending rather than on those which are more welfare-oriented.

Multi-Agency Working

All the keyworkers, YISP co-ordinators and managers were firm believers in the principle of multi-agency working and regarded YISPs as an excellent model of this kind of approach. The benefits are regarded as: ease of information-sharing; provision of professional advice and guidance; having a named agency representative; opportunities for networking; the provision of local knowledge; and the provision of professional support about how to help children and young people. The YISP panels have the potential to get all the local agencies together to focus on developing an integrated support plan tailored to each child's needs.

In order to examine this aspect of YISPs, we studied three panels and their areas in depth. Data were obtained largely through semi-structured interviews with senior staff and panel members in agencies linked to YISPs. The objectives were to ascertain: how the different agencies involved understood the operation of YISPs; the issues raised by multi-agency working; the roles played by different agencies associated with the YISPs; and how the YISP remit varied in different areas. We studied the origins of each YISP, the structures in which it was embedded and the processes that had been implemented. All three panels had been developed from some kind of existing structure for or commitment to multi-agency working in the area of preventing youth crime. Most of those involved felt that the introduction of YISPs had formalised the system of collaboration and had resulted in greater sharing of information, improved co-ordination of activity; more structured interventions with children and families; and higher levels of accountability on the part of the collaborating agencies. This is not to say, however, that multi-agency working was universally and unequivocally regarded as a good thing. The YISP staff in some pilots experienced frustrations, such as securing the involvement of agency staff senior enough to commit resources to the YISP, and a lack of commitment to regular panel meeting attendance. During our interviews, YISP keyworkers emphasised what they perceive as a gap between commitment at a strategic level – agencies have signed up to the concept of YISPs – and the allocation of resources, including staff time, to allow these agencies to engage in service delivery. It became clear to us that the lack of resources/services offered by partner agencies can be a source of serious frustration for YISP staff. Networking can be very positive, but, if services are not being offered to YISP children, good relationships alone cannot provide the services a child might need.

We found that different agencies play different roles in the YISPs. The nature of the role depends on the degree of involvement (active and passive) and whether the agency provides referrals, information and services to the YISP. We looked specifically at the participation of YOTs, the police, education and social services in respect of these activities. The YOTs were very active in all aspects of YISP involvement. The police are the agency whose policies and structures are most consistent with YISP, and their role is generally an active one also. Education was also active in terms of referrals from schools, although the Education Welfare Service did not play an active role in most panels. Getting teachers involved in YISPs has been a challenge although they are key players in the preventative

agenda. Perhaps the most interesting of the agencies is social services. This was the agency that aroused the most passion among all those involved in YISPs. Of key importance was the tightening of its thresholds for working with young people and the implication of this for its relationship with YOTs. Although this agency was often detached from the work of YISPs, it was precisely in this detachment that its importance resided. We can place it very much in the 'passive' role, but the views of a number of interviewees suggested that social services' impact on YISPs was not neutral, as 'passivity' suggests, but actually negative.

The issue of resources is one which needs to be addressed if YISP panels are going to be able to function effectively. It may be that partner agencies offer very little in the way of intervention because the cases YISPs deal with fall below the usual threshold of involvement with the statutory services. If YISPs are successful in targeting children and young people before they get into trouble in order to undertake preventative work, there is a conundrum for statutory services. Some YISP keyworkers believed that YISPs were highlighting gaps in the ability of existing mainstream services to offer early intervention.

Exploring and Understanding Outcomes

Although we did not set out to conduct an impact study and had no control or comparative data on which to draw, an important objective of our evaluation was to attempt to assess whether and how YISP interventions make a difference in children's lives and, in particular, whether they might have the propensity to reduce antisocial or criminal behaviour. We also wanted to assess the extent to which YISPs might meet the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes and those identified in *Youth Matters*. We approached the task of exploring what outcomes there might be in three main ways: first, by examining whether YISP interventions had a statistically significant impact on a measurable indicator of the risk of problematic behaviour; second, by exploring levels of satisfaction for parents and children; and third, by considering the perspectives of the parents, children and keyworkers who were interviewed in the case-study areas. Our original intention was to conduct a rigorous analysis of changes in a range of measurable outcomes and in risk factor scores identified in final ONSET assessments. The more qualitative data would then enable us to understand the findings from the quantitative analysis. The first task, therefore, was to analyse ONSET scores over the period of YISP intervention. The second task involved analysis of satisfaction questionnaires administered to parents and children by the pilots, and the third involved analysis of in-depth interviews with families which were undertaken at two periods in time. Inevitably, interview data provide a more subjective understanding of outcomes rather than numerical evidence of changes in risk scores, but they also enable us to explore more subtle impacts on the day-to-day lives of families who agreed to participate in the YISP programme.

Changes in Risk

The quantitative modelling centred on an examination of the change in ONSET score for each case, the aim being to account for patterns in the change in ONSET scores through *explanatory variables* such as the gender of the child involved and the type and number of the interventions the child received. We could examine only 229 cases in six of the thirteen pilots which had recorded both an initial and closing ONSET score and for which we had a full set of data. Other cases with full ONSET data had to be discarded as other key information, such as the gender of the child, was missing. The pilots are known to be working in very different ways, and there was considerable variation between them in terms of the levels of risk reduction they achieved. Along with the differences between pilots, caused perhaps by contrasts in policy or practice, we found considerable variation at the case level. We conducted a large number of analyses using the YISPMIS data to measure changes in risk and found:

1. The higher the child's starting risk the greater the likely level of risk reduction.

2. Older children are less likely to experience large risk reduction.

3. The gender of the child and the level of deprivation in the home neighbourhood are not statistically related to risk reduction levels.

These findings are important in that they endorse the importance of targeting high risk children as early as possible. We looked for evidence that certain interventions might be more effective than others, but all those which were most commonly used (and whose effectiveness can as a result be more reliably measured) showed similar levels of effectiveness, with risk reduction levels of between 4 and 5 points. There was very little difference in the outcomes for children referred by different agencies, although children who were referred by social services showed a slightly larger average ONSET-measured risk reduction. The model we used accounts for about 20 per cent of the variation between children in the level of change in their ONSET scores, and we undertook further analysis to consider whether there were patterns in the residual variation which could be identified so that the model could account for these patterns too. There were no residual patterns and we have reached the following tentative conclusions:

- having a higher initial ONSET score was strongly linked to greater reduction

- children receiving mentoring saw a risk reduction averaging over two points

- children who were said to discriminate against other people at initial assessment tended to have increasing risk scores

From the quantitative analyses we have concluded that the value of the initial ONSET score – 'the size of the initial problem for that case' – can be regarded as the key influence on the likely scale of the measurable effect of the YISP intervention on the risk of antisocial or criminal behaviour. It is probable that if YISPs are rolled out they will have the greatest effect if they are targeted at the highest risk children. However, there is relatively little statistical evidence that any particular interventions have much stronger impacts than others. Because of the extent of the missing data on YISPMIS, these conclusions should, of course, be treated with appropriate caution.

Measuring Parent and Child Satisfaction

In our second approach to measuring outcomes, we examined data relating to the satisfaction of parents and children. While satisfaction is a softer outcome measure than changes in ONSET scores, it is an important indicator. We received 29 satisfaction questionnaires completed by children interviewed in the four case study areas (22 boys and 7 girls), and 26 questionnaires completed by parents of those children, mostly mothers. Caution should be employed when interpreting these findings, as we cannot claim to have a representative sample. Nevertheless, both children and parents appeared to be well satisfied with the service they received from their local YISP. Most parents felt that YISP intervention had helped their child, and some had clearly received considerable support for themselves. Parents said they would recommend the YISP to others. Children generally felt positive about YISP involvement and particularly enjoyed doing activities.

The Reflections of Parents and Children

During our in-depth interviews with parents and children we examined their perceptions of the changes that had occurred, as a result of YISP intervention, across the four risk domains of a child's life: family, education/school, community, and individual well-being. We also examined whether the young people had been in trouble with the police since they had been engaged with the YISP. We would caution, however, that it is very difficult to isolate the impact of YISP intervention from other interventions in the lives of children and families. Most of the families in our interview sample had received a range of services either prior to or during YISP involvement. These may have included family counselling, family therapy, parenting support, learning support, social work intervention and so on. It is also important to recognise that YISPs varied considerably in respect of the duration and intensity of YISP involvement, so the outcomes described by parents and children were drawn from a range of different YISP models. We are also very aware that parents and children do not conceptualise the problems they face in terms of 'risk'. Moreover, the risk of their child being involved in antisocial behaviour was rarely at the front of parents' minds. Nevertheless, the interviews told us a great deal about the stresses and strains in these families' lives and the kinds of risk children were facing.

Looking at family life, a substantial majority of families interviewed mentioned living arrangements, specifically overcrowding, as a significant concern when their child was referred to the local YISP. Some keyworkers were able to support applications to move house, for example, but YISP involvement did not specifically address problems with living arrangements. Undoubtedly, poor housing conditions increase the risk factors for children and any improvements can substantially improve family well-being. In addition, the majority of parents were concerned about their children's attitudes and behaviour at home. Children were apt to be disruptive, aggressive, abusive and generally disobedient. On the other hand, they spoke of their own concerns about family life, often referring to parental conflict; loss of contact with a parent or grandparent through separation, bereavement or imprisonment, and domestic violence. Many children had experienced complex and difficult family situations. The YISPs were able to address some of the problems relating to home life, and most parents reported an improvement in their child's behaviour as a result of YISP interventions. Children and young people mostly described the situation at home as having improved. Nevertheless, a minority of parents regarded their child's behaviour as a matter of ongoing serious concern, despite YISP involvement.

Problems at school had been a major worry for most parents at referral, and almost two-thirds reported some improvement during the period of YISP intervention. Most parents said that their child was working better at school, had an improved attendance record, was behaving better, and had a better attitude. Improvements at school meant that parents were no longer feeling harassed by teachers. Parents stressed, however, that it was too soon to conclude that some problems would not persist. Just over a third of parents told us that things were as bad as before or had got worse: some children had been excluded from school during YISP involvement and a few were attending a study centre or pupil referral unit. These parents were frustrated and depressed about what they saw as a never-ending cycle of exclusions. While YISP intervention had clearly reduced some children's risk factors relating to school, some of the educational improvements at the end of YISP involvement were very fragile, and it was unlikely to take much for children to revert to their previous poor behaviour. Things could be particularly difficult for children when YISP involvement came to an end, leaving little ongoing support in place.

Reflecting on the neighbourhood in which they lived, most parents took the view that this put their child at risk. They expressed concerns, when we first met them, that their children were involved in vandalism, fighting, mugging, joyriding, begging, and other antisocial behaviour in the neighbourhood. Some parents believed that their children were at risk through staying out late, or overnight, in areas which were rife with social problems such as drugs, car crime, abductions and murder. A number of

parents were worried about their children being drawn into a drug culture; others that their children were getting a bad reputation locally, which would lead to them being targeted by the police and the community. When we first talked to the children, many freely admitted their involvement in antisocial or offending behaviour, and some obviously regarded it as 'fun'. They clearly got a kick from climbing on roofs, shoplifting, fighting, riding motorbikes illegally, stealing the dust caps from cars, damaging property, and knocking on doors then running away. These children had witnessed a good deal of crime taking place in their neighbourhoods, including gang fights, drug-taking, shoplifting, joyriding and mugging. They had seen a good many police chases and raids, and crime had frequently become a normal part of their everyday lives. What is clear from our follow-up interviews, however, is that many of the children and young people had substantially improved their behaviour since we first talked to them. Over a third of parents had noted large improvements that meant their children were no longer out on the streets and were not getting involved in crime and antisocial behaviour. Nevertheless, many parents were well aware that the improvements might not last. Some thought that it was only a matter of time before peer pressure reasserted itself.

Almost all the parents had been concerned about their child's emotional and psychological well-being at the time the child had been referred to YISP. Parents frequently mentioned self-harm as a problem, as well as poor temper control. Over half of the parents believed that their child had some kind of emotional, behavioural or mental problem, such as ADHD, which they felt was linked to a number of factors. They told us that their child had been bullied (often because of being overweight), lacked social skills, had low self-esteem, or showed a lack of pride in their appearance. Some children had clearly suffered as a result of parental separation or the death of a significant adult. Many parents told us that their children smoked and several parents were worried about drug taking. When we re-interviewed the parents and children, around a third of the parents reported that their child's psychological health had improved. They described their children as happier and less aggressive. Some were said to have 'calmed down' or to have 'settled down'. Children themselves reported that they had 'calmed down'.

The majority of parents reported that the children had not offended or been involved in antisocial behaviour during YISP involvement, and most were optimistic that they were not likely to reoffend in the future. Parents felt that children had learned their lesson and had turned a corner, and that the outcomes were positive. Only a few young people reported that they had offended during YISP intervention. Clearly, some children had made great strides during YISP involvement and wanted to stay out of trouble. Others were still living on the fringes of antisocial and criminal behaviour and some parents were concerned that these children would always be labelled potential troublemakers.

Although YISP activities may not themselves have had a direct impact on the children, some of the changes in circumstances may well have been facilitated by the fact that the child had been referred to YISP and members of the multi-agency panel had been able to commit resources to effecting change in the family's life. In addition, the one-to-one relationship with a keyworker seems to have had a positive impact, alongside the availability of constructive leisure activities. Being listened to was an important trigger for change for some young people. Taking part in activities also gave children the opportunity to learn new skills. Some made new friends as a result, and realised that they could have fun doing things other than offending. Parents could see the change in their child's behaviour and noted increased self-confidence and self-esteem. Improvements in children's behaviour were evident also when parents had received support. Although YISPs direct most of their resources towards children and young people, some support is usually offered to parents. It seems that YISP keyworkers were successful in establishing the kind of rapport and trust with parents and children which parents often felt was lacking in their dealings with other agencies. Keyworkers were described as accessible, relaxed, informal and friendly. One of the biggest challenges facing keyworkers in their one-to-one work was how to engage the less motivated children. Some keyworkers had spent months winning the trust of young people who at first had completely refused to engage in YISP. This commitment, however, was more difficult for those YISPs that limited their intervention to twelve weeks.

Keyworkers, then, emerge as a very important factor in the success of YISPs. Positive outcomes can be facilitated through a constructive, supportive keyworker relationship. Usually, YISP was not regarded as 'a miracle', as one parent put it, but as an intervention which could be helpful and which might make a real difference in the long run. It seems that much depends on the extent to which other agencies continue the constructive work YISPs have started. Keyworkers were positive about the impact of YISP intervention but found it difficult to gauge any potential long-term outcomes relating to criminal and antisocial behaviour. They preferred to consider short-term outcomes which are achievable, such as: the child no longer being involved in antisocial or offending behaviour; the child staying in full-time education; the child having accessed mainstream services, such as CAMHS; the reduction of a major risk factor; and raising the profile of the family and ensuring multi-agency support from social services, housing, police and education. Children who had high risk factors might be successful in small ways, and keyworkers were keen that, in the words of one, 'little bits of success' should be celebrated.

We clearly need to be tentative when considering the outcomes of YISP intervention, but it has become clear from both the quantitative and the qualitative data that the younger children are when YISPs intervene the greater the chance that early intervention will have an impact. Children and young people referred to YISPs frequently presented with a range of risk factors across several domains. Tackling risks at different levels was usually more effective than focusing solely on one risk. YISPs have huge potential, because the multi-agency panels should ensure that help is forthcoming from a range of agencies simultaneously. The role of the keyworker in co-ordinating this support and in working intensively with the child and the family has emerged from our research as a key factor in YISPs being able to deliver positive outcomes. Regular and intensive keyworker support has been highly valued by parents and children, whereas inconsistent keyworker involvement has been regarded as unsatisfactory. We have reached the conclusion that YISP intervention, to be effective, needs to be both intense and sustainable.

The Costs of YISP Intervention

One of the most challenging aspects of our evaluation has been to attempt to determine the costs associated with the YISP programme. The purpose of the costing exercise was to determine the financial, time and other costs involved in delivering the YISP pilots for different offices and panels. Three main components of activity and cost involved in administering and delivering YISP at the area level were identified, as follows:

1.   The number of children dealt with by type of activity (referral process, ONSET assessment, panel attendance, etc.) and the time input of YISP and non-YISP staff.

2.   The expenditure involved in providing services/activities to children, in respect of YISP and non-YISP staff.

3.   The office costs in running YISPs, including allowances for variable and fixed costs (e.g. rent, furniture, and fungibles such as telephones and printing).

Data were returned for nine of the thirteen areas. The data were not always returned in the manner required and some of the returns were of relatively poor quality. The costs study is based on just seven pilot areas, therefore. It is a small sample and findings must be treated with caution. Analysis of the data available indicates that the average cost of dealing with a child under the YISP procedure was relatively small. Depending on the exact view of the average daily rate of staff involved, the estimates give an average cost of less than £500 and, perhaps, only half this figure. It must be remembered that

this was a snapshot, as individuals were not followed through the YISP procedure, but rather the activities and costs were calculated on a monthly basis across pilot areas. On average, a pilot area dealt with 129 children each month, and another 93 undertook activities, with the financial costs (excluding staff) amounting to less than £6,000. However, by far the greatest element of cost was the staff time input, which amounted to 306 days a month, of which 56 related to the input of senior staff. It is important to remember that we were not in a position to estimate the costs associated with panel meetings themselves. We could not and would not estimate whether YISPs represent value for money, therefore. This must be a judgement made by policymakers and those administering preventative and early intervention initiatives.

Preventing Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

In order to inform both policy and practice in this relatively new area of work, we focused deliberately on understanding YISP processes – the various elements which might contribute to an effective service – as well as considering outcomes wherever possible. Considerable variations in practice were evident across the pilots. The model for YISPs involved a systematic process from referral to delivery in which the children and their parents/carers would participate at every stage. The key elements in this process which emerged as significant in striving to achieve positive outcomes were:

- being able to target high risk children

- systematically and rigorously assessing risk

- making contributions through multi-agency (panel) working

- developing a tailored, integrated support plan and empowering children and their families

- delivering preventative services which address the identified risk factors

We summarise the key elements in turn.

Targeting High Risk Children

It is clear that the numbers of children and young people referred to the pilot YISPs during the national evaluation were significantly lower than had been expected. Whether this is a result of ignorance about a new initiative or an inability to identify high risk children is a matter for conjecture. We were aware that some professionals were concerned about pulling children who have not offended into the criminal justice system – net-widening, as it is commonly called. A wide range of agencies made referrals during the evaluation, and most cited the incidence of antisocial behaviour or offending as the major cause for concern. Problems relating to school were commonplace, as were problems in the home. It would seem that these three problem domains frequently occur in combination, indicating that offending/antisocial behaviours are associated with difficulties at home and school. Looking for problem clusters may well be a helpful way for professionals to target the highest risk children. We suspect that the different professions tend to look primarily for difficulties in their own domain (e.g. teachers are aware of problems at school) without necessarily enquiring about problems in other domains. It is notable that many parents we interviewed had been aware of problem behaviours for several years, suggesting that the YISP children could have been identified earlier, particularly by parents and teachers. It seems likely that some if not all of these children might have benefited from YISP referral at an earlier stage. For the most part, they were only identified when behaviour or

troublesome situations began to worsen. The evidence suggests that attracting early referrals relating to children who can benefit most remains a key challenge.

Assessing Risk and Protective Factors

Simply adding up risk factors is not likely to help in enabling us to predict which children might get into trouble. Nevertheless, the greater the number of risk factors in a child's life the greater the risk of offending behaviour, although risks are rarely static. Assessing risk needs to be a continuous process, and this was clearly the thinking behind the development of the ONSET suite of assessment tools. It is unfortunate that the pilot YISPs did not all recognise this and that the ONSET assessment was often used as a one-off exercise at the time of referral. Contrary to expectations, ONSET did not inform all aspects of YISP intervention in most pilots.

Although assessment is not an exact science, there were considerable regional variations in scoring, with some pilots recording very high ONSET scores and others recording lower-than-average scores. We believe that there was some confusion about scoring risks *per se*, and scoring the risks of offending and antisocial behaviour. We detected some scepticism among YISP staff as to whether the scoring system is helpful, and it seems essential that with the introduction of the common assessment framework there should be more consistency in the approach of professionals towards assessing children and young people. It may be helpful to note that while overall scores may not have changed significantly as a result of YISP intervention, the individual components of the score may have shifted, indicating that any scoring system must be very sensitive to change and considered in the broader context of a child's life at any given moment in time.

YISP Panels and Multi-Agency Working

We observed some very dedicated panels during the evaluation, and many developed a strong identity. Few panels actually involved young people and their parents/carers directly, however, so that most families who participated in the pilots had little understanding of the panel process. Pilots adopting a family group conference approach were the exception to this although the family group meeting took the place of the YISP panel, thus rendering it a completely different kind of experience for families. In terms of the work undertaken by panels, we noted that not all the panels engaged in the development and review of ISPs. Some panels received detailed information relating to each referral; others received relatively little information and tended to rely more on what the panel members might already know about a child. We were aware of a strong caring ethos within each panel we observed, although this sometimes resulted in panel members becoming overly involved in the cases and being reluctant to agree closure.

It would be reasonable to suppose that YISP panels would be highly costly if the time of panel members were to be taken into account. Our costs study did not do this. While it is important that agencies are represented at a senior level on the panel in order to commit resources, the cost of this might be questioned, particularly when some of the agencies represented did not actually contribute to ISPs. There is a clear tension when YISP children fall below the threshold for statutory service provision even though needs have been identified for interventions such as CAMHS services. Many keyworkers were of the view that too much of the support was left to them and that they did not always get the resources they needed from other agencies. Multi-agency working was identified as a major benefit of the YISP programme, but not all agencies appeared to be willing to offer services to YISP families.

Delivering Tailored Services

The YISPs were designed to occupy the middle ground between welfare, youth offending and community safety. They were not intended to have a role as commissioning bodies or, directly, as long-term service providers, but they were expected to ensure that a holistic, tailored, individualised package of support could be delivered. The ISP was seen as the tool which would enable families to receive appropriate services. Keyworkers were in a unique position to encourage the children and their parents to engage with YISP. If children and/or their parents were not motivated to engage this was likely to result in non-compliance with YISP expectations and the ISPs. Nevertheless, YISP keyworkers recognised that there is a danger of over-intervening in the lives of YISP families and becoming a long-term caseworker. The evaluation would suggest that there needs to be closer links between assessment, the drawing up of the ISP and service delivery. It is easy to fall into the trap of offering services simply because they exist without ensuring that they will address identified risk and/or protective factors.

Understanding Outcomes

We have been acutely aware of the very hard work and high level of dedication of YISP staff and panel members, but the evidence we have been able to garner has been primarily qualitative despite our best efforts to conduct a robust, quantitative study. Qualitative data have enhanced the learning about what appears to be working well in YISPs, but we cannot be as robust about the impacts or outcomes as we had expected. There is evidence from the national evaluation that many children who experienced YISP intervention did demonstrate improvements in their mental health and well-being; they were less likely to roam the streets and get into trouble; they were doing better with their schooling and making a more positive contribution at school and at home. Just how far these improvements were sustained we simply do not know, but the trends appeared to be in the right direction for many of the children.

It is important to understand, however, that there are key differences between prevention and early intervention and policy initiatives need to be clear about the aims and objectives. Prevention involves reducing the likelihood of problems emerging, while intervention starts with evidence of risk. This distinction between preventing difficulties emerging by ensuring that children and families have the support they need for children to attain the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes; and intervening to address identified risk factors which are impacting negatively on a child would suggest that universal and targeted services such as YISPs need to be developed hand in hand. The critical questions relate to whether YISPs work: do YISPs reduce the risk of children becoming involved in criminal and antisocial behaviours? We were never going to be able to consider anything other than short-term outcomes and we had always acknowledged that identifying and attributing even short-term outcomes to YISP intervention would be problematic. Although the quantitative findings need to be interpreted with caution, they are important: they suggest that the higher the child's risk factors at referral the greater the likelihood that YISP intervention will reduce the risks, and that younger children are more likely to experience a significant reduction in risks. It would be reasonable to conclude that if YISPs are able to target the higher risk children they will demonstrate the most impact because small changes can contribute to important shifts in behaviour and attitude. The more positives there are to work on in a child's life, the greater the likelihood of success. Our qualitative findings suggest that positive shifts might be very subtle, that changing patterns in risk factors are related to a variety of factors and the links between changes in ONSET assessment and YISP interventions are complex. Many parents were cautiously optimistic about the future, although factors outside YISP were often responsible for this optimism. However, other parents continued to be anxious about the sustainability of positive outcomes after the end of YISP engagement. The fragility of support for the future was evident, and longer-term evaluation would be required to test just how far improvements were sustainable.

Two key questions emerge from the evidence in respect of early intervention, and they are both relevant here:

1. Which problems require action when, and over what time period?

2. How are gains/positive outcomes to be sustained?

The first question is relevant to YISPs, particularly since we found that the majority of referrals were for children at the upper end of the 8–13 age range. Indeed, most YISPs accept referrals relating to young people up to the ages of 14 or 15 and these make up the highest proportion of cases. Far fewer children in the younger age range are referred for YISP intervention, yet many parents told us that problematic behaviour patterns had been manifest for a long time. Problems such as hyperactivity and aggressiveness tend to appear in early childhood, whereas poor peer relationships and schooling problems emerge only in the primary school years. Conduct problems associated with crime, antisocial behaviour and delinquency generally emerge in adolescence. It is these conduct problems which normally led to YISP referral. It seems likely, however, that there are multiple pathways into crime, and early childhood problems can be catalysts for later criminal behaviour.

Elements of Promising Practice

One of our objectives has been to identify elements which appear to be significant in developing best practice. From the evidence available to us, these can usefully be summarised as follows:

1. Developing multi-agency partnerships which are effective at both the strategic and the service delivery levels.

2. Developing a model of intervention which is clearly articulated and which distinguishes YISP intervention from other types of welfare and youth justice programmes.

3. Working with referring agencies to agree clear referral criteria so as to avoid over-emphasis either on children with very complex, mental health problems or those children who are better suited to interventions from welfare agencies.

4. Deciding how high risk children and young people can be identified prior to their becoming involved in offending or antisocial behaviour.

5. Adopting rigorous assessment procedures which become a routine and essential part of engagement with children, young people and their families and which are regarded as continuous processes.

6. Linking rigorous assessment to the development of integrated support plans so that interventions are targeted at specific risk and/or protective factors.

7. Deciding on the dosage, duration and order of multiple interventions, and ensuring that they are delivered via a coherent, holistic programme of work which does not allow cases to drift.

8. Promoting effective engagement through the development of supportive relationships between the keyworker and the child and the keyworker and the child's parents/carers.

9. Delivering one-to-one direct work with children and young people in conjunction with other kinds of activities and interventions.

10. Developing and agreeing coherent exit strategies to ensure families receive continuing support as necessary.

11. Securing the participation and commitment of children, young people and their families at all stages in the YISP process.

12. Employing effective, user-friendly management information systems to record individual-level case data routinely, accurately and effectively so as to enable ongoing analyses of inputs, outcomes and change.

The YISPs should be able to empower young people, encourage them to make a positive contribution, and help them achieve, thus reducing risk factors and enhancing the protective factors in their lives. To do this, however, YISPs will need to be extremely focused in their remit and clear about their specific role within the ever-widening preventative and early intervention agendas. Many YISPs are still considering how best to involve children, young people and their families and how to incorporate restorative justice approaches within the YISP process.

Despite promising findings from the national evaluation, there is a danger that YISP intervention could become just another kind of long-term welfare service, and the evidence would suggest that more needs to be done to determine and uphold appropriate intervention and time boundaries. There is evidence that, if the elements of good practice identified through the national evaluation of YISPs were put into place, YISPs could play a significant role in the Government's agenda for an effective youth justice system in which every child matters.

Chapter 1   The Research Context – Every Child Matters

Janet Walker

In 2002, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) set out its commitment to develop and pilot pre-crime at-risk panels, later renamed Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) in Spring 2003.[2] The new panels were designed to identify and support young people aged 8–13 who are at high risk of offending and antisocial behaviour, and were regarded as a key component of the Government's campaign to prevent crime and combat antisocial behaviour. The YISPs were described as multi-agency planning groups which seek to prevent offending and antisocial behaviour by offering voluntary support services and other complementary interventions for high risk children and their families. Pilots were established to test the development of YISPs, paid for by the Children's Fund under the auspices of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). In 2003 we were commissioned by the DfES to evaluate thirteen new pilot YISPs, located in Barking & Dagenham, Birmingham, Ealing, Greenwich, Knowsley, Lancashire, Liverpool, Nottingham, Salford, Sheffield, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Walsall, and Wigan.

In this chapter we review the policy context which led to the development of YISPs and refer to the new policies and initiatives which have been established during the period of the research. This review is particularly important since YISPs constitute only one element in a complex and multi-faceted matrix of policies which address current concerns relating to both family life and youth crime. Any evaluation of initiatives such as YISPs must take account of the wider practice and policy frameworks within which they operate.

The New Vision for Children and Young People

> Every child and young person deserves the best possible start in life, to be consulted, listened to and heard, to be supported as they develop into adulthood and maturity, and to be given every opportunity to achieve their full potential.[3]

This vision underpins all the Government's proposals for an overarching strategy which covers all services for children and young people and is at the heart of a political agenda which seeks to eradicate child poverty and social exclusion and prevent offending and antisocial behaviour. It is located in a firm belief that if the quality of life of all children, particularly those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged, can be improved, this will lead to a reduction in crime, particularly street crime, involving children and young people and we will live in a safer society. Providing high-quality services for children and for their families has been regarded as an essential step in preparing young people for the challenges and stresses of everyday life and giving them real opportunities to achieve their full potential and thereby contribute positively within diverse, multicultural communities. Increasingly in recent years, the focus has been on prevention and early intervention, particularly with respect to children deemed to be at high risk.

To support its agenda, the Government announced a major reorganisation of key government departments accompanying major reforms of children's services and youth justice. A Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families would provide integrated leadership and take responsibility

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[2] Youth Justice Board and Children and Young People's Unit (2002) *Establishing Youth Inclusion Panels (YISPs): A guidance note for Children's Fund Partnerships and Youth Offending Team*s (Youth Justice Board).
[3] Children and Young People's Unit (2001) *Building a Strategy for Children and Young People: Consultation document* (Department for Education and Skills), Crown Copyright.

for children's services and family policy within the DfES. The aim was to provide a single departmental focus on children, drawing together a myriad of supporting and interconnected policy initiatives. Prevention has been at the heart of the agenda, and has been described as being 'about ensuring that we prevent children and young people from dropping out of education, committing crime, and suffering from family conflict and ill health'.[4]

Services were to be targeted at the most vulnerable children and young people, so as to ensure that emerging or potential problems could be addressed as early as possible. Of course, concerns about youth crime have been evident for well over twenty years, and a number of attempts have been made to limit the propensity of young people to offend and reoffend. The Labour Government's mission to be 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime' since it came to power in 1997 has led to a series of programmes and initiatives which provide a dual but complementary approach to tackling juvenile crime and antisocial behaviour: supporting families on the one hand, and dealing effectively with young offenders, on the other.

Supporting Families

In November 1998, the then Home Secretary issued a consultation document entitled *Supporting Families*, laying out a programme of measures to strengthen the family as the 'foundation on which our communities, our society and our country are built'.[5] Recognising that families in contemporary society are under considerable stress and that being a parent is a challenging job, the Government acknowledged that all 'parents need support with their children's health, education and welfare, and many also want advice and guidance on how to bring up their children'.[6] The Government's priority was to provide better support for parents so that parents can provide better support for their children. Since 1998, the Government has introduced a number of initiatives with the objective of supporting families. Some of these initiatives have universal application while others are targeted at families perceived by policymakers and practitioners as being the most vulnerable. Themed initiatives have included projects relating to fathering, lone parenting, teenage pregnancy, parenting teenagers, and children at risk of becoming involved in criminal and antisocial behaviour.

As a central part of departmental reorganisation, in 2000 the Prime Minister established the Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU), now known as the Children, Young People and Families Directorate (CYPFD), within the DfES, and in 2001 the Unit set out a radical framework for a strategy covering all services for children and young people.[7] It promoted a collective vision for all children and young people which required agencies to work together and communities, families and young people to take responsibility for meeting that vision. The aim was to ensure that all children and young people would have:

- the opportunity to grow up in a loving, stable environment

- real opportunities to achieve their full potential and contribute to a fast moving, changing and interdependent world

- opportunities to experience the benefits of living in a diverse multi-cultural society, where all experiences are valued and racism is not tolerated

- the prospect of living in a safe and secure community where they are protected from harm,

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[4] Efunshile, A. (2003) 'How can children be protected?', *Family Today*, Issue 6, National Family and Parenting Institute.
[5] Home Office (1998) *Supporting Families: A Consultation document* (The Stationery Group), p. 2.
[6] ibid., p. 6.
[7] Children and Young People's Unit, *op. cit.*

abuse, harassment, exploitation or neglect and have the chance to enjoy the opportunity to grow up with their peer groups and friends

- chances to contribute to their local communities – feeling heard and being valued as responsible citizens – shaping their lives and their futures

- the opportunity to appreciate their environment and participate in sport, music, art, drama, and a variety of cultural activities of the society and community in which they live

- focused support as they pass through the various transitions from birth to adulthood, expanding their capacity to make decisions about their identity, relationships, education, future careers and financial affairs

- excellent joined-up public services which strive to meet the individual needs of children and young people and their families

In October 2002, the Prime Minister announced plans to publish a Green Paper on children at risk, and *Every Child Matters* was published in September 2003.[8] The Green Paper focused on early intervention and effective protection, supporting parents and carers, local, regional and national accountability and integration, and workforce reform. It also set out five outcomes for children which now provide the core outcomes framework for all government policy relating to families and to youth justice, including YISPs. They are that children and young people should:

- be healthy

- stay safe

- enjoy and achieve

- make a positive contribution

- achieve economic well-being

The publication of the Government's response to the Green Paper in 2004[9] coincided with the introduction of the Children Bill 2004. These were followed by a series of documents setting out a national framework for change.[10] In combination, they encapsulated the Government's plans to reform children's services. They included the introduction of three tiers of family support; the introduction of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF); information-sharing between agencies and sectors; the creation of a UK-wide Sector Skills Council for Social Care, Children and Young People, and extension of the role of the Teacher Training Agency to deliver training and development to school support staff; and multi-agency partnerships of professionals working in schools, healthcare, social care, youth services, childcare and the criminal justice system.

Everyone delivering services for children and families is expected to play a role in meeting the agreed outcomes. The scope for change, therefore, is considerable. Putting the requirements for change into practice, however, has presented a considerable challenge, and as we see in this report there are still some areas in which the provision of services and joined-up working are problematic. Indeed, the report of the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee Inquiry into the reforms, published in 2005, found

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[8] H. M. Treasury (2003) *Every Child Matters* (HMSO).
[9] Department for Education and Skills (2004) *Every Child Matters: Next steps* (DfES), Crown Copyright.
[10] Department for Education and Skills (2004) *Every Child Matters: Change for children: outcomes framework* (DfES), Crown Copyright; Department for Education and Skills and Department of Health (2004) *The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* (DfES), Crown Copyright.

that the Youth Justice System could be regarded as undermining the aims of *Every Child Matters*.[11] We have been particularly mindful of this while considering the findings and reaching our conclusions relating to YISPs.

Youth Matters

While many of the early initiatives focused primarily on improving services for young children, interest has been growing in improving support for young people. In July 2005, the Government launched a major consultation targeted at young people.[12] It applied the principles and outcomes outlined in *Every Child Matters* and challenged teenagers to participate more fully in the debate. The results of the consultation led to a comprehensive set of plans for improving the life chances of young people, heralding a radical reshaping of universal services for teenagers, and targeted support for those who need it most. It includes reform of health and social care services and new investment in youth justice. The overriding theme is that young people should be actively involved in their communities, able to influence decision-making and democratic processes. There are four key strands to the proposed reforms, which have been described as follows:

- empowering young people – things to do and places to go

- young people as citizens – making a contribution

- supporting choices – information, advice and guidance

- young people achieving – reformed targeted support

Fourteen Targeted Youth Support Pathfinders were set up in 2006 to provide integrated support to young people, primarily teenagers, with additional needs that go beyond what a single agency can address and who face a high or growing risk of poor outcomes. Some are extending their remit to include early intervention work with children aged eight or over – the same target group as for YISPs. The children and young people may be involved in substance abuse, truancy, offending or antisocial behaviour, and they may have learning difficulties, be excluded from school, or be at risk of teenage pregnancy. Many of the new pathfinders are building on the work undertaken by YISPs, and interventions are expected to both support and challenge young people, via a variety of services and programmes which may include the use of compulsory interventions such as Parental Compensation Orders and Child Safety Orders.

Dealing Effectively with Young Offenders

We can see, in the Youth Matters agenda, a renewed emphasis on supporting families in tandem with an emphasis on tackling crime and antisocial behaviour. Youth justice agencies are increasingly important partners in the delivery of children's services which focus on early prevention of antisocial and criminal behaviour. In 2000, the then Home Secretary spoke of being 'tough on crime' by sending clear signals to criminals that the criminal justice system will catch and punish offenders, and tough on the causes of crime by strengthening communities, getting people into work, improving support for families and young children, improving education and housing, and taking action against truancy.[13]

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[11] *The Education of Skills Committee 9th Report* (2005), http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/ cmeduski.htm
[12] Department for Education and Skills (2005) *Youth Matters*, Cm 6629 (HMSO).
[13] The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP (2000), *The Government's Crime Reduction Strategy* (Home Office), Crown Copyright.

The Government's strategy focuses in particular on young offenders, who account for a disproportionate amount of recorded crime. In 1996, the Audit Commission argued that resources should be used more effectively to reduce the amount of crime committed by young people through preventative services which would improve parenting skills and target children and young people at greatest risk of becoming offenders.[14] The emphasis was on multi-agency approaches which would tackle the risks associated with offending. Shortly afterwards, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 reformed the youth justice system in England and Wales, whose overarching aim was to prevent youth offending. The youth justice system now requires that young people who offend are systematically assessed, appropriately punished, helped and directed to change their behaviour and encouraged to compensate the victims of their crimes. The Youth Justice Board was established to ensure the reform of the system, tackle delays in the administration of justice, intervene to reduce the risk of reoffending, encourage reparation and reinforce the responsibilities of parents. The YJB has provided funding for programmes designed to prevent offending, including bail supervision and support, mentoring schemes, drug and alcohol projects, education and training, reparation schemes which involve victims, and programmes for parents of juvenile offenders. At the heart of the new system are locally-based multi-agency Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), responsible for delivering and co-ordinating youth justice services. They deliver community-based intervention programmes designed to make young offenders face up to their crimes and to change their attitudes and behaviour. The Crime and Disorder Act includes powers to enable early, targeted intervention to deal with antisocial behaviour and divert young people from crime. The strategy is to act early, quickly and effectively; to ensure that offenders are aware of the impact of their crimes; and to assess and confront offending behaviour holistically and through multi-agency teams.[15]

Antisocial Behaviour

Within the Crime Reduction Strategy, antisocial behaviour is acknowledged as a significant issue requiring resources to nip it in the bud in order to build securer communities. New powers have been given to the police and courts, and efforts have been made to reduce levels of truancy and school exclusion. The Antisocial Behaviour Order (ASBO), which came into force in April 1999, may be made on anyone over the age of ten. It contains prohibitions considered necessary to prevent repetition of certain antisocial conduct, and lasts for a minimum of two years. The YOTs play a key role in helping applicants to decide when an application is advisable in respect of a young person, although an ASBO does not constitute a criminal conviction. A review of ASBOs, published in 2002, found inconsistent use of this new order around the country, although in some areas ASBOs have been used constructively as part of a problem-solving approach to antisocial behaviour which might also include the application of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs).[16] As with most of the new initiatives, the success of implementation has depended to a large extent on the level of effectiveness of co-operation between the key agencies involved – the local authority, the police and the courts. Partnership working is seen as a key prerequisite for the development of the new initiatives in youth justice.

The Antisocial Behaviour Act received Royal Assent in November 2003. The Act addresses, *inter alia*, parental responsibilities and establishes provisions to enable Local Education Authorities and schools to enter into Parenting Contracts. Clause 36 (7) requires courts making an ASBO against a young person under 16 to make a Parenting Order against the child's parents. The objectives are twofold: to help parents fulfil their responsibilities and to penalise those who condone their children's truancy and bad behaviour.

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[14] Audit Commission (1996) *Misspent Youth: Young people and crime* (Audit Commission).

[15] Edwards, E. and Coles, B. (2002) *Truancy and School Exclusions*, in J. Bradshaw (ed.) *The Well-being of Children in the UK* (Save the Children Fund).

[16] Campbell, S. (2002) *A Review of Anti-social Behaviour Orders*, Home Office Research Study 236 (Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate).

In January 2006, the Government launched its *Respect Action Plan*,[17] which outlined how it intends to tackle antisocial behaviour further. The plan puts emphasis on tackling the root causes of antisocial behaviour in the classroom, the community and the family. The Government believes that parents have a critical role to play in reducing antisocial behaviour and that poor parenting has to be addressed. The emphasis is on developing more parenting services across the country and establishing a National Parenting Academy for the training and support of front-line staff. In 2006, fifteen Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders were launched to test the delivery of three evidence-based parenting programmes for parents of 8-to-13-year-olds at risk of antisocial behaviour. Parents of children who meet the criteria for YISP intervention are likely to find themselves encouraged to participate in these parenting programmes. The respect agenda also provides for parents to be 'challenged' to accept support, and for more punitive measures, including an increase in the number of agencies which can apply for a parenting order. Further initiatives are being launched to test different approaches to tackling mental health and conduct disorders, supporting parents, reducing teenage pregnancy and tackling social exclusion.[18]

Prevention

Prevention is at the heart of the new youth justice system. The Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 provided for new sentences such as referral to a youth offender panel, and a final warning scheme to replace juvenile cautions. The YJB has highlighted the success of school holiday (Splash) programmes which provide out-of-school activities for 13-to-17-year-olds in deprived areas, and Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs) which target the most at-risk 13-to-16-year-olds. Clearly, the key to prevention lies in being able to target effectively those children and young people most at risk of becoming involved in crime and antisocial behaviour. Interventions are less likely to be successful if they are given to low risk offenders or are too brief to establish the conditions in which potential or existing young offenders can make sustainable changes in their lives. This is particularly pertinent to the work of YISPs, which are primarily about prevention. The research evidence harnessed by the YJB highlighted the following factors:

1. Risk factors and their analysis are crucial to prevention.

2. Pre-delinquency intervention is necessary.

3. Only high risk young people and their families need to be targeted.

4. There are a small number of key risk factors that can be used to target those at high risk.

5. Programmes must remain focused and of high intensity.

6. Multiple interventions that continue until young people can make sustainable changes in their lives are needed for the high risk group.

7. Unauthorised absences from schools are strongly correlated with youth crime.[19]

A review of research has suggested that it is never too early to intervene and support children who might be at risk of becoming offenders, and never too late to work with adolescents.[20] The authors

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[17] Respect Task Force (2006) *Respect Action Plan* (Home Office), http://www.respect.gov.uk
[18] Cabinet Office (2006) *Reaching Out: An action plan on social exclusion* (The Stationery Office).
[19] Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, *Youth Crime Prevention Strategy*,
http://www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/publications.cfm

found that pre-school enrichment programmes, for example, had reduced the incidence of antisocial behaviour. The evidence indicates that tackling the whole cluster of risk factors that impact on children's behaviour is far more effective than simply addressing individual risks. This has been central to the work of YISPs.

In setting up its prevention strategy, the YJB indicated that four key areas required attention. It pointed to the need:

- for effective targeting to allow for early identification of and the provision of supportive interventions for those at high risk

- for greater intensity of intervention for those who are first- and second-time offenders

- for recognising that school absence is a key factor which impacts on crime and antisocial behaviour

- for ensuring that prevention strategies focus on deterrence and detection of youth crime

The YJB adopted a twin track approach within its crime prevention strategy, the first track relating to crime prevention and reducing the risks and the second to post-crime reduction and active intervention. The first track has been particularly relevant to YISPs, which aim to help children and young people aged 8–13 who are at greatest risk of becoming involved in antisocial behaviour and criminal activity *before* they enter the youth justice system. To achieve this aim, it is essential to be able to identify those most at risk at an early stage, for example when a child first comes to the notice of an agency or individual and through multi-agency risk assessment. The YJB recommended high-level intervention for these children as part of a defined, graduated interventions matrix tailored to the needs of each young person and his or her family.

There has been a clear recognition that it may well not be agencies located within the criminal justice system which are most likely to identify risks at an early stage in a child's life. Teachers are more likely to be aware of problem behaviours, and so levels of truancy are regarded as a key indicator in assessing risk, and truancy. School exclusions incur financial and human costs, primarily because of the link between educational disaffection and later unemployment and criminal behaviour.[21] In 2002, the Education Secretary announced a new package of measures to crack down on truancy and bad behaviour, which included new or expanded learning support units, electronic registration systems, behaviour, education and support teams (BESTs) to intervene early to prevent bad behaviour, and full-time education for excluded pupils and ensure that there is appropriate identification, intervention, referral and tracking (by a keyworker)[22] for all children deemed to be 'at risk'. To be successful the initiative requires multi-agency collaboration, clear referral systems and information sharing. The new measures built on pilot work relating to the street crime initiative and were part of a new behaviour and attendance strand to the Excellence in Cities programme. Schools were placed at the heart of preventative services for children and young people at risk of social exclusion.[23] This focus has not been without policy dilemmas, however. On the one hand, head teachers have been tasked with being tough on discipline and improving standards, yet on the other hand, when they have excluded

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[20] Sutton, C., Utting, D. and Farrington, D. (2004) *Support from the Start: Working with young children and their families to reduce the risks of crime and antisocial behaviour* (Department for Education and Skills).
[21] Vulliamy, G. and Webb, R. (2000) 'Stemming the tide of rising school exclusions: problems and possibilities', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 119–33.
[22] Department for Education (2002) '£66 million to tackle bad behaviour in schools', Press Release 25, April.
[23] Children and Young People's Unit (2002) *Local Preventative Strategy: Guidance for local authorities and other local agencies (statutory and non-statutory) providing services to children and young people* (Department for Education and Skills), Crown Copyright.

troublesome pupils, they have been in danger of undermining the Government's objective of reducing truancy and exclusions.[24]

Assessing Risk

Michael Little argued in 1999 that, because the 'idea of prevention has much appeal to any profession',[25] there was a need for a clearer set of ground rules around definitions, terms and principles and the identification of children at risk. Several longitudinal studies have tracked children over time in order to assess which factors in a child's life are most closely associated with subsequent antisocial and criminal behaviour.[26] These studies provide important insights into the factors which put children at risk of becoming engaged in antisocial and/or criminal activities. The key risk factors which emerge from the research are: low income; poor/inconsistent parenting; large family size; family members being convicted of criminal offences; low IQ; aggressiveness; deprivation; individual temperament; parental separation/divorce; and lack of interest in education/poor educational attainment. Another significant factor is geographical location. There is a clear relationship between type of area, such as inner cities, and serious or persistent offending.[27]

Chains of effects suggest the interplay of several risk factors interacting over time, sometimes mediated by protective factors operating in a child's life.[28] Risk factors can be categorised into four domains which interact in the day-to-day life of the child and are highly relevant to the evaluation of YISPs. The domains relate to the individual child, the child's family, the community and environment in which the child lives, and the child's educational and school experience.

Longitudinal studies have also enabled researchers to determine protective factors, although the complexities of the interplay between risk and protective factors in promoting resilience in children are, as yet, uncharted.[29] It is helpful nevertheless to view protective factors as processes, rather than as discrete variables, which work in somewhat different ways to promote resiliency by reducing the impact of risk, limiting chain reactions to negative experiences and promoting self-esteem and achievement. Protective factors can also be found in the same four domains of child, family, community and school. Any risk assessment must take protective factors into account. The Cross Cutting Review of Children at Risk for the 2002 Spending Review recommended that mainstream services should be more focused so as to ensure that they respond more effectively to those in most need, and that early identification of need should ensure that preventative services are available before children and their parents are in crisis. The YISPs were designed to address these recommendations.

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[24] Edwards, E. and Coles, B. *op. cit.*

[25] Little, M. (1999) 'Prevention and early intervention with children in need: definitions, principles and examples of good practice', *Children and Society*, vol. 13, pp. 304–16.

[26] See e.g. Farrington, D.P. (1995) 'The development of offending and antisocial behaviour from childhood: key findings from the Cambridge study in delinquent development', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. 36, pp. 929–64; Farrington, D.P. (1997) 'Early prediction of violent and non-violent youthful offending', *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, vol. 5, pp. 51–66; Kolvin, I., Miller, F.J.W., Fleeting, M. and Kolvin, P.A. (1988) 'Social and parenting factors affecting criminal offence rates', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 152, pp. 80–90; Henry, B., Caspi, A., Moffitt, T.E. and Silva, P.A. (1996) 'Temperamental and familial predictors of violent and nonviolent criminal convictions: age 3 to age 18', *Developmental Psychology*, vol. 32, pp. 614–23; Wadsworth, M. (1979) *Roots of Delinquency: Infancy, adolescence and crime* (Martin Robertson).

[27] Flood-Page, C., Campbell, S., Harrington, V. and Miller, J. (2000) *Youth Crime: Findings from the 1998/1999 Youth Lifestyles Survey* (Home Office).

[28] Rutter, M. and Smith, D. (eds) (1995) *Psycho-social Disorders in Young People: Time trends and their causes* (John Wiley).

[29] See Walker, J. (2002) Crime Reduction and the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children. Report to the Home Office and the Children and Young People's Unit (Newcastle Centre for Family Studies).

Partnership Working

Although establishing causality between risk factors and behavioural outcomes is fraught with difficulty, attempts to prevent criminal and antisocial behaviour are grounded in an understanding that offending is part of a larger syndrome which begins in childhood and can persist into adulthood.[30] This has provided the framework for the Government's strategies which aim to provide support to families before children go to school (e.g. through Sure Start), identify children at most risk of becoming involved in crime or antisocial behaviour (e.g. through programmes such as On Track) and support young people through their teenage years and into the workplace (e.g. through Connexions). Other initiatives, such as the New Deal for Communities which focuses on intensive regeneration in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and the Youth Inclusion Programme which targets high crime estates, have all contributed to the Government's vision for improving the lives of children and young people and reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. The New Deal for Communities programme launched in 1998 in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England was particularly ambitious, and although there are no national figures relating to the impact on youth crime, case study evidence suggests that youth inclusion and diversionary projects benefited some 50,000 young people.[31] The projects most able to demonstrate positive outcomes were those with emphasis on inter-agency working.

The concept of partnerships and collaboration is not new, but it has taken on a more critical thrust in recent years because many of the new provisions have created a statutory basis for partnership working and necessitated the establishment of an organised structure within which partnerships may develop as part of the Government's drive for 'joined-up' thinking. Historically, multi-agency crime prevention initiatives have varied according to local circumstances and some agencies, such as the police, have appeared to be consistently more powerful than others.[32] Nevertheless, one of the key measures of the effectiveness of any new initiative within the current government agenda relates to the ability of different agencies to collaborate and develop effective partnerships. Local agencies are tasked with finding local solutions to local problems informed by evidence of what works. The CYPU Outcomes Framework relies on a more holistic cross-agency and cross-sector approach in which local services and communities work together to tailor services around individual needs. This kind of co-ordination underpins initiatives such as YISPs. The Social Services Inspectorate introduced a framework for co-ordinated service planning for vulnerable children and young people in England, recommending that areas should establish Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships (CYPSPs) to address levels of need, determine priorities, articulate shared objectives and agree targets and milestones.[33] Although the guidance is advisory it clearly conforms to the Government's vision for co-ordinated service planning and delivery and it endeavours to simplify the changes required to achieve co-ordination in children's services. Multi-agency working and sharing are central to reducing youth crime and enhancing youth inclusion.

In 2001, the Children's Fund was established as part of the Government's strategy to tackle child poverty and social exclusion by providing increased and better co-ordinated services for children aged 5–13 who are at risk of social exclusion and their families. By 2003–4 all areas of England and Wales were tasked to deliver Children's Fund Programmes and YISPs were expected to be a priority service.

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[30] McCarthy, P., Laing, K. and Walker, J. (2002) *Guide to Assessing the Risk of Young Children Becoming Involved in Criminal or Antisocial Behaviour*, report to the Children and Young People's Unit,
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR545.pdf
[31] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) *New Deal for Communities 2001–2005: An interim evaluation*, ODPM Research Report 17 (ODPM).
[32] Sampson, A., Stubbs, P., Smith, D., Pearson, G. and Blagg, H. (1988) 'Crime, localities and the multi-agency approach', *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 478–93.
[33] Social Services Directorate (2001) *Co-ordinated Service Planning for Vulnerable Children and Young People in England* (Department of Health), Crown Copyright.

There was a requirement that 25 per cent of the Children's Fund would be earmarked for programmes jointly agreed with YOTs. Furthermore, resources had to be made available to put mechanisms in place for early identification, referral and tracking (IRT) for every child at risk. The IRT system was regarded as a key mechanism for delivering local preventative strategies and as a possible framework for the effective operation of YISPs. The focus, again, was firmly on prevention, early intervention and multi-agency co-operation.

Youth Inclusion and Support Panels

In August 2002, YOTs were asked to provide information about models of panels operating in their areas, and their responses indicated that panels were already in operation in some areas, mainly funded through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and the Children's Fund. The characteristics and target groups of these panels varied and most did not conform exactly to the prescribed requirements set out for YISPs. The YISPs were regarded as a key component of the campaign to prevent crime, complementing the Street Crime Initiative (SCI) announced by the Home Secretary in March 2002 which was focused on ten police force areas in an effort to combat the increasing levels of robberies, thefts and other forms of street crime. Using a matrix of the risk and protective factors which may lead young people into, or protect them from, crime, the YISPs were tasked with constructing a personally tailored package of support and interventions, summarised in an integrated support plan designed to facilitate the kind of provision which will prevent the young person moving further towards crime. Central to the concept was the role of keyworkers, who are responsible for assessing risk and co-ordinating and monitoring the package of interventions.

The emphasis in YISPs is on ensuring that children at risk of offending or reoffending and their families receive mainstream public services at the earliest opportunity. Their key characteristics are as follows:

- a focus on prevention of offending and antisocial behaviour

- multi-agency involvement and local accountability across statutory and voluntary sectors

- information exchange

- efficient and effective processes for early identification, referral, assessment and tracking of high risk children and young people aged 8–13

- systematic approach to comprehensive assessment (using a specially designed tool – ONSET – as a mandatory assessment tool in the pilot areas)

- multi-agency panel meetings

- the provision of integrated support services tailored to individual needs through an integrated support plan (ISP)

- voluntary involvement and creative participation of children and their families at all stages of the process

- participation and involvement of community volunteers

- restorative justice

- family group conferencing

- dedicated key workers to work with children and families

- a co-ordinated network of service provision

- equality of access to services and a focus on inclusivity

We refer to these characteristics in more detail in the discussion of our findings.

The YISPs were designed to support children who have failed to access mainstream services in the past, particularly those with complex needs who may have fallen through the gaps between services. Involvement in YISPs is voluntary. Children and their families are asked to consent to referral and assessment for consideration by a panel, and to co-operate with proposals for the delivery of services through an ISP. Indeed, one of the core principles of YISPs is that children and their parents/carers should be involved as much as possible in each stage of the process. At the centre of YISPs is the multi-agency panel whose main task is to ensure that children and families receive, at the earliest opportunity, mainstream public services and complementary interventions delivered by voluntary and community groups. The YJB listed the main benefits of the YISP approach as being that it:

- holds public services accountable for delivering services

- ensures that preventing youth crime is at the centre of mainstream public services responsibility

- responds to public and political concerns about 'hidden' offending and antisocial behaviour

- ensures that children at risk and their families receive services at the earliest opportunity

- provides a single point of referral and agency response to youth crime and antisocial behaviour

- provides a mechanism for exchanging information on individual risk factors and problem behaviour

- reduces demands on public services providers for acute and crisis intervention or services

- reduces the number of children entering the criminal justice system and potentially becoming persistent offenders

The YISPs are expected to operate as part of a broader strategy for preventing offending and antisocial behaviour in each local area, including the use of ASBOs and ABCs. The YJB characterised the strategic location of YISPs (Figure 1.1) as being on the cusp of services for children and families, community safety and youth justice.[34]

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[34] Youth Justice Board (2005) *YISP Management Guidance* (YJB), p. 7.

Figure 1.1   Strategic location of YISPs

The model for YISPs involved a systematic process from referral to service delivery (Figure 1.2).[35]

[35] ibid., p. 8.

Referral		Panel Involvement			Delivery of ISP
Step 1	**Step 2**	**Step 1**	**Step 2**	**Step 3**	
Referral from voluntary and community sector, mainstream services and families	Referring agency/ Individual referrer obtains the consent of the young person/ parents to being referred	Verification of the information provided by the referrer and prioritisation of the cases referred	Detailed assessment of young person	ISP designed in the light of panel discussions	Support and intervention by key workers, and mainstream voluntary and community provision including community safety interventions (ABCs, ASBOs, etc)

Figure 1.2   The YISP model

The clear expectation is that the panel will be involved in prioritising cases, considering detailed ONSET assessments and designing integrated support plans. Panels were not specifically required to oversee compliance with ISPs or with community safety interventions, but were expected to monitor and review the child's progress and satisfaction with the interventions offered. As we shall see, the YISP model was variously modified by the pilots. The objectives of the YISP panels and outcome targets were identified as being to:[36]

- prevent children referred to the YISP from becoming involved, or further involved, in offending and antisocial behaviour (a reduction in reoffending rates)

- reduce the risk factors and increase the protective factors of children who are involved, or at risk of becoming further involved, in offending and antisocial behaviour (and reduction in ONSET scores)

- ensure that children assessed as high risk by the YISP are in full-time education (a reduction in truancy and exclusion rates)

- ensure that children and their families are satisfied by the YISP intervention, and that they receive services at the earliest opportunity (increase levels of satisfaction with services)

In order to achieve these, YISPs are expected to:[37]

- identify children aged 8 to 13 who are known to the criminal justice system, but who:
  - have not yet passed the police Reprimand stage
  - are offending, but are not known to the Criminal Justice System
  - are judged, on the basis of a systematic analysis of risk and protective factors, to be at very high risk of

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[36] ibid.
[37] ibid., p. 9.

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offending

- gain the voluntary consent and co-operation of children and their families to consider the causes of the problematic behaviour presented by the child and the possible responses to it

- develop and implement an individual ISP, with appropriate multi-agency commitment and keyworker support

- track the implementation and impact of the ISP, including the commitment of all parties to the agreed plan

The YJB provided detailed guidance to the pilots relating to implementation and operation of YISPs. It was assumed that, in most cases, the YOTs would act as the lead agency for the YISP on behalf of the Children's Fund and the local authority. Each YISP was expected to have dedicated keyworkers responsible for case management and tracking referrals. Panels were expected to include representatives from a wide range of agencies. It was considered essential that the YISPs should provide accessible services which reflect the diversity of the local population and which take account of ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, age and race.

We endeavoured to explore the extent to which the pilot YISPs were able to meet the objectives set by the YJB and the ways in which the requirements were translated into practice. In the next chapter we indicate the methods we adopted and the limitations of the evaluation. The following chapters take the reader through the process of YISP intervention from referral to outcomes. In the final chapter, we present our conclusions and a number of recommendations relating to factors which have emerged as indicative of best practice and promising in respect of their being capable of achieving the *Every Child Matters* outcomes.

Chapter 2   Evaluating YISPs – The Art of the Possible

Janet Walker

Critical to new initiatives designed to support families and reduce juvenile offending is the desire to build on evidence of what works, but identifying what this is is by no means straightforward. There have been many initiatives and a great deal is happening on the ground, much of it in the more deprived areas of England and Wales. The complexity of the initiatives, which involve several government departments and quasi-governmental agencies, led to the creation of the Regional Co-ordination Unit to ensure collaboration between the new programmes, but joining them up is beset with difficulties. The sheer volume and speed of turnover of initiatives serves to work against effective mainstreaming.[38] Provision of services to families is particularly problematic since a child and his or her family may be the recipient of services under a number of initiatives or may receive several inputs under the same initiative. The key problem faced by any evaluation of a particular initiative such as YISPs is the tendency for outcomes to result from a myriad of influences. Furthermore, the history that precedes the introduction of new initiatives is a crucial determinant of how they function and how local people respond to them.[39] It was essential, therefore, for us to understand how YISPs targeted children and young people, assessed the risk and protective factors, developed integrated support plans and delivered multi-agency interventions, and then to consider how YISP interventions might interact with other initiatives designed to prevent criminal activity and to support children and families.

Designing the Evaluation

At the beginning of the YISP initiative, the Department for Education and Skills delineated two core strands for the evaluation:

1. To describe the various models of early identification and assessment processes aimed at preventing children and young people from becoming involved in crime and antisocial behaviour.

2. To evaluate the development and operation of YISPs in order to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to ascertain whether they are more effective than alternative mechanisms for identifying and assessing children and providing services for them.

We regarded a scoping phase as an essential first step which would help us decide how to meet these requirements. A number of issues emerged during our early investigations, which influenced the design of the national evaluation. Thus, we noted that the pilot YISPs were not all targeting the same groups of children, making overall comparison problematic. We were aware that YISPs were being developed alongside a range of other initiatives, which might make it difficult to identify specific impacts which could be attributable to YISP intervention. Moreover, there was a considerable degree of flexibility in the way in which YISPs were being implemented locally, with some pilots starting from scratch in developing panels while others were building on existing initiatives. We regarded the variations in practice as potentially very interesting on the one hand, and as a potential threat to a robust research design on the other. These variations underscored the importance of capturing as robust data as we

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[38] Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2002) Collaboration and Co-ordination in Area-based Initiatives, Final Report to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions.
[39] McCarthy, P., Whitman, J., Walker, J. and Coombes, M. (2002) *Targeting Initiatives: Diverting children and young people from crime and antisocial behaviour*, report to the Children and Young Persons' Unit.

could about process, outputs and outcomes both quantitatively and qualitatively through *in situ* fieldwork. Specifically, we needed to examine the implementation and operation of YISP panels, models of practice, outputs, activities and outcomes, and contextual issues. In order to do this we proposed a model of process evaluation which would enable us to:

- profile the communities within which YISPs were located

- describe the organisation and delivery of YISPs, and identify variations between models and between the ways in which agencies change their services, modes of service delivery and organisational structures

- consider processes for the identification and assessment of children and young people

- discover how panels operate and are used

- ascertain the experiences of panel members, participating agencies, children, parents and keyworkers

The purpose was to address questions about:

- the kinds of children who form the YISP target group

- the experience children and families have of the referral and assessment processes

- the characteristics of panels which might influence outcomes

- the levels of involvement of community members, children and families in the panels, and the effects of this involvement

- the delivery of services

- the extent to which YISPs meet key outcome targets

- the extent to which outcomes are expected to be sustainable over time

Moreover, we wanted to collect data at the level of each individual child referred to each pilot YISP, in order to be able to demonstrate:

- whether, and if so how, children complied with the YISP integrated support plan

- whether specific changes in behaviour, such as greater commitment to education and improvements in school performance, were being achieved

- whether children were committing crime or antisocial behaviour

- whether, and if so how, relationships between children and their parents and teachers improved

- whether the children and their families were receiving mainstream services, and if so for what purpose

- whether risk factor scores were reduced

A core component of the scoping study was to examine alternative ways in which the evaluation could approach one of its central questions, namely, have YISPs been successful in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in their target young people? A definitive answer to this question would require some means of estimating the level of crime which might have been expected in the absence of YISPs, but the lack of any such counterfactual data always poses a critical challenge for such analyses. The main alternative approach, which was explored in detail during the scoping study, depended on modelling the outcomes for young people over as many areas as possible, so as to compare what the YISPs achieve with what happens elsewhere.

A less direct form of this modelling adopts a macro-level approach, seeking to measure a 'YISP effect' across the youth population in a whole YOT area. Building on the recent modelling of geographical patterns in YOT area youth crime rates, we thought that it might be possible to re-analyse these area rates after the introduction of YISPs so that the modelling could measure the impact of YISPs in the areas where they had been introduced. The crucial risk with this approach was that no YISP effect would be evident, for two main reasons:

1. The evaluation timetable meant that few YISPs would have been operating for very long before the analysis was undertaken.

2. Some YISPs were concentrating on relatively small high risk sub-populations within their areas (e.g. young people in certain neighbourhoods).

We were aware that YISPs would have had the chance to influence only relatively few young people within the time frame of the evaluation, so changes in their behaviour could be lost amid the trends among a whole area's youth population. As a result, the macro approach to evaluation was not recommended.

The alternative micro approach considered would measure a YISP effect in terms of *individual* young people's behaviour. The policy objectives provided a clear framework for the analysis, because these required that young people who are at risk of crime and/or antisocial behaviour should be diverted towards more positive outcomes. The positive outcomes here included:

- not committing offences

- not engaging in antisocial behaviour

- improved school attendance

A more general positive outcome might be seen from monitoring the young person's level of risk, as measured by a repeat ONSET assessment after they had experienced YISP intervention for a period. These outcomes were closely aligned with the proposed targets set by the DfES and the YJB for YISPs. As a point of detail, it should be noted that this form of analysis is different from simply assessing YISPs as failing unless they are producing positive outcomes. What would constitute evidence of success in the YISPs would be engagement with a YISP leading individual young people to *more* positive outcomes than would be expected otherwise.

We were acutely aware that the search for robust evidence of outcomes can prove elusive, particularly as there are other intervening factors which impinge on children's development and behaviour. Nevertheless, we believed that if it could be established that children comply with the plans drawn up for them, receive appropriate preventative and support services and improve their behaviour in school, at home or in the community, and that their risk factor scores are reduced, it might be possible to argue, on the basis of theories of change relating to evidence from risk and resilience studies and outcomes of

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other national evaluations, that children and young people will be less likely to get involved in crime and antisocial behaviour. Moreover, increasing commitment to education and improving parenting and communication within families are clearly worthwhile objectives in themselves which can reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors.[40]

Our Approach to the Evaluation of YISPs

We adopted an action-research framework and delineated two complementary strands to the evaluation: a quantitative micro-level element, including a study of costs, and a qualitative case study element. Our aim was to collect quantitative data from all 13 pilots and to focus our qualitative work in four pilot areas. The details of our research methods are described fully in our final evaluation report submitted to the DfES in December 2006. We do not go into detail here but more information about the research can be made available on request. Here we describe briefly, the data we sought and obtained. We proposed that the national evaluation of YISPs:

- would not include a comparative element which attempted to compare YISPs with other mechanisms in non-YISP areas, and that comparison would only be undertaken within and between YISPs

- should provide early indicators of what is effective in terms of targeting children at risk of committing criminal offences or engaging in antisocial behaviour, and indications of short-term outcomes only

- should focus primarily on determining the key elements of effective YISPs and the core components which contribute to the broader objectives relating to early identification, referral and tracking

- would attempt to discern the extent to which criminal and antisocial behaviour should be the key, or the only, focus of YISPs and the interventions which might be recommended

- would not involve a large-scale cohort study but would attempt to determine the elements of best practice through a more focused case study approach

While the original research specification had asked the evaluators to test the assumption that YISPs are more effective than alternative means of reaching children at risk of offending, addressing their needs and delivering appropriate services, it became clear that this would require some measurement of what would happen if the YISPs were not in place. Ideally, we would have developed an experimental design in which the target population is randomly assigned to a YISP. This kind of design involved enormous practical difficulties and was not a viable option.

We considered whether it would be possible to match YISP pilot areas with others without a YISP, but could see no reliable way to identify a suitable comparator population, and, in any event, YISPs were being rolled out nationally while the evaluation was ongoing. We also discarded the possibility of a before-and-after study in the pilot areas because pilot YISPs had already been identified and were in various stages of implementation.

We agreed, in discussion with the DfES, that none of the possible approaches was ideal and that we would be unlikely to derive sufficiently robust data to make it possible to measure the counterfactual.

[40] McCarthy, P., Whitman, J., Walker, J. and Coombes, M. (2002) *Targeting Initiatives: Diverting children and young people from crime and antisocial behaviour* (Department of Education and Skills).

Moreover, it having been agreed that the national evaluation of YISPs could not involve large-scale cohort work, the task was to ensure that appropriate methods were found for more intensive, in-depth study over a relatively short period of time. We also agreed with the YJB that we would take a 'light touch' to the national evaluation since we did not want to get in the way of service delivery.

The Quantitative Micro-level Element

We wanted to gather information from all the YISPs about each new referral in a given time period (February 2003 to October 2005). We were keen to use whatever data-capture systems existed locally rather than devise a separate, additional system for the evaluation. We were assured that this would be possible. A management information system, known as YISPMIS, had been developed for the YJB for use by the pilots, and we were encouraged to use it as the means for data capture for the evaluation. We expected that details would be recorded on each child to include: referral information; ONSET assessments; the details of integrated support plans; panel information; details of all interventions; and outcome data. Unfortunately, YISPMIS proved to be far more problematic than helpful for the evaluation and many pilots were equally frustrated by its complexity. The nature of the YISPMIS relational database is particularly complicated. For example, making a connection between the referral (the case or record in the data set) and the type of organisation which the person who referred that case belonged to requires no less than a five-step sequence of links. As a result, there were ongoing problems relating to the extraction of data throughout the evaluation. When we were eventually able to access the data, the file consisted of 2,235 referral records. Many of these fell outside our evaluation time-range and many children were outside the YISP age-range of 8 to 13. Stripping the data set of these cases reduced it to 1,642 records.

We discovered, also, that there was a considerable amount of missing data for many of these cases, the most serious gaps relating to data about ONSET assessments which we had expected to rely on to give us a picture of the impact of YISP intervention. Indeed, for 500 cases no ONSET data were recorded. In only 403 cases were initial, midway and closure ONSET scores available for calculating changes in a child's risk scores during YISP intervention. As we shall see in the remainder of this report, the extent of the quantitative analyses we have been able to undertake has been severely compromised by the poor quality of YISPMIS data. This is very disappointing, and suggests that management information systems need to be far more user-friendly if busy practitioners are going to record their work carefully and diligently. Had we known just how resistant pilots would be to using YISPMIS we would not have relied on it for deriving evaluation data, but would have devised a much simpler data-capture tool to collect the information needed for robust statistical analyses. In the following chapters we have drawn on the quantitative data wherever possible, to provide a wider context for the in-depth qualitative work, and indicated where caution must be used in interpreting the results.

We were asked to consider the costs of YISPs, and this proved to be one of the most difficult elements in the evaluation. Pilots found it difficult to provide the data we needed, although nine of them did manage to supply some information. Again, our analysis of cost data must be read with considerable caution as to its generalisability.

In-Depth Qualitative Case Studies

Although the YISPMIS data have been extremely problematic, our in-depth qualitative work has provided a rich tapestry of information about how the YISPs have operated and the more subtle impacts on children and parents. At the end of the scoping phase we selected four pilots as case-study sites, taking account of their adherence to the core elements of YISPs (e.g. a primary focus on prevention, involvement of parents and children, a dedicated keyworker and community participation),

socio-demographic characteristics and levels of deprivation, and the YISPs' experience of multi-agency work. We selected panels in Birmingham, Ealing, Lancashire and Nottingham. During the evaluation, however, it became clear that Nottingham was receiving very few YISP referrals and we switched our attention to Wigan, which had high numbers of referrals and was using an innovative family group conferencing approach. Our in-depth work has involved us in the examination of seven separate panels (three in Lancashire, two in Birmingham), all of which are very different. Qualitative research aims to provide as in-depth understanding of people's experiences, perceptions, and understanding of their personal circumstances and situation which have led to interventions and of those interventions themselves. Using unstructured and semi-structured methods, the objective is to capture data which are detailed, rich and complex and to develop explanations at the level of meaning or micro-social processes.[41] We used a range of methods to study YISPs, including: observations; exploratory interviews at different points in time; discourse and narrative analysis; and documentary analysis. The primary purpose was to identify the factors which might contribute to successful and unsuccessful delivery of interventions; identifying the outcomes as perceived by the providers and receivers of the interventions; and to explore the organisational aspects of service delivery. We followed a number of recognised principles of practice, which are described in more depth in our final evaluation report. We have attempted to be rigorous at all times in our data collection, analysis and interpretation of the data.

In the case study areas we:

- observed 33 YISP panels in action

- interviewed 32 children (30 of them at two time periods)

- interviewed 32 parents (30 of them at two time periods)

- conducted 29 interviews with the children's keyworkers

- interviewed 36 practitioners, managers and panel members in three of the case-study areas

- observed YISP panel away-days and steering group meetings

- considered a wide range of panel documentation

- conducted content analysis relating to a number of integrated support panels

- talked with a range of YISP staff

We were dependent on YISP keyworkers as gatekeepers to the children and families referred to the YISPs and, although we asked them to invite all families in specific time periods to participate in the evaluation, we are aware that this practice was not always followed. Some keyworkers were openly resilient to involving their families in research and others were uncomfortable about seeking consent. We prepared a variety of colourful, user-friendly leaflets for parents/carers, children, panel members and partner organisations. We sought written consent to participation and followed accepted ethical procedures at all times. We had hoped to derive purposive samples of children and families, but were obliged to follow-up all families in which consent had been given. We have no means of knowing how many families declined research consent as our gatekeepers did not keep rigorous records of their activities. It is essential, therefore to treat the findings from our interview sample of families with caution. Nevertheless, we believe that our qualitative enquiry has provided valuable insight into the

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[41] Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. and Dillon, L. (2003) *Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A framework for assessing research evidence.* (Government Chief Social Researcher's Office. Cabinet Office), Crown Copyright.

lives of a number of families who experienced YISP intervention in our case study areas and into the day-to-day challenges facing YISPs. The throughput of cases was significantly lower in most pilots than they had predicted, and few met their targets. We draw extensively on our interviews with families and keyworkers throughout the report and on our own observations of YISP panels and interviews with panel members. All the interviews were tape-recorded (with the consent of the interviewee) and transcribed. The transcripts were analysed thematically to discern key themes and patterns in the data. When referring to the interview data in this report, we present verbatim some of the many responses from people who took part in the study. We assured everyone that we would respect their confidentiality and have made every possible attempt to ensure that no-one is personally identifiable, although we appreciate that people may well recognise what they themselves have told us. All the names have been changed. We have endeavoured to achieve a balanced presentation at all times, and our aim has been to select comments which flow directly from the accounts of research subjects. It is our belief that those who have experienced YISPs in one form or another are best placed to comment on them. While verbatim accounts do not provide 'hard' data in the same way as the analyses of YISPMIS does, they do bring to life the every day worlds of those involved with the pilots in a way that quantitative data cannot. Inevitably, a discussion of qualitative data lengthens the report, but because of the paucity of robust quantitative data available to us, we make no apology for presenting a more discursive and descriptive document which is undoubtedly richer for the nuances it portrays.

The Case Study Pilots

To place the qualitative findings in context it is necessary to know something about the areas in which the study took place. In our final evaluation report we provided a detailed discussion of each of our case-study pilots, highlighting the contextual factors within which each has operated and the challenges they have faced. We also provided a detailed description of each of the YISPs. Here, we highlight some of the factors which distinguish each of the case-study areas and the similarities and differences between them.

Birmingham

In Birmingham we examined in-depth panels in two areas: Quinton, to the west of the city, and Aston, renamed as the Newtown and Lozells panel during our study, to the north. Aston has a particularly high crime rate and, at the time the YISP was set up, there were increasing worries about gun crime and race-related disorder. By contrast, Quinton is regarded as a more affluent area which contains small pockets of deprivation and a number of crime hotspots. Nevertheless, Quinton is seen as one of the safer neighbourhoods in Birmingham despite increasing incidents of vandalism and antisocial behaviour at the time the YISP was established. The YISP panels in each area met monthly and each had representatives from a wide range of agencies. Quinton panel was unusual in that it had two community representatives and two members of a local psychotherapy group. Children referred to Birmingham YISP are allocated a tier of intervention between 1 and 4, depending on the perceived needs of the child and family. Children with the highest risk factors are allocated to tiers 3 and 4 and are usually accepted as YISP cases.

Birmingham Quinton panel was the largest of all the panels we observed and it retained a committed and regular group of attendees. The Quinton panel sometimes passed YISP cases to professionals from other agencies who were represented on the panel, who then acted as the keyworkers. This caused some difficulty for the evaluation, in that we did not have complete sets of data available about the children and young people who were accepted as YISP referrals but passed on to other agencies.

The YISP programme in Birmingham involves the Youth Inclusion and Support Team which takes a much wider range of referrals. Keyworkers deal with both panel and non-panel cases. In fact, relatively small numbers of YIST referrals were actually processed by the panels, and our evaluation had to focus on those which went to the two YISP panels in our study.

Ealing

The YISP in Ealing, known as the Ealing Children's Support Panel (CSP), covered the whole borough. It is a multicultural borough, with 41.3 per cent of the residents identifying themselves as belonging to a minority ethnic group. Over a hundred languages are spoken across the borough. In 2003, Lord Laming's inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié concluded that assessment and referral systems in Ealing were poor.[42] Since then, many changes have been introduced, but the YISP was implemented against a difficult backcloth. Youth crime was particularly prevalent. Although Ealing YISP had a borough-wide catchment area, it primarily serviced three crime hotspot areas in Ealing-Northolt, Southall and South Acton. Panels usually met at fortnightly intervals and it seemed to be difficult to engage all the key players in the panel meetings. Ealing has taken a very open approach to YISP intervention, and there is no fixed period of engagement with a child. Cases are regularly reviewed, however. The YISP keyworkers have had very heavy caseloads throughout the evaluation and this has clearly impacted on their work with the children and young people.

Lancashire

We selected three of the six YISP panels operating in Lancashire as case-study areas: Fylde and Wyre; Lancaster and Morecambe; and Hyndburn, Rossendale and the Ribble Valley. Lancashire is an area of stark contrast, some areas being rich in cultural diversity and opportunity, while residents in some inner urban areas, outer estates and rural pockets experience low incomes and high levels of deprivation. Some 83 per cent of children in the central ward of Hyndburn district live in poverty, and there are significant health inequalities across the county. Crime tends to be located in town centres. Wyre, Preston and Lancaster are youth crime hotspots although Fylde and Wyre experience relatively low crime rates as does the Ribble Valley.

Lancashire YISP had been built on an existing, successful panel programme, known locally as the Lancashire Group Intervention Panel (GRIP). Six GRIP teams cover the county and each of the three we studied operated slightly differently. It quickly became clear to us that the panels were already well-established and had a shared vision and shared values. All the keyworkers were committed to delivering a short, focused set of YISP interventions within the three-month period advised by the YJB. In many ways, Lancashire YISPs adhered the most closely to the YJB Management Guidance.

Wigan

Wigan sits midway between Manchester and Liverpool, and is the ninth-largest metropolitan borough in England. Despite being regarded by a large majority of its residents as being a good place in which to live, Wigan has higher than average rates of violence, domestic burglary and vehicle theft. Much of the violent crime is alcohol-driven within the town centre.

Wigan YISP is known locally as the Wigan Youth Inclusion and Support Project (not Panel), primarily reflecting its unique approach to YISP intervention. It puts the direct involvement of children, young

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[42] Lord Laming (2003) *The Victoria Climbié Inquiry* (Crown Copyright), http://www.victoria-climbie-inquiry.org.uk/finreport/finreport.htm (last accessed 25/01/06).

people and their families at the heart of its work, offering family group meetings as a routine element in the YISP process. Emphasis is placed on a holistic approach, with support being offered to parents as well as to children and young people. Referrals to Wigan YISP have been high, but Wigan does not operate multi-agency panels as do the other pilot YISPs. Instead, family group meetings take the place of panels. Wigan included children and families, however, at all stages of YISP intervention, which was not a feature in any other YISP we examined in the evaluation.

Similarities and Differences

Our four case study areas provided a rich variety of social and economic contexts within which to study the operation of YISPs. Birmingham has by far the largest urban area of our four pilots, with a relatively young population and considerable ethnic diversity. This is in distinct contrast to Lancashire, where YISPs have operated within a primarily rural context with a predominantly white population. Nevertheless, in all four pilots there are both pockets of social deprivation and areas of relative prosperity. Whereas the deprivation in Birmingham tends to be concentrated in inner city neighbourhoods, in Lancashire it is evident in rural areas as well as in some inner city neighbourhoods.

Like Birmingham, Ealing is multicultural, and in addition has had to absorb a large number of asylum seekers in recent years. Wigan, however, has few minority ethnic residents. In both Ealing and Wigan, many residents travel out of the borough to work in neighbouring areas. Local employment in both these pilot areas is largely in retail and service industries. Unemployment in Birmingham is higher than the national average, whereas in Lancashire as a whole it is lower than the national average. Both Ealing and Wigan have unemployment rates, at around the national average. These variations inevitably impact on the prospects and opportunities for young people. Moreover, there are significant health inequalities, with particular problems evident in Birmingham. Teenage pregnancy was a concern across all four pilot areas.

Patterns of crime and disorder varied across the pilots, but all four identified particular problems associated with youth crime. Aston in Birmingham, which is one of the most deprived wards in the country and has the highest unemployment rate of all Birmingham wards, had been experiencing an increase in violent crime, often associated with gun use. Indeed, we were told that gang and gun crime were so entrenched in Aston that it would take a relatively long time to achieve marked changes. Quinton, by contrast, was considered to be a relatively safe place in which to live and the youth crime tended to be associated with vandalism and antisocial behaviour linked to truancy.

While youth crime is also prevalent in Ealing the most common offences tend to be residential burglary, vehicle theft, handling stolen goods and assault. The pattern of youth crime in Wigan is similar to that in Ealing, with domestic burglary and theft of vehicles giving the most concern. Violent crime, notably in Wigan town centre, is associated with alcohol abuse. In Lancashire, youth crime is most prevalent in the urban areas, and antisocial behaviour and juvenile nuisance tend to cause the most concern. In Lancaster, Morecambe and Hyndburn, however, criminal damage and violent crime had been on the increase.

Despite these variations in patterns of youth crime, residents in all four pilot areas identified the fear of crime as a real problem, often influenced by the obvious presence of young people 'hanging around' and 'getting up to no good' on the streets. Tackling antisocial behaviour had become a priority across all four pilots, with various initiatives in place to provide alternative, prosocial activities for young people.

Learning from the Research

Measuring the effects of YISPs across such a diverse landscape presented many challenges and we have attempted to delineate examples of promising practice within the various YISP models. Any policy implementation which is trialled through pilots is carrying out a form of experiment, with the associated evaluation assessing whether the experiment suggests that the policy will be a success if implemented more widely. This strategy depends on the representativeness of the pilot: how far can the findings from the pilot be generalised to the other potential subjects of the policy? It has been important for us to address this question, particularly in light of the inadequacies of the YISPMIS data set.

We were not able to adopt an experimental design for the evaluation, for a range of reasons, and we were faced with a variety of models of YISP intervention. Our strategy has been to look at how representative the pilot areas are in relation to factors thought to be critical to the risk of youth crime and antisocial behaviour. Our multiple assessments of generalisability are discussed in detail in our final report. They indicate that the social conditions across all the pilots combined were substantially more challenging than those faced in most of the country as a whole. In this sense, the pilots have been a tough proving ground for the implementation of YISPs. This may have given them more chance to appear effective because there was more scope for YISP intervention to have an impact, or it may be that local conditions have made making any impact at all the more challenging. We return to this issue in the final chapter.

It is always a challenge to conduct robust evaluations of new programmes which are liable to change as they are being implemented. This evaluation has been no exception. We have had to work with a management information system which was so complex and cumbersome that pilots did not use it in ways which provided us with the detailed case data we needed. Moreover, the low throughput of YISP referrals meant that we had to extend the evaluation timetable and include a fifth area in our in-depth case studies. Nevertheless, we have been able to derive a wealth of data which can inform the Government's agenda around early intervention and prevention in youth crime and antisocial behaviour. Our findings relating to outcomes must be considered with a high degree of caution, however. We simply cannot know what the longer-term outcomes might be or whether YISP interventions 'work' to prevent children becoming involved in antisocial behaviour and criminal activities.

The extent to which the pilot YISPs contributed to the *Every Child* Matters outcomes is a matter for conjecture primarily because the findings represent an evaluation of a new initiative in its early stages, enabling us to consider only the potential YISPs have to play a major role in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. In our final chapter, we return to current government policies and consider the implications of the evaluation for the challenging and ambitious programme of change taking place in services for children and young people across England and Wales. Wherever possible, we have identified those elements of YISP practice which, in our view, are most likely to contribute to positive outcomes, and those which seem to have been less helpful. We believe that the evaluation has highlighted the difficulties many agencies face when tasked with implementing a new initiative, the delays in getting new approaches accepted and established, unrealistic assessments about target numbers, the challenges inherent in multi-agency partnership and the importance of grounding new initiatives within existing structures and local conditions while simultaneously responding to a wider national agenda for change in the delivery of children's services, particularly those focused in prevention and early intervention. We draw attention to these issues as we document the work of YISP pilots and the outcomes they have achieved.

The Role of Pilots in Policy-Making

In recent years many new initiatives have been tested and evaluated prior to national role-out. Pilots help to inform implementation and are an important first stage in longer term policy evaluation. By definition, pilots are experimental and variations and innovations in practice can enhance this experimentation and challenge researchers tasked with their evaluation. Many policies take time to bed in and YISPs have been no exception. While we had hoped to measure the likely impact of YISPs, we have had to focus our efforts on understanding different delivery mechanisms.

We did not design the evaluation of the YISP pilots as an impact study as we could not establish a genuine counterfactual,[43] but we focused on process which enabled us to explore the practicalities of implementing a new policy in a particular way. Although we were not able to conduct as extensive an evaluation as we had originally proposed, it is our view that the YISP pilots have provided an important opportunity to consider the challenges inherent in targeting children and young people who have not yet entered the youth justice system but are at serious risk of so doing, and in providing tailored support which can reduce that risk. The potential benefits associated with preventative work provided a catalyst for new approaches in the YISP pilots and we were aware of a huge determination in all thirteen areas to make YISPs work. By tracking their early developments we may have missed out on the chance to measure outcomes but we have been in a unique position to observe the challenges and the early 'wins' and to tease out the opportunities for the future of this kind of approach to reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. Despite the caveats which must be applied to the findings from the early years of the YISP pilots, there is much that can be learned from the evaluation.

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[43] Jowell, R. (2003) *Trying It Out: the role of 'pilots' in policy-making*. (Government Chief Social Researcher's Office, Cabinet Office), Crown Copyright.

Chapter 3   Troubled and Troublesome: Targeting High Risk Children

Karen Laing, Christine Thompson and Janet Walker

If YISPs are to achieve their objectives, it is essential that high risk children aged between 8 and 13 are identified. The YISP Management Guidance requires that the children:

- should not yet have passed the police reprimand stage

- may be offending, but are not yet known to the criminal justice system

- are, on the basis of systematic analysis of risk and protective factors, judged to be at very high risk of offending

In order for children to be referred to a YISP, the ONSET assessment must indicate that four or more risk factors are present in their life. Furthermore, the child's behaviour should be of concern to two or more of the partner agencies and/or the child's parents/carers, all of whom consider that a multi-agency response is called for. The emphasis is on early intervention in children's lives, providing preventative services which support young people and their families before they reach crisis, with the aim of reducing the probability of poor outcomes.

In this chapter we examine data available from YISPMIS in respect of the referrals to the pilots during our evaluation, looking specifically at those in our four case study areas. We consider, also, the views expressed during our interviews with parent/carers and the children referred to YISPs, about their referral, their reflections on their expectations of YISPs, and how intervention might help them. We also consider the views of YISP keyworkers in respect of children targeted.

Referrals to Pilot YISPs

The incomplete nature of the YISPMIS data set has severely limited the information we have about cases. Unfortunately, many of the data about who refers to YISP in the thirteen pilots were not recorded on YISPMIS, so we are unable to get an accurate picture of the pattern of referrals across the board. Data relating to the source of referrals to the pilot YISPS were only available in about a third of cases. Certain pilots performed better than others in this regard. Across the thirteen pilots, referrals have tended to come from several statutory sources, including education, social work, health and criminal justice agencies such as the police and youth offending teams. It would appear that referrals from education were received in every pilot area, and were the most common referral source. Social work referrals seem to have been common in Ealing (38% of referrals) and Southwark (30%). Several pilots received considerable numbers of referrals from the police while other pilots received hardly any police referrals. Nevertheless, referrals came from a wide range of agencies with Ealing recording 59 different referral sources.

During the period February 2004 to October 2005 inclusive, 1,642 referrals in respect of children aged between eight and thirteen were recorded on YISPMIS across the thirteen pilots. However, pilots varied considerably in their throughputs. Lancashire recorded the highest number of referrals across the six panels (578), followed by Wigan (224) and Southwark (115). Lancashire throughput was high compared to that for other areas, but referrals were received by six different panels that cover the whole of Lancashire. The lowest numbers of referrals were recorded in Nottingham (18) and Ealing (55).The

total of 1,642 referrals in a 21-month period is very much lower than we would have expected given the original prediction of 200 referrals per year in each of the 13 pilots. It is difficult for us to know whether some pilots somehow managed to achieve a much higher number of referrals than others or whether some pilots were more conscientious about entering data on YISPMIS. However, our observations of panel meetings indicated that some pilots had very few new referrals each month and that referrals dropped dramatically during school holdays.

Characteristics of Children Referred to all Pilot YISPs

Gender

The vast majority of children and young people referred to YISP were male, and this was fairly consistent across all pilot areas. The Birmingham pilot received the most referrals in respect of females (31%), while in Walsall only eight females were referred over the course of the study period (8%).

Age

Twenty-eight per cent of referrals involved twelve-year-olds (28.6%). This was closely followed by referrals involving eleven-year-olds (21.7%). Very few eight-year-olds were referred to any of the pilot YISPs (5.4%). There was, however, some variation between pilots. Knowsley and South Lancashire had higher numbers of eight-year-olds referred to them than other pilots (11.4% and 10.1% respectively), while Greenwich and Tower Hamlets had more referrals involving thirteen-year-olds than other pilots. The age distribution across the pilot YISPs is shown in Figure 3.1.
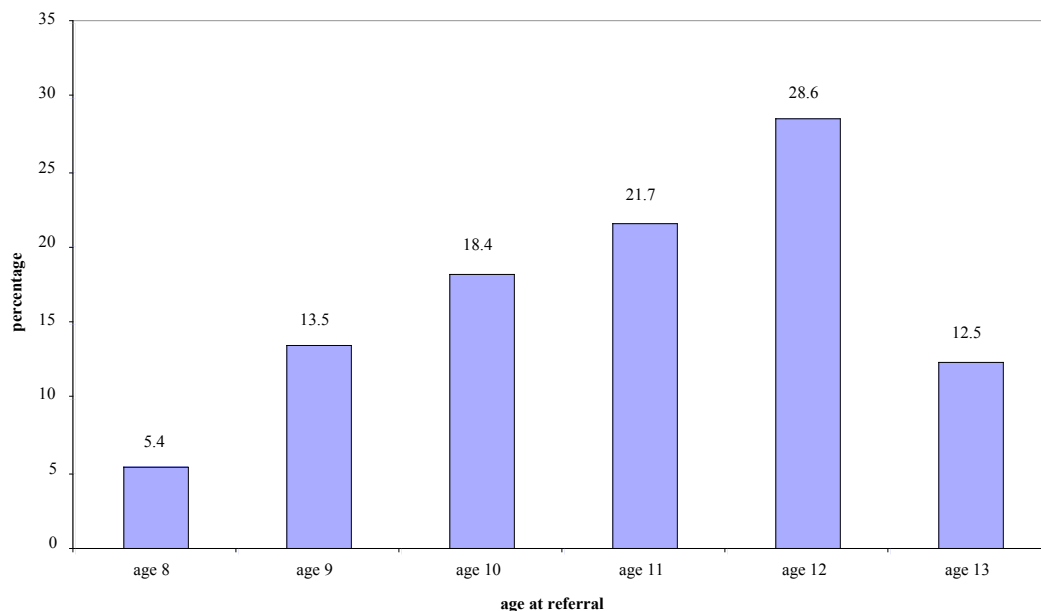

Figure 3.1   Age of children and young people referred to pilot YISPs

Ethnicity

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In terms of ethnicity, four in every five children referred were categorised as 'white'. As might be expected, there was some variation between pilots. Some three in every five children referred to Tower Hamlets, Southwark and Ealing were classified as 'non-white', while the proportion of minority ethnic children recorded in South Lancashire was less than one per cent. Wigan, Liverpool and the other panel areas of Lancashire all recorded fewer than one in ten referred children as belonging to a minority ethnic group.

Disability

There was a significant difference between pilots as regards the proportion of referrals of children with a disability. Whereas in Wigan only one child with a disability was referred, and fewer than one in ten children were recorded as disabled in Birmingham, Preston, South Lancashire and Walsall, the proportion of children with disabilities was noticeably high in Greenwich (32.2%), Southwark (29.6%), and Ealing (25.5%). It seems unlikely that this variation could be accounted for by variations in the level of disability in the underlying 'at risk' population, and we have no way of knowing for sure why this variation exists. One possibility could be differences in the way disability has been defined in these pilots, or else the variations could reflect targeting strategies. A wide range of types of disability were recorded.

Offending history

Referrers were asked to record on the ONSET referral form whether the child they were referring had received a police reprimand. Sadly, these data were not consistently recorded within YISPMIS. Overall, data were missing for 37.5 per cent of all referrals. Some pilots had less missing data than others, so we are able to report that approximately a quarter of children referred to YISPs in Birmingham and Preston had received a police reprimand. We can be less confident of the proportion in other areas. Pilots were also required to indicate on YISPMIS whether there was any evidence of offending. Data were entered more consistently, but again this varied across pilots. We are unable to say anything in this regard about referrals in Barking and Dagenham, Hyndburn, Nottingham and Southwark, but it seems that the vast majority of children in the remaining pilots had some kind of history of offending behaviour. Birmingham and Ealing, in particular, noted offending behaviour in respect of all but one of their referrals, and in Burnley no children were referred who did not have a history of offending.

Education

Referrers were asked to indicate the existence of several factors relating to education for each child they referred. Most pilots seemed to record this systematically on YISPMIS so we were able to gain a fairly comprehensive picture of the educational situation of children referred to the YISPs and of how this varied between pilots. Table 3.1 shows the proportion of children who were exhibiting particular education-related risk factors in each pilot, including whether a child was in full-time education, whether the child was a regular non-attender, whether a child bullied others at school, whether a statement of special educational needs (SEN) had been issued in respect of a child, or whether the child was having difficulties with schoolwork. Overall, some 10 per cent of referrals were in respect of children who were not in full-time education. Some panels, such as Nottingham, Southwark and Ealing, seemed to receive a higher proportion of referrals in respect of children who were not in full-time education while others, such as Wigan and Morecambe, had very few such referrals. A more common factor in relation to education seems to be non-attendance at school. Overall, nearly 30 per

cent of referrals were in respect of children who regularly truanted from school. Again, there was some variation among pilots, with 50 per cent of children referred in Sheffield being regular truants, while Greenwich and Nottingham had far fewer referrals in this respect.

Table 3.1   Educational factors identified by referrers

Pilot	Not in full-time education (%)	Displaying regular non-attendance (%)	Bullies others (%)	Has a statement of SEN (%)	Difficulties with schoolwork (%)
Barking & Dagenham[a]	16.4	26.4	22.0	6.6	19.8
Birmingham	14.3	23.4	19.5	16.9	42.9
Ealing	20.0	18.2	25.5	25.5	49.1
Greenwich	5.7	12.6	20.7	16.1	25.3
Knowsley	10.0	24.3	17.1	17.1	27.1
Lancashire	4.8	24.6	27.5	13.1	40.5
Liverpool	19.2	39.7	25.6	2.6	50.0
Nottingham	44.4	11.1	27.8	0.0	33.3
Sheffield	19.6	50.0	15.2	10.9	37.0
Southwark	23.5	32.2	12.2	11.3	24.4
Tower Hamlets	6.3	28.1	34.4	10.9	37.5
Walsall	11.7	27.7	27.7	18.1	45.7
Wigan	0.4	32.7	6.7	3.1	54.7
Total (%)	9.8	27.7	21.6	11.6	39.5

Note. [a] The amount of data missing in Barking and Dagenham in respect of education means that we have less confidence in the figures for this pilot.

Twenty-two per cent of referrals across the pilots were in respect of children who were seen to be bullying. Wigan received a lower number of referrals in this respect than any other pilot. Twelve per cent of referrals across the pilots were in respect of children who had received a SEN. Ealing had noticeably more referrals in this regard than other pilots. By far the most common factor relating to education was difficulty with schoolwork. Referrers identified difficulties with schoolwork in approximately two in every five referrals. They were noted more frequently in referrals from Birmingham, Ealing, Fylde and Wyre, Liverpool, Preston, Walsall and Wigan, as Table 3.1 shows.

Reasons for Referral to the Case Study Pilots

Referrers were asked to indicate on the ONSET referral form why they were referring a child to YISP. The qualitative responses that were recorded on YISPMIS in our case study areas were coded to gain a picture of the most common reasons for referral. The reasons tend to fall into several main categories, including problems at or with school, incidents of offending or antisocial behaviour, contact with the police, association with siblings or peers involved in offending or antisocial behaviour, and a lack of interpersonal or social skills. Other reasons given included problems at home, substance misuse, running away or staying out late, inappropriate sexual behaviour, issues to do with self-harm, suicide or depression, and (occasionally in Wigan) being on a Child Protection Register.

In Birmingham, unlike in the other case study areas, problems at school were given as the most common reason for referral, which reflects the source of referrals, given that the majority of Birmingham YISP referrals came from education-related professionals. The problems cited relating to school included exclusion, truancy and bullying (both as perpetrator and victim), and children's attitudes towards school, other pupils and their teachers. Problems at school were also cited in Ealing, Lancashire and Wigan as the second most common reason for referral in those areas. The problems

tended to be similar to those given by Birmingham referrers, but referrers to these pilots also mentioned lack of achievement or progress. The following comments relating to school problems are typical of those recorded:

> Young person is very turned off from school – it is a chore to him. He is a truant and misses many days. He can become very abusive to members of staff and at home. He has not been excluded but he has been taken/sent home on a number of occasions.

> [Child] is drifting through school in an aimless manner. He has little ambition and though he does find some of the work difficult he should be near the top of the lower ability group.

In the Ealing, Lancashire and Wigan YISPs, the most common reason for referral was the incidence of antisocial behaviour or offending. In Birmingham it was the second most common referral. This behaviour varied in severity, but in Lancashire it was usually connected with antisocial behaviour in the area where the children lived and there were frequent references to arson or fire setting. This could, of course, explain and/or reflect the strong emphasis on provision in Lancashire of interventions responding to arson, usually led by the fire service, and made available to the YISP panels. Elsewhere, the behaviour took a variety of forms, and differed in severity from relatively minor antisocial behaviour to shoplifting or violent crime, as the following examples indicate:

> Young person admitted to a theft of a sandwich from Sainsbury's.

> Taking a BB gun (replica shoots plastic balls) into school, with help of younger brother. Shot 3 school friends with it causing minor injuries.

While problems with school and the incidence of offending or antisocial behaviour were the most common triggers for YISP referral, the next most common reason for referral in all case study pilot areas, with the exception of Wigan, was concern about underdeveloped or poor social and interpersonal skills. Problems perceived by referrers included children's inappropriate responses to others, difficulties in interacting with peers, low self-esteem, and appearing immature for their age:

> Young person has long standing problems when interacting with peers as well as members of her family. She is egocentric, immature and there have been episodes of bullying. She has difficulties maintaining friendships as some friends are intimidated by her.

> We are concerned by [child's] low self esteem and friendship difficulties at school. [She] can sometimes be quite spiteful towards other children.

Another reason cited several times in all pilots, most commonly in Wigan, included difficulties at home. This encompassed difficulties in parental or sibling relationships, or regarding parenting issues:

> [Child] has been tearing wallpaper off the walls at home. [His] mother told me that she found a T-shirt with excrement on it in his bedroom and when asked he stated he did not want to get up and go to the toilet.

> Family break-up 12-18 months ago. Impact on young person as mum took sisters and left [child] behind.

Several children had been in contact with the police, although this was more commonly mentioned as a reason for referral in Birmingham and Lancashire than in either Ealing or Wigan. In Wigan, in particular, referrals were often made in respect of children deemed to be hanging around in gangs, or with peers who were getting into trouble. In some cases in Wigan, it appears that several members of a group of children were referred together in order to nip problems in the bud.

Although there was usually one trigger for a YISP referral there were usually multiple reasons for a child being referred, as evidenced by the following extracts from YISPMIS:

Young person seems to have low self esteem. He has told me he gets bored and has recently been banned from the local shops for stealing … He is almost constantly in trouble at school for being a bully.

[Child] seems to have a complete lack of care/interest in family/school and has recently been involved in cannabis taking, running away from home on numerous occasions and non-attendance at school. Also involved in antisocial behaviour.

Levels of Risk and Protection Associated with Offending in the Case Study Pilots

As part of the ONSET referral process, referrers were asked to record the existence of standardised known risk and protective factors associated with the onset of offending. These factors were grouped into a number of domains, relating to: living and family arrangements; neighbourhood and friends; emotional and mental health; thinking, behaviour and attitudes; statutory education; substance misuse; perception of self and others; child's vulnerability; risk of harm by the child; and motivation/positives. The pilots differed significantly in terms of the levels of risk identified in connection with the majority of indicators within these domains. We have analysed each of these domains with respect to referrals in the four case study pilots.

Living and Family Arrangements

Overall, nearly half (45.7%) of children referred to case study YISPs were living with just one biological parent or with neither of their biological parents. There was no significant difference in this respect between the pilots. Over a quarter of children were deemed to be living in a deprived household, and this varied significantly between pilots. Children in Ealing and Wigan were more likely to be living in a deprived household than children in Birmingham or Lancashire. In Birmingham and Ealing, younger children were more likely than older ones to be living in a deprived household.

Nearly two in five referrals (37.4%) were made in respect of children who were, in the referrers' view, subject to inconsistent supervision. Again, there was a significant difference between pilots in this respect. Birmingham referrers were less likely than those in other case study pilots to identify this as a factor (16.9%). Very few children were identified as being subject to harsh discipline at home (5.7%).

Approximately one in five referrals (19.0%) were in respect of children who had family members involved in crime or antisocial behaviour. There was no significant difference in this respect between pilots, although in Lancashire girls were more likely than boys to be identified as having family members involved in crime.

Neighbourhood and Friends

Overall, approximately 30 per cent of referrals were in respect of children deemed to be living in a crime hotspot area, which is hardly surprising. There was, however, a significant difference between pilots in this regard. Referrers in Birmingham were far more likely than those elsewhere to state that the child they were referring lived in a crime hotspot area, while referrers in Wigan were significantly less likely to do so. This difference is not surprising since the Birmingham YISPs were situated in areas with particular problems related to criminal activity, whereas Wigan referrals came from across the whole borough.

Only 7 per cent of referrals were in respect of children who were living in an isolated location. Wigan referrers were significantly less likely to identify this as a factor than those in the other case study pilots. Nearly half of referrals mentioned a lack of appropriate facilities (48.3%), and this was significantly more likely to be a factor in Wigan (59.8%) than in the other pilot areas. Ealing referrers were significantly less likely to identify this as a factor (30.2%). In Birmingham and Lancashire, boys were more often identified than girls as having a lack of appropriate facilities. The proportion of referrals made in respect of children seen to be displaying non-constructive use of their spare time follows a similar pattern. Overall, 62.5 per cent of referrals were made in this respect, but referrals in Wigan were significantly more likely to relate to children with non-constructive use of spare time (71.3%), perhaps reflecting the perception referrers have of a lack of appropriate facilities in the area where these children lived. Ealing referrers were significantly less likely to identify non-constructive use of spare time as a factor (51.9%).

Twenty per cent of referrals were in respect of children who were said to be associating with pro-criminal peers (20.6%). Again, there was a significant difference between pilots in this respect. Wigan referrers identified this factor in only three referrals (1.4%), whereas it was identified most often in Birmingham (35.1%) and Lancashire (31.7%). In Birmingham, older children were more likely than younger ones to be deemed to be associating with pro-criminal peers. Moreover, Wigan referrers were significantly less likely than referrers in other pilots to identify a lack of age-appropriate friends as a factor. Only two referrals in Wigan mentioned this, as against 39.5 per cent in Ealing, 28.5 per cent in Lancashire and 27.3 per cent in Birmingham.

Emotional and Mental Health

Wigan referrers were significantly less likely than those in any other case study pilot to identify emotional and mental health factors as relevant for the children they were referring. Approximately 18 per cent of referrals were made in respect of children with a condition that affects everyday life, for example ADHD, in Birmingham, Ealing and Lancashire. Just five children (2.4%) were so identified in Wigan. Similarly, only three children in Wigan (1.4%) were identified as having suffered a significant bereavement or loss. The figure was highest in Ealing, where nearly a quarter of referrals were in respect of children who had suffered some kind of loss (23.3%).

Most significantly, approximately a quarter of referrals were in respect of children who had already been referred to a mental health service. Again, this was significantly less likely in Wigan (and indeed related to only four children), but the proportion of children referred who were already involved with mental health services was particularly high in Ealing. Overall, just over one referral in ten related to a child thought to have some kind of emotional disturbance (12.1%). Again, this factor was attributed to just two children in Wigan, and was mentioned more frequently in Lancashire, where approximately two in ten referrals were in respect of children with an emotional disturbance of some kind (19.3%).

Thinking, Behaviour and Attitudes

Wigan referrers were significantly less likely to identify negative factors in respect of thinking, behaviour and attitudes for the children they referred. On each of the five individual indicators, Wigan referrals were noticeably different from those in other pilots. Referrers in Wigan did not often state that children lacked an understanding of the consequences of their actions, yet they often requested that YISPs should undertake work around the causes and consequences of behaviour with the child.

Statutory Education

The figures presented here vary from those given in the national comparison made earlier, since missing data have been excluded from this analysis in order to identify significant variations. Across the four case study pilots, the proportion of children not in full-time education was approximately 6 per cent. In Ealing, however, the proportion is significantly higher, with over a quarter of referrals to Ealing YISP being made in respect of children who were not in full-time education (25.6%). By contrast, in Wigan only one child was referred who was not in full-time education. Conversely, Wigan referrals recorded a significantly higher rate of regular truancy than the other case study pilots. Thirty-four per cent of referrals in Wigan were in respect of children who did not attend school regularly, as against 24.9 per cent in Lancashire, 23.4 per cent in Birmingham and 23.3 per cent in Ealing. In Birmingham only older children were regular non-attenders at school. No younger children were identified as truants in Birmingham.

The rate of referrals in respect of bullying was significantly higher in Ealing than in the other case study pilots (32.6% as against 18.2 % across the case study pilots overall). Wigan had a particularly low rate (7.2%). Again, Ealing received a significantly higher proportion of referrals in respect of children who had been issued with a statement of special educational needs than the other case study pilots (32.6% as against 11.8% overall). Approximately half of referrals across the case study pilots identified difficulties with schoolwork as a factor in the referral. Again, this varied between pilots, the numbers in Ealing and Wigan being higher than those in Birmingham or Lancashire. Wigan also recorded a significantly higher proportion of referrals in respect of children with a lack of attachment to school than the other pilots (51.2% as against 38.4% overall). In Lancashire, it tended to be older children who were most likely to display a lack of attachment to school.

Substance Misuse

Again, there were significant differences between the case study pilots in respect of referrals involving substance misuse. Overall, nearly 20 per cent of referrals were made in respect of children known to drink alcohol. The proportion of referrals was significantly lower, however, in Ealing and Birmingham than in Lancashire and Wigan. One in ten referrals identified a child known to take drugs, and there was no significant difference in this respect between pilots. Only 3.6 per cent of referrals were made in respect of children for whom substance misuse was a central factor in their lives. Nearly a quarter of referrals in the case study pilots were in respect of children being known to smoke tobacco. Again, as with alcohol use, this proportion was lower in Ealing than in the other pilots (11.6% as against 23.3% overall). Only a few referrals related to children thought to be at risk of harm from substance misuse (3.6%). In Lancashire, a higher proportion of girls were known to drink alcohol and smoke tobacco than boys, particularly among older children.

Perception of Self and Others

There were significant differences between the pilots in the proportion of children showing evidence of negative indicators relating to perception of self and others. The most common indicator across all case study pilots would seem to be the existence of inappropriate (usually low) self-esteem (35.3%). However, referrers in Ealing were significantly less likely to identify this than those in other areas. Another common factor related to children acting in a discriminatory way towards others, yet this was almost non-existent in respect of Wigan referrals. Indeed, Wigan referrals show a markedly different profile from those in the other pilots except in respect of inappropriate self-esteem.

Child's Vulnerability

Wigan referrers did not identify indicators of vulnerability for any of their children. In the remaining three case study pilots, approximately two in five referrals were in respect of children identified as vulnerable owing to the behaviour of other people (37.7%). A similar number were considered vulnerable owing to events or circumstances (35.2%), and a third of children were considered to be vulnerable owing to their own behaviour (33.3%). There were no significant differences between the three pilots in this respect, except that Ealing YISP was more likely than other pilots to receive children who were vulnerable owing to events and circumstances (51.2%).

Risk of Harm by Child

Again, Wigan referrers did not identify any indicators of risk of harm to others in relation to any of the children they referred. In the remaining three case study pilots, 17.3 per cent of referrals were in respect of children known to have caused actual serious harm to someone else, and 16.5 per cent were in respect of children who had said that they would cause serious harm to someone else. There were no significant differences between the three pilots in this respect. Approximately one in five referrals were in respect of children for whom others had expressed concern about serious harm issues. Ealing referrers were more likely to identify this factor than were referrers in Birmingham and Lancashire.

Number of Risk Factors Attributed to Referrals

There are 43 individual indicators of risk within the domains identified on the ONSET referral form as being associated with offending. The highest number of factors identified in relation to a single referral was 28 (in Lancashire). As might be expected from the evidence presented above about individual indicators of risk, the pilots varied significantly in terms of the levels of risk that referrers identified. Wigan referrals displayed a lower level of risk than the other pilots and there were no cases in which over 15 risk factors were identified. The number of risk factors associated with offending in respect of children in the four case study pilots is presented in Figure 3.2.

Ealing had the highest number of referrals in which no risk factors were identified. However, very few referrals in Ealing were ever rejected. Birmingham and Lancashire referrals seem to have been assessed as being at higher risk, if a purely additive model of risk calculation is used.[44] There were no significant differences between boys and girls in the number of risk factors identified but, in Ealing alone, there was a significant age difference: children in the 11–13 age group were likely to exhibit a higher number of risk factors than were children in the 8–10 age group. This variation in age difference was not a feature in the other case study pilots, however.

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[44] For an explanation of the different models of risk assessment see McCarthy, P., Laing, K. and Walker, J. (2004) *Offenders of the Future: Assessing the risk of children and young people becoming involved in criminal or antisocial behaviour* (Department for Education and Skills), www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR545.pdf
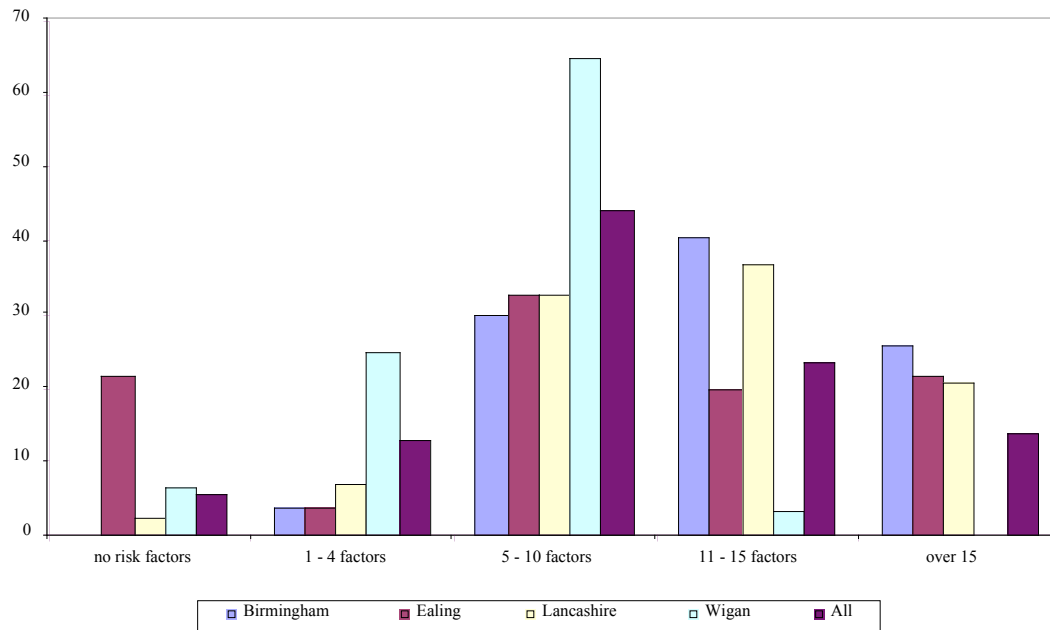
Figure 3.2   Number of risk factors associated with offending identified by referrers in case study pilots

Protective Factors

Referrers in Wigan did not routinely record any positive protective factors in respect of their referrals. The other pilots did not differ significantly in the existence of positive factors in their referrals, with the exception of factors relating to 'ambitions for the future'. Some 31.2 per cent of referrals in Birmingham identified that the child concerned had 'ambitions for the future', as against 7 per cent of referrals in Ealing and 14.5 per cent of referrals in Lancashire. Overall, in Birmingham, Ealing and Lancashire, approximately one in five referrals were made in respect of children who were said to be 'able to understand the problems in life' (21.1%), 'were able to think things through' (19.2%), and had some 'pro-social friends' (17.3%). Half of all referrals stated that children had 'supportive family or adults to turn to' (49.1%), but only one in ten referrals was made in respect of children who were described as 'making good use of their spare time' (10.3%).

It seems fairly clear from the analyses above that the children and young people referred to Wigan YISP had a somewhat different profile, although it is noticeable that Ealing accepted quite a few children with no identifiable risk factors associated with offending or antisocial behaviour. We cannot know whether these variations indicate differing populations of children targeted for YISP intervention, or whether they merely reflect variations in the perceptions of those making referrals.

Expectations of Referrers in the Case Study Pilots

Referrers were asked to indicate on the ONSET referral form the kinds of services they were hoping the YISP could provide. These qualitative responses were entered on to YISPMIS, and we have coded them thematically. In many cases, the types of services referrers asked for tended to reflect the services that were on offer in the pilots. In other words, they asked for what they knew could be delivered. However, as a result, the expectations of referrers did not always seem to be related to the risks that they had identified for the children they were referring. We consider this disjunction later in the chapter. Constructive leisure activities were requested most often in Birmingham, Ealing and

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Lancashire, and rarely requested in Wigan. Few specific requests were ever made in any area for children to be referred to more specialist or mainstream services. We examine each case study pilot area in turn.

Lancashire

In Lancashire, referrers tended to request a wide range of different services. The provision of constructive leisure activities and work around the causes and consequences of crime were equally popular. Activities were requested, it seems, in order to divert children's attention away from antisocial behaviour, introduce them to pro-social peers, and provide more positive and constructive use of free time. The following are examples of services requested by referrers:

> Introduction of positive activities for [child] to try and divert him away from situations which may lead to trouble.

> Inclusion in clubs or groups to make more positive use of spare time.

Work on the causes and consequences of crime often related to a request by the referrer for the child to go on visits to places associated with the criminal justice system, as well as to think through his or her actions. Also popular in Lancashire were requests for family or parenting support and one-to-one work with children to develop or improve their social skills:

> Mother needs support to deal with [child]. As a parent she does struggle at times to understand his behaviour.

Requests were regularly made for drug/alcohol awareness work, anger management work, counselling/emotional help and the provision of a mentor. Just five requests were for help in accessing specialist/mainstream services. In addition, two requests were made for housing advice, and one for respite care.

Birmingham

In Birmingham, referrers cited the provision of activities as their main request, in order to divert children's attention away from antisocial behaviour, improve their social skills, develop their existing interests, introduce them to more pro-social peers, and give them things to do during the holidays. The next most popular request by Birmingham referrers was for family or parenting support. Although the type of family support needed was not specified, referrers mentioned the need to support parents in managing their child's behaviour, as well as in dealing with the more specific problems they were facing:

> Help mother in terms of creating a positive home environment.

Another popular request in Birmingham was for the provision of a mentor for the child:

> Support and mentoring to develop self-esteem and appropriate strategies for looking after himself.

In addition to constructive leisure activities, family support and mentoring, six requests were made for anger management, five for work around the causes and consequences of crime, four for drug/alcohol awareness, and three for counselling or emotional help. Only four referrals were made in order to gain access to specialist or mainstream services. Some referrers made very specific requests which reflected a lack of knowledge about the objectives of the YISP.

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Ealing

In Ealing, referrers almost exclusively cited the provision of constructive leisure activities as the most relevant intervention. As in other pilots, these activities were requested in order to improve children's social skills and channel their energies constructively, to introduce them to more pro-social peers, and to give them things to do during the holidays:

> [Child] needs to be introduced to activities that have elements of being part of a team, where good leadership and behaviour that is appropriate to the situation is modelled.

> [Child] needs activities out of the home to get him off the estate and channel his energies constructively.

A few referrers requested the provision of a mentor. In addition to activities and mentoring, two requests were made for family support, one for counselling and one for a referral to a mainstream service. No requests were made for interventions addressing anger management, specific work around the causes and consequences of crime, or drug/alcohol awareness. Help was also requested for an escort to school for the children in one family, and for an escort to take another child to leisure activities.

Wigan

In Wigan, in contrast to the other case study pilots, the most popular requests for help by referrers did not centre on the provision of constructive leisure activities for children. Instead, it was for parenting or family support work, in order to help parents deal with their children's behaviour:

> Parents would welcome some parenting work as they feel that their present strategies are failing.

> [The family] would value some parental advice on how to deal most effectively with [child].

The second most popular request made by Wigan referrers was for work around the causes/choices and consequences of crime, in an attempt to address offending behaviour. Another popular request in Wigan was for the provision of one-to-one work with children. Several requests were made for anger management work, six for drug/alcohol work, four for mentoring, four for counselling and three for help with referral to specialist services.

It seems to us that those who refer children and young people to their local YISP have quickly learned what kind of support might be given in the locality and so have selected the children and requested interventions accordingly. We are particularly struck by the seeming lack of any expectation, on the part of many referrers, of children being guided into mainstream service provision. For the most part, expectations seem to centre on the provision of diversionary activities, together with some one-to-one work with a child to deal with the consequences of their behaviour.

Rejected Referrals

Overall, some 12 per cent of referrals were rejected by the thirteen pilot YISPs. There appears to be a significant variation in patterns of acceptance and rejection between pilots, however. Greenwich, for example, rejected over a third of the cases referred within the study period, whereas Birmingham rejected almost no referrals. It is possible that these differences reflect differing practices and policies within pilots, but it is difficult to discern these from evidence contained within YISPMIS. Non-

parametric tests do not show any evidence of significant difference in respect of age or gender between those referrals accepted and those rejected by pilots. Moreover, referrals display no significant difference in the initial ONSET score, but only ten rejected cases actually had an initial ONSET score, suggesting that, in most cases, ONSET assessment is not generally carried out if cases are rejected and that rejection takes place on the basis of evidence provided on the ONSET referral form. The data on which our analysis was carried out also exclude those children who were outwith the YISP age range, which might have affected the patterns of rejection.

We have no data which enable us to examine whether pilots rejected referrals because YISP was simply not the right kind of intervention. For the most part, referrals appear to have been accepted unless the child was in the wrong age range or lived outside the YISP catchment area. The need to attempt to reach targets set by the YJB may well have meant that all comers were welcome and that pilots could not afford to adopt rigid criteria which may have resulted in even fewer referrals being received. One co-ordinator reflected on the situation that could arise if referrals were routinely rejected: in her view, referrers would simply not bother to refer in future, and all respect for YISPs would be lost. The acceptance of all referrals, however, often meant that some were not appropriate for the YISP:

> There have been cases at the soft end, where we feel 'What are we involved for?', but others where the issues are so serious that CAMHS or social services are needed. (YISP keyworker)

The kinds of cases considered to be inappropriate by the YISPs fell into two categories, as the previous comment indicates:

1. Children with a low risk of offending: cases which failed to meet the risk threshold (e.g. children in need of welfare intervention).

2. Children with a very high risk of offending: cases with evidence of chronic and complex mental health, educational and welfare needs which were beyond the remit of YISP. Sometimes, these children meet the YISP eligibility criteria because they are at high risk of offending but their behaviour is so serious and persistent that it is unrealistic to regard early intervention within a preventative agenda as appropriate.

The feeling was that high risk children had often had a range of interventions from a range of agencies prior to YISP referral, and that other services had done all they could to help the children, so they had referred them to a YISP. Obviously, these very entrenched cases do not appear to be appropriate for the YISP programme, which focuses on intervening early rather than coming in late in the day when everything else has failed to address the child's behaviour. Moreover, we were told that these very high risk children are particularly difficult to engage with and draw into a YISP.

In some areas, YISP staff felt that they had been used as a 'dumping ground' for hard cases which the statutory agencies had not been able to handle. On occasion, the YISP had been used as a 'back-up' service or as a 'bolt-on' to other services, and some agencies had referred children to YISP as part of their own exit strategy from a family. The YISPs felt that dealing with these inappropriate referrals had at times made relationships with some statutory agencies quite difficult. Staff in YISPs have had to point out that YISP is not a substitute for statutory provision but exists as a unique programme with a clear set of objectives, which includes getting children into mainstream services.

As YISPs have evolved they have tended to become more selective about which referrals are appropriate, tightening their gatekeeping and verification procedures. Many YISPs reviewed their referrals during our evaluation period and attempted to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals. While a number of strategies were in place in many YISPs to increase referrals and reduce inappropriate referrals, keyworkers recognised that it is very difficult to identify, target and predict the young people who are at most risk of offending and for whom YISP intervention is most appropriate.

Nevertheless, YISP keyworkers appeared to be firm believers in the concept of YISP, sharing a vision that early intervention can prevent children from becoming persistent offenders. They also believed in the value of the interventions YISPs offer.

Clearly YISPs cannot do all the work with young people, however, and many YISP staff would have liked other agencies to get more involved with the preventative work. At the end of our evaluation, YISPs were still trying to ensure that referrals were appropriate and that YISPs maintain a clearly defined role as a preventative service. All the YISPs experienced a steep learning curve in the early years of the YISP programme and not all the pilots had found their place within the plethora of other local initiatives. Staff in YISPs often found it difficult to be driven by YJB targets when they were still attempting to ensure that they could identify and target the appropriate client groups. The YISP teams vary in size, composition and skills-mix, so they inevitably target children to whom they can offer appropriate services.

Parent/Carer Expectations of YISPs

In order to discover what families and keyworkers expected of YISPs, we turn now to the qualitative data derived from research interviews. During our time 1 interviews with parents/carers[45] in our case study areas we explored with them their thoughts about their child being referred to the local YISP, and asked them to tell us what they had hoped the referral would achieve. Although we intended to conduct the time 1 interviews as soon as possible after the case had been accepted by the YISP once research consent had been obtained, it was often difficult to find out when the case had been considered. Furthermore, on many occasions, we did not receive research consent forms from the YISP co-ordinators until some considerable time after referrals had been received. This meant that some of our first interviews with parents did not take place until some time had passed and their memories of the referral were either hazy or coloured by events and YISP interventions since the referral. There was a limit to the extent of the probing we could do to prod parents' memories and we had to make a judgement about how far we could explore their initial expectations. Nevertheless, the interviews with those who had clear recall of what was happening when the referral was made and what they wanted from YISP involvement reveal some interesting variations.

Reasons for Referral

Most of the parents interviewed told us that their child had been referred to YISP by a local agency such as social services. A minority of parents said that the youth offending team or a police officer had made the referral. Only one parent could not remember who had referred her child to the YISP. Two parents said they had made the referral themselves: one had heard about YISP from someone in CAMHS, and the other had been told about YISP by an educational adviser from a voluntary organisation. The first of these two parents told us:

> I rang [CAMHS] and I was in tears. I was desperate for help. And they said, 'Have you ever heard of YISP?' And I said 'No'. And she said, 'They deal with kids who are in danger of running into problems with the legal system.' So I said, 'That's brilliant'… And then the policeman came round … after the stone-throwing incident … And I said to the policeman, 'Have you ever heard of YISP?'… and, bless him, he rang up a few days later and said he'd found out about YISP and gave me their phone number and I rang them. (mother of Ian, aged 8)[46]

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[45] In this chapter and following chapters, for ease of reading we refer to parents when talking about interviews with parents and carers, unless it is particularly significant to make the distinction between them.
[46] All names of children have been changed to protect their identity.

The YISP referrals relating to our interview sample fell into two broad categories:

1. Referrals made by agencies who had approached parents to suggest a YISP referral.

2. Referrals made by agencies (either directly or indirectly) after having been approached by a parent expressing concerns about their child.

Parents in the first category usually believed that their child's worsening behaviour in school, at home or in the community had triggered the referral to the YISP:

> Because of his behaviour Gavin was having a lot of trouble at school… a lot of children kept calling him fat – you know, because of his weight and stuff like that. So people are calling him [names] and he's just retaliating, you know what I mean. He don't think about just walking away … he hits them and he starts fighting … So, it's all escalating for him really … Gavin's got a bad attitude with teachers as well. (mother of Gavin, aged 10, referred by the school)

> Zac was throwing stones outside…shouting abuse at people … throwing things around in the library … getting banned from [the supermarket] … standing on roofs throwing stones off, and it were getting him in trouble even though it were just trivial stuff … they were going to kick him out of school … because he was wagging it all the time. (mother of Zac, aged 11, referred by the police)

Rarely did parents mention a specific incident that had triggered the referral but rather they talked about an accumulation of incidents, which is consistent with the findings from YISPMIS data. Occasionally, however, parents did refer to one particular event or offence which had led to the referral to YISP:

> She smacked a teacher across the face. Then she smacked a dinner lady in the face … And then it's all come out she's been shoplifting the last three or four months. Every morning, going to school, where she's nicking bottles of WKD, cans of lager, condoms. (father of Sophie, aged 12, referred by the school)

Referrals in the second category, which had been reactive, followed approaches from parents or when agencies themselves had no appropriate services to offer the family. The parents we interviewed had asked for help with a variety of often complex and interrelated problems relating to the child's education, family relationships, antisocial behaviour, or the child's emotional and mental health. Often, the call for help had been triggered by what was perceived to be a crisis:

> Briefly, Logan's been a little shit since he's been born basically … with anger, temper, not doing well at school … We had to take him out of junior school because he wasn't getting on well there … he was disruptive in class … and over the last few months it's come to a head when he was really losing his temper badly in the house. He beat his brothers up constantly … he's a complete bully. But he started to turn on me … he was being abusive and aggressive towards me and he did actually physically harm me and bruised me … and that was the end of the line. I couldn't take no more, so I went to the school and spoke to [the school liaison officer] and I said, 'Please help. I need some help for Logan before he destroys the family …' and that's how we got involved with it [YISP] … He was mixing with the wrong people. These are the kids he was going on about that do the drugs, do the burglaries. (mother of Logan, aged 12, referred by school liaison police officer)

Other parents described how the problems were ongoing and unremitting and that they had sought help out of sheer desperation:

> I asked for help, 'cos I didn't know where else to turn you see with John … [We think he's got] ADHD. He doesn't seem to understand danger and he was doing a lot of dangerous things. His whole behaviour towards me was very negative – well towards everybody, really, even his peers, you know … he still doesn't know how to play. He gets violent, you know, he gets frustrated – doesn't realise …

when he hits out that he's actually doing damage, whether it's just a smack or whatever – you can't seem to get him to understand that. He's very Jekyll-and-Hyde … I had to shout at him through the window, 'cos he held a kerb stone over a little girl's head. I'm not saying he was doing it deliberately – he was threatening, whether he realised the consequences … (mother of John, aged 8, referred by the school)

It is clear from our interviews that many parents were at their wits' end, trying to cope with a child who was causing a variety of stresses, and desperate for someone to do something which would help them as well as help the child. In these circumstances parents were likely to have high expectations that whichever agency is involved the staff will take action and address the problem. Many parents mentioned that their child had ADHD, and we have become aware that children with this kind of disorder were often referred to YISP. This raises interesting questions about whether this is the most appropriate referral avenue for these children.

Not surprisingly, all the parents and carers interviewed said that they were happy for their children to participate in the YISP and gave their consent willingly. Because many of them were actively seeking help, they were grateful for any help that was subsequently offered. As we will see, however, not all these parents were prepared to offer active support to their child once YISP had accepted the referral. Some parents clearly wanted someone to relieve them of the stresses associated with managing very difficult and disruptive behaviour. Beyond wanting help with a crisis, some parents had little idea what YISP might offer.

When parents did have expectations of YISP, these were often expressed in terms of there being activities or interventions (such as one-to-one support) which would be offered to the child. The reference to interventions that would keep children 'off the streets' was repeated by many parents. They associated their children being 'on the streets' with their 'becoming bored' and 'getting into trouble'. So the expectation that YISP would make activities available after school and during school holidays was driven by the parents' desire to keep their children active in a constructive way:

I saw it as a playgroup for kids … I was going to social services 'cos [the children] were really upset [about a domestic violence situation] and everything, and they said the best thing for them to do is to go and play football and everything in the holidays so they're not bored, so they got in touch with youth offenders [sic]. (mother of Ken, aged 10, referred by Social Services)

[The head teacher] just said that there's a programme called [YISP] and it basically gets them off the streets and gives them something to do, instead of them getting in with the wrong crowd. She said we should try that and she put our name forward and we got accepted ... That's how I heard about it. (mother of Nick, aged 11)

Occasionally parents saw diversionary activities as being just part of the solution, however. A few parents said that they hoped the activities would also offer their children the opportunity to meet new, and by implication more suitable, friends, and to improve their social skills. Some parents, however, were very worried that their children might meet unsuitable friends through YISP activities since those taking part would also be exhibiting antisocial behaviour or getting into trouble. Initially, however, some parents had hoped that new acquaintances might relieve existing peer pressure.

While activities might help to keep children off the streets, some parents also hoped that YISP would find out what was causing their child to behave badly or get into trouble and then do something to change the behaviour. These parents were hoping that individualised support would be given to their child. Parents occasionally referred to sessions on anger management, drugs education or the consequences of crime.

Support for Parents

The family is an important domain in a child's life and a myriad of risk factors are associated with family life. It is obvious from the comments of parents and carers that most, if not all, of those to whom we spoke were extremely anxious about their child's behaviour and concerned that things were frequently not going well at home. Part of the focus for YISPs is on supporting parents and some of the interventions are directed at helping parents, very much in line with the Government's current agenda. Many described the stress and upset their child's behaviour was causing within their daily lives and within the family. Some mothers admitted to feeling depressed and embarrassed about their child's problems, and some parents said that they felt as if they were a failure. Some parents had tried to access mainstream services such as social services and CAMHS, and frequently felt let down by their apparent failure to respond. Comments such as 'I can't take much more of this' reflected parents' sense that they had done their best to seek help and that the only option left might be for their child to be taken into care – a few mentioned 'boot camps'. Others wondered if residential care might make things worse, rather than better, which heightened their feelings of despair. Some parents remained determined to leave no stone unturned until they had found help, and some said they had been searching for help for years, often since their child had been a toddler. We found that parents endorsed the principle of early intervention, but, ironically, had found it impossible to find anyone who would intervene early. Ian's parents recounted:

> *Mother*. I have been in bits … and I have said this [to various professionals] till I'm blue in the face, Ian could kill somebody. Completely innocently. The stones that were being thrown at school … If that had happened to hit a moving car … and it would have been completely innocently meant. The tenth anniversary of the Bulger case … I was terrified because I could see Ian getting drawn into something like that…

> *Father*. We've mentioned that in the discussions we've had with various people, he could well be the next Jamie Bulger waiting to happen. In all innocence.

> *Mother*. With no malicious intent at all.

> *Father*. He's the most caring child you could ever wish to meet but … he loves taking other children under his wing and nurturing them …

> *Mother*. At other times, he's so volatile we just don't know what he's going to end up doing. Somebody'll suggest something … He can't rationalise reality … I used to get so angry with him when he was younger …

> *Father*. And a lot of the stuff that's on television … he'll watch something like James Bond, or Batman or Superman, and think it's real life …

> *Mother*. That's why we're pushing for Ian now because I feel that … as he gets older we are losing him. The older he gets the harder it will get … the problems that they have are decreasing but the magnitude is growing … That's why we feel time is running out.

What is striking in the above exchange was the concern of these parents that their young son, aged 8, might commit a very serious offence, even murder, if help was not forthcoming. This child certainly seemed to have fallen through various nets by the time he was referred to a YISP at the age of eight. By this time, his parents were wanting help with deep-seated and complex problems connected with his behaviour, and were certainly ready for support for themselves after years of worry. This need for support was acknowledged by a number of other parents. Parents were wanting someone to address their child's problems and to resolve other difficulties in their families' lives. We detected that expectations of YISPs ranged from the provision of diversionary activities for troubled and troublesome children to hopes that YISP interventions could tackle wide-ranging and deep-seated problems and provide direct services for children, parents and siblings. Implicit in many parents'

comments was a belief that antisocial and offending behaviour could only be reduced if YISPs addressed the underlying issues and got to the causes of their child's behaviour problems.

The Expectations of Children and Young People

By the time we were able to conduct time 1 interviews with children and young people, some of them had difficulty remembering how and why they had been referred to a YISP. Indeed, we discovered that many children had no knowledge that they had been referred until a YISP keyworker spoke to them some time into the assessment process. It was also clear to us that some of the children had no clear understanding of what YISP was when we interviewed them for the first time, and this was particularly so for children who had rarely seen their keyworker and had never had any one-to-one interventions.

Reasons for Referral

Most children understood that YISP is for children who had been naughty in some way. Most believed they had been referred to a YISP because of problems associated with their behaviour at school, or on the streets, or at home. They made comments such as the following:

> … I was swearing at teachers, and stuff like that … Because they annoy me … [The teacher] was just annoying me, and I hit her and swore at her (Sophie, aged 12, referred by the school)

> … because of my bad behaviour and I was uncontrollable so my mum referred me to YISP … I was … getting kicked out of supermarkets … climbing on roofs … stuff like that … I just did it … it were a lot of fun. (Zac, aged 11)

One girl, aged 10, who had been staying out very late at night against her parents' wishes told us that she had been referred to YISP because she had been 'back-chatting to teachers and being rude' as well as staying out late. Other children mentioned that they had been fighting at school.

Quite a few of the children and young people to whom we spoke said they had not known what to expect from the YISP when they were referred. Some said that they thought they might be shouted at, or forced to talk to someone about what they had done. Laura, aged 12, told us:

> I thought it was just going to be locked in a room where you had to talk to someone and they'd shout at you, and things like that.

Two children had worried that they might be taken away from home and another feared that she would have to go on residential activities. The majority of children, however, expected that YISP would provide structured activities and/or some support from a keyworker or another agency. In one of our case study areas, all the children in our interview sample discussed their expectations of YISP in terms of doing things during school holidays and after school, as the following comments show:

> They said I'd do workshops – I don't know what kind. (Stephen, aged 11)

> [They] said I'd do different types of activities – like hairdressing. (Kelly, aged 13)

The activities mentioned by children across the pilots included: football, tennis, cricket, Xbox, dance, drama, cookery, abseiling, swimming, motocross, ice skating, boxing, karate, kickboxing, and 'trips' of various kinds. In only one of our case study pilots did the children themselves emphasise the expectation of one-to-one work with a keyworker. In this pilot, activities were less dominant in the children's expectations.

Keyworker Perspectives

Ensuring that YISP targets the children and young people who are most likely to benefit from YISP intervention has not been an easy task for the thirteen pilots. Undoubtedly, YISPs had to 'sell' their new service, and this was true even for pilots which were building on pre-existing panel programmes. Since YISP is a preventative programme, it is harder to be clear in publicity about who should be referred because potential candidates may not yet have got into trouble with the police. The ONSET referral form has been designed to help referrers target the most appropriate 8–13-year-olds, and keyworkers were generally comfortable with the referral process. Nevertheless, all the case study pilots faced problems promoting their new service and found it difficult to get other agencies to understand YISP's aims and objectives and, most importantly, the eligibility criteria. This was illustrated by the remarks of one keyworker, who told us:

> It can go from one extreme where [referrers] have completely unrealistic expectations of us … it goes from one extreme where they want you to do everything, and they think that you can do so much … to the other extreme where they don't really know what we can do, so they [don't refer children who] could benefit really.

The YISP staff acknowledged that parents were not always given accurate information about YISP and that some were inclined to think of YISP as an agency which would take children off their hands for a while to give them a break. Other parents had apparently had no idea what YISP was at the time when the keyworker had first made a home visit following a referral to the service.

The target given to YISPs by the YJB was to deal with 200 YISP referrals each year. This proved to be totally unrealistic for all 13 pilot YISPs. Most pilots had a slow start and, for many, referrals remained low. Staff in the YISPs suggested that six key factors had contributed to low referral rates:

1. The lack of knowledge about and understanding of YISPs by other agencies, and a generally poor comprehension of how and where YISP fits into wider strategies relating to early intervention and prevention.

2. The lack of support for the concept of preventive services such as YISP at the operational level – on the front line – despite acceptance in most agencies at a strategic level.

3. The concerns of referring agencies about 'labelling' children as potential offenders (and entering their details on a YOT database) before they have committed any offences or become known to the criminal justice system, makes them wary about referring.

4. A belief by YISP staff that the referral form may be off-putting because it is formal, lengthy and asks for considerable detail about the child. Other agencies and parents/carers may be reluctant to refer, as a result.

5. Referring agencies may lack sufficient time to gain consent for a referral from parents and children and so do not bother to refer.

6. The referral form also asks for a lot of information which may be unnecessary if a case is simply going to be signposted on to another agency and not held by YISP, so referrers are reluctant to spend time seeking so much detail if they believe only a low-level intervention is needed.

We detected a number of tensions in respect of how closely YISPs should be identified with YOTs and the police. Some YISPs felt strongly that being identified with a YOT was not helpful in promoting the

YISP agenda. To deal with some of the practical concerns about the referral process, some YISPs designed shorter, less detailed versions of the referral form. One YISP panel was of the view that the ONSET referral form was intrusive and it was not used. Although referral rates picked up in some YISPs, others continued to struggle to get as many as three or four new referrals each month. YISP staff stressed that the need to network is continuous, because professionals elsewhere move on and new staff may never have heard of YISP. In some areas the process of selling YISPs had been hindered by prolonged staff absences or shortages. Others lacked a designated team member who could go out and champion the programme and nurture multi-agency working. Consequently, referral rates in some areas remained very low and the YISP staff in one area considered the possibility of using outreach workers to widen their referral base.

Furthermore, as YISP programmes have been developing we have noticed that it takes considerable time for workers to engage some families and young people, particularly those who are described as 'hard to reach' families. The time taken to work with families in the early stages of the referral can impact negatively on keyworkers' capacity to take on new cases. One keyworker told us:

> What tends to happen is you get young people who have had five or six years of difficulties, five or six years of problems, parents who have been struggling for quite a number of years and are quite negative, or they've been involved with other services before and had bad experiences, so they're reluctant to engage in certain situations. And for them, you need more time to build the relationship in order to be more effective with accessing what they need.

Targeting Strategies and Challenges

Targeting children who are at high risk of offending and antisocial behaviour and whose behaviour is causing concern to a number of agencies is not a straightforward task. Although the pilots were all optimistic about the numbers of referrals they would receive, in reality most struggled to reach the predicted targets: ten of the thirteen pilots recorded fewer than 100 referrals in a period of 21 months. The evidence would suggest that the preventative agenda is a challenging one. While it is not difficult to identify children and young people who have got into trouble with the police, it is more difficult to identify those who have not but who might well do so in the future. These children may be exhibiting some problems in school, in the community and at home, but are the difficulties sufficiently serious for them to be deemed at risk of offending and antisocial behaviour? Who will be able to identify these children, and will they do so?

Although YISPMIS data are far from complete, it is clear that education has been a major source of referrals. This is not surprising, since children aged between 8 and 13 are probably at their most 'visible' because they are at school or, indeed, because they are not in school when they should be. Problems at school was one of the commonest reasons given for referral to YISPs, followed by incidents of criminal and/or antisocial behaviour in the community in which the police had been involved. As we might have predicted, the vast majority of referrals involved boys, the majority of whom were aged between 10 and 13. Younger children aged between 8 and 10 were less likely to be referred. For the most part, the children and young people referred to the YISPs presented with a variety of risk factors in various combinations spanning all the domains of home, school, community and self. We have noted, however, that there were significant variations in patterns of acceptance and rejection by the pilots, almost certainly reflecting the different practices and policies around the country.

We detected tensions, also, in terms of how closely YISPs should be identified as part of the criminal justice system given their primarily preventative agenda and the concern that identifying potential offenders could stigmatise and label children who had not committed any offence. Moreover, YISP staff considered children at low risk of offending inappropriate for YISP intervention and more suited

to welfare intervention. Equally, very high risk children were seen as inappropriate because of the complexity of dealing with what are often entrenched mental health, education and family problems. So, targeting exactly the right kind of children has proved problematic. The YISPs do not want to become a dumping ground for cases which other agencies have given up on. Nor do they want to be offering welfare support to children who are unlikely to become the offenders of the future. It seems that while there is general support for the Government's preventative agenda among professionals working with children and families, and that YISPs are viewed positively, ensuring a steady flow of children at high risk of offending and engaging in antisocial behaviour has been a major challenge for most of the pilots. Moreover, parents and children have not always fully understood what YISPs are, nor how they differ from other kinds of support. The pilot YISPs developed a variety of approaches to YISP intervention, and attracting the children and young people who can benefit most from their work remained a key issue for them at the end of the evaluation.

Chapter 4   Assessing Risk

Janet Walker, Karen Laing, Christine Thompson and Simon Raybould

As we noted in Chapter 1, high levels of juvenile offending and antisocial behaviour have led to concerted efforts to find ways of preventing children and young people from getting into trouble. Targeting the children most likely to be at risk of offending and then assessing their levels of risk are central to being able to put preventative programmes, such as YISPs, in place. In this chapter, we refer briefly to the literature relating to risk and risk assessment,[47] consider the Government's agenda in relation to a common assessment framework (CAF), and examine the use of ONSET as the assessment tool developed specifically for use in the YISP pilots.

Risk

It is now widely accepted that the existence of one or more risk factors in a child's life is not a particularly good predictor of later behaviour. Establishing causality between risk factors and offending behaviour has been difficult and, until recently, there has been limited understanding about the relationship of both risk and protective factors with later criminal or antisocial behaviour, and about the concept of risk itself. Risk and protective factors are socially constructed concepts, subject to situational and contextual interpretation. Furthermore, the salient risk factors for serious, violent criminal behaviour may not be the same as those for alcohol or drug abuse. As is clear from our evaluation of YISPs, children vary in respect of how they respond to risk, and even siblings who grow up in the same family show disparate patterns of adjustment.[48] It is important to remember, therefore, that risk factors are context-dependent and vary over time and in different circumstances, and the nature and timing of factors influence outcomes. Relating factors to outcomes is insufficient without measuring the length of exposure to risk.

Although simply adding up risk factors is not necessarily likely to help in predicting which children might get into trouble, the Youth Lifestyles Survey[49] of the self-reported behaviour of young people found that the greater the number of risk factors in a child's life, the greater the risk of offending behaviour. But risk factors fluctuate over time and one small change can have an important ripple effect on other factors. Gilligan[50] suggested that it is helpful to think in terms of 'developmental pathways', where a child's pathway into or out of crime might be altered by a single incident or turning point. Clearly, YISPs could provide the impetus for such a change. Interventions that target multiple risk factors may be more effective than those which address single factors.

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[47] For a more detailed discussion please refer McCarthy, P., Laing, K. and Walker, J. (2004) *Offenders of the Future? Assessing the Risk of Children and Young People Becoming Involved in Criminal or Antisocial Behaviour*, DfES Research Report, RR545 (Department for Education and Skills).
[48] Dunn, J. and Plomin, R. (1990) *Separate Lives: Why siblings are so different* (Basic Books).
[49] Campbell, S. and Harrington, V. (2000) *Youth Crime: Findings from the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyles Survey*, Home Office Study Research 126, http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hors209.pdf
[50] Gilligan, R. (2000) 'Adversity, resilience and young people: the protective value of positive school and spare time experiences', *Children and Society*, vol. 14, pp. 37–47.

Protection

It has been increasingly acknowledged that assessing risk factors on their own is unlikely to provide a helpful or comprehensive assessment of the child's propensity to become involved in offending or antisocial behaviour. It is equally important to consider protective factors, which consist of internal assets and external strengths. Protective factors can: reduce the impact of, or exposure to, risk; reduce chain reactions to negative experiences; promote self-esteem and achievement; and provide positive relationships and new opportunities. The more protective factors, the greater the likelihood that a child will be resilient. Many of the important protective factors cut through ethnic, socioeconomic, geographical and historical boundaries, and can be seen as processes rather than discrete variables.

While evidence suggests that many children with clusters of risk factors experience poor outcomes in later life and may display offending or antisocial behaviour, further examination shows that many other children with the same kinds of stressors go on to lead law-abiding and successful lives, irrespective of the interventions they receive. It is commonly thought that some children do well because protective processes help them to develop resilience. This finding has important implications for intervention strategies such as YISPs, because, even though some risk factors may not be amenable to change, interventions which provide compensatory experiences or enhance protective factors can work to prevent the likelihood of offending or antisocial behaviour.[51]

Resilience

While emphasis has been placed on locating the key risk factors for children, it is important to stress that the majority of children with identifiable risk factors do not engage in problem behaviours. Consequently, there has been a growing interest in understanding resilience, which has been defined as

> the process of, capacity for, or outcome of, successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.[52]

We know that children can be more or less resilient depending on the complex interactions between risk and protective factors at different stages in their lives.[53] The International Resilience Project[54] concluded that older children are more likely than younger children to demonstrate resilience, and that adults play an important role in promoting and enabling the development of resilience in children. This is an important finding given that YISP keyworkers deal with children as young as eight and they and other adults might play an important role in these children's lives.

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[51] Buchanan, A. and Flouri, E. (2001) '"Recovery" after age 7 from "externalising" behaviour problems: the role of risk and protective clusters', *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 23, no. 12, pp. 899–914.
[52] Masten, A., Best, K. and Garmezy, N. (1990) 'Resilience and development: contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity', *Development and Psychopathology*, vol. 2, p. 425.
[53] Howard, S., Dryden, J. and Johnson, B. (1999) 'Childhood resilience: review and critique of the literature', *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 307–23.
[54] Grotberg, E. H. (1996) 'The International Resilience Project: findings from the research and the effectiveness of interventions', paper presented at the 54th Annual Convention, International Council of Psychologists, Banff, Canada, 24–8 July, http://www.resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/grotb97a.html

Need

Little has been said about assessing need in relation to YISP intervention, but we believe it is an important concept because there is often a tendency in all kinds of assessment processes to juxtapose risk assessments as needs assessments. Need can be defined as an individual's, a family's or a community's ability to benefit from a specific intervention. It is often difficult for practitioners to differentiate between children and families at risk and children and families in need. This may be attributable, in part, to the association of the concept of risk in child welfare terms with danger and negative outcomes. When a child is assessed as exhibiting high risk factors this does not automatically mean that he or she is in need, however. Risk assessment focuses primarily on the key indicators in a child's life which demonstrate their propensity for non-healthy or problematic development. On the other hand, needs assessment focuses on the key indicators in a child's life which demonstrate that additional intervention is required to enable a child to reach a reasonable standard of development, very much in line with the outcomes identified in *Every Child Matters*.

Part of the Government's strategy is to enable children to receive help at the first onset of problems rather than suffering from delays and duplications and from being passed between different agencies. Measures were proposed to improve information sharing, integrate professional working through multi-disciplinary teams, and establish a common assessment framework (CAF). A CAF is expected to help identify a child's needs as early as possible and to avoid duplication between agencies. The Government suggested that a lead professional can develop a trusted relationship with each child, ensure clear accountability for each case where a child is known to more than one specialist service, and promote a more integrated response.[55] The introduction of CAF is designed to shift the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in a child's life to a preventative agenda which stops things from going wrong in the first place through the assessment of needs. It should be regarded as complementary to other assessment processes which focus on assessing risk. The CAF has the potential to drive multi-agency working by embedding a shared process, and is expected to lead to early intervention and better support for children and parents following a thorough assessment process. Any professional who works with children and families is expected to be able to undertake a holistic assessment of a child or young person's needs, to help determine the level of need and identify an appropriate response.

It seems clear, therefore, that YISP keyworkers should be assessing not only risk and protective factors but also the child's needs. The latter is crucial for determining appropriate interventions, particularly as not all a child's needs are necessarily directly associated with criminal or antisocial behaviour. Integrated Support Plans should be directly informed both by risk assessment and by a careful needs assessment, thus ensuring that interventions are developed in the light of the assessment undertaken. Different interventions have different impacts on specific risk and protective factors, so the choice of interventions needs to be guided by an understanding of the way risk and protective factors are influenced by intervention strategies. Multi-agency partnership working, which is a key feature of the Government's preventative approach to working with children at risk, can aid service planning and offer a more holistic intervention package.

ONSET

The YISP initiative set out to target the children and young people aged between 8 and 13 who are considered to be at high risk of offending and antisocial behaviour. As we have seen in the last chapter, being able to target the most appropriate children is not an easy task, particularly since the emphasis is

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[55] Department for Education and Skills (2004), *Every Child Matters: Next steps* (DfES), Crown Copyright.

on locating at-risk children *before* they begin to get into trouble. Deciding who is most at risk and the kinds of interventions which will be most effective poses particular dilemmas for professionals, who often rely on anecdotal and subjective evidence – the 'gut reaction' – about problems which could result in a child getting into trouble. Being able to assess risk accurately and to measure outcomes as a result of services and support offered are crucial to evaluating the effectiveness of the programme. Jones *et al.*[56] argued that, while accurate and relevant referrals are an important dimension of effectiveness,

> an effective system of assessment is also needed to ensure that children who are eligible for YISP get interventions targeted to their actual needs, ie the appropriate statutory or voluntary agencies agree to make the child and family a priority for work and help.

It is important to be aware that risk assessment is not an exact science and assessment requires interpretation, which is often subjective. Moreover, it is a considerable leap from assessing risk to being able to predict future offending or antisocial behaviour. It is also important to see assessment as a continuing process. This was undoubtedly the thinking behind the development of ONSET for use by YISPs but our evidence suggests that not all YISP children have experienced assessment as a process and ONSET has frequently been used as a one-off assessment tool at a specific moment in time.

The new referral and assessment process was developed for use in the pilot YISPs by a team in the Centre for Criminology at Oxford University. Known as ONSET, the new tool has been used by pilot YISPs since autumn 2003, and research has been conducted by the Oxford team in order to validate ONSET in parallel with our national evaluation of YISPs. During this period, the ONSET suite of forms has been modified as a result of Oxford's work and feedback they received from pilots. The basic design of the suite is unchanged, however, so modifications are unlikely to have impacted on our findings.

The ONSET is the only specifically designed tool in use in early intervention/prevention programmes. Training was given to all YISP staff in the use of ONSET and members of the Newcastle research team also attended ONSET training. In order to fit with the YISP process, ONSET includes:

- a referral form (which can aid verification of suitability)

- a pro-forma for parental and child consent

- a standardised assessment form

- a self-assessment questionnaire for children, entitled *Over To You*

- a self-assessment *Over To You* questionnaire for parents/carers

- mid-way review

- closure review

The referral form is a comprehensive document which seeks information about the child being referred, the child's family, the child's educational details, the involvement of statutory services, the child's criminal or offending history, and reasons for the referral. It contains a list of potential risk and protective factors that might apply to the child being referred. The referrer is expected to ensure that both a parent/carer and the child consent to the referral being made to a YISP.

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[56] ibid., p. 6.

When the referral form is received by the YISP, verification should establish whether the child actually demonstrates a risk of offending or antisocial behaviour. The existence of a number of risk factors does not necessarily suggest that the child might offend, so informed judgements have to be made about the possible links between the factors identified and future behaviour. When a referral has been verified, the referral form should be passed to a keyworker for detailed ONSET assessment. The assessment document is more substantive than the referral form. Fuller details are required about behaviour and other aspects of the child's life. Each section has to be given a rating which indicates the extent to which there is a likelihood of offending or antisocial behaviour on the part of the child in the future. In other words, the keyworker has to make a judgement about the link between the problems identified and the child's future offending behaviour. This is very important because it draws the distinction between the existence of risk factors and problems and the likelihood of them leading to criminal behaviour. A scale of 0–4 is used to rate each section as being relevant to further offending. The scores are delineated as follows:

0   No association.

1   Slight, occasional or limited indirect association.

2   Moderate but definite association (direct or indirect). Tends to become offending-related when combined with other factors.

3   Quite strongly associated. Normally a direct link. Relevant to most types/occasions of child's offending or serious antisocial behaviour.

4   Very strongly associated. Clearly and directly linked to any offending/antisocial behaviour by the child. A dominant factor in any cluster of behaviour-related problems.
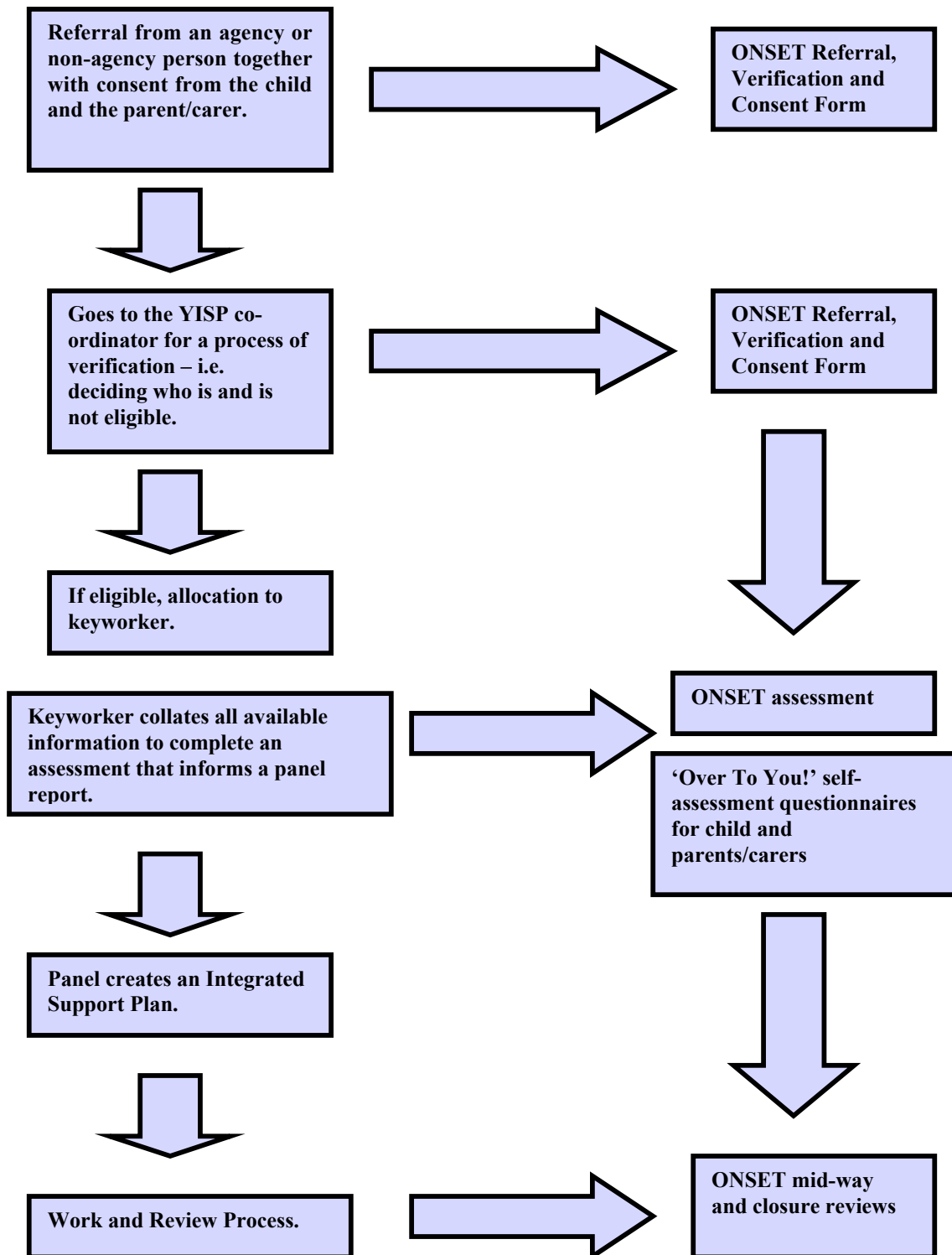
As well as assessing problems it is equally important to assess the protective factors for each child. A summary section at the end of the assessment document provides an opportunity for the keyworker to bring all the information together and identify the key factors which need to be addressed during YISP intervention and any steps or referrals to other agencies which need to be undertaken immediately. During the completion of ONSET assessment, keyworkers have the option of using the *Over To You* self-completion questionnaires which allow an opportunity for parents and the child to answer questions from their own point of view. A further form which documents the child's risk of serious harm should be completed by the keyworker if a child is thought to pose a risk of serious harm to another person. It highlights serious harm issues and records evidence for the YISP file and for the development of the ISP.

The ONSET referral form, and to a greater extent the assessment document, were designed to provide the evidence about each child accepted by a YISP, which could both guide subsequent panel discussions and the development of a tailored ISP and enable measures of change to be recorded at a later stage in the intervention (See Figure 4.1). Clearly, the assessment can stand alone as a working tool, but its primary use is in measuring and assessing outcomes. It is vital, therefore, for reviews to be undertaken during the course of and at the termination of YISP intervention.

Midway reviews allow for modifications to be made to the ISP if necessary and for the extent to which the risk and protective factors are still applicable to be reconsidered. Importantly, a midway review can discern how well the child and family have engaged with YISP intervention, ascertain whether services promised have been delivered and note any difficulties encountered, consider whether there have been improvements in the child's behaviour/performance (e.g. at school), and rescore the sections from the original assessment. The ONSET guidance suggests that the midway review might indicate that the scores may have worsened as the keyworker finds out more about the child and reassesses levels of risk. The closure summary should be completed at the end of YISP intervention. It reflects the format of the midway review, enabling tracking of change in all the factors identified in the original

assessment process. The closure review also provides information about the child's current circumstances and about work which is ongoing. All the ONSET instruments have been modified to fit with the CAF.

The Use of ONSET

Referral from an agency or non-agency person together with consent from the child and the parent/carer.	→	**ONSET Referral, Verification and Consent Form**
↓		
Goes to the YISP co-ordinator for a process of verification – i.e. deciding who is and is not eligible.	→	**ONSET Referral, Verification and Consent Form**
↓		↓
If eligible, allocation to keyworker.		
Keyworker collates all available information to complete an assessment that informs a panel report.	→	**ONSET assessment**
		'Over To You!' self-assessment questionnaires for child and parents/carers
↓		↓
Panel creates an Integrated Support Plan.		
↓		↓
Work and Review Process.	→	**ONSET mid-way and closure reviews**

Source: Jones *et al*. 2005, p. 7.

Figure 4.1   ONSET flow chart

Use of ONSET

The final report of Oxford University's review of ONSET is due shortly. The interim report[57] highlighted a number of issues, both in respect of YISP implementation and in the use of ONSET. The Oxford team planned to collect ONSET forms from each of the thirteen pilot YISPs over a four-month period beginning in December 2003. Unfortunately, the Oxford team have been thwarted in their evaluation by the much lower than expected number of referrals in the early years of the YISP pilots, the delays in YISP implementation and the slow uptake of ONSET which was not received by the pilots with universally great enthusiasm. We had expected to base our quantitative study of outcomes on changes in ONSET scores, but the numbers of cases in which initial and repeat ONSET assessments were recorded was a relatively small proportion of the total number of cases recorded on YISPMIS during our study period. It would seem that many of the ONSET assessments collected by the Oxford team were not fully completed either, making it more difficult for them to validate the instrument. Nevertheless, analysis of the available data has shown that education, neighbourhood, lifestyle and emotional and mental health were the most serious risk factors recorded.

Despite the difficulties, we have been able to discern the proportions of ONSET initial assessments that were recorded on YISPMIS for each pilot. There were 1,015 initial ONSET assessments in total. Approximately two-thirds of all YISP referrals have an initial ONSET assessment recorded on YISPMIS. However, we are unable to say to what extent the rest of the cases are missing because these children did not have an ONSET assessment, or because the data were simply not entered on to YISPMIS. A number of YISPs have recorded relatively high numbers of ONSET assessments on YISPMIS, but others have recorded very few ONSET assessments, giving us less confidence in any analyses using ONSET scores for these pilots.

A total of 601 *Over To You* – Parent questionnaires were recorded on YISPMIS. Pilots seem to vary in terms of how often they used these. Some panel areas used them very infrequently, whereas others used them in the majority of cases**.** The pattern of completion of the *Over To You – Child* questionnaire is similar to that of the *Over To You – Parent* questionnaires. There was a distinct correlation between the pilots that had used parent questionnaires and those that had used child questionnaires (Spearman's+0.934; p<0.0001; n = 18). Fifty-two per cent of children had completed an *Over To You – Child* questionnaire which was recorded on YISPMIS, representing a total of 747 questionnaires.

Unfortunately, quantitative data in respect of ONSET review assessments were not consistently entered on to YISPMIS, so it is impossible to say with any confidence how ONSET reviews were used in the thirteen pilot YISPs. In brief, however, there appears to be a strong correlation between the tendency of a pilot to fail to enter data on ONSET reviews and the tendency to fail to enter an ONSET closure review. The ONSET closure forms include a reassessment of the child's ONSET score. In respect of 1,440 children referred to YISPs over the period 1 February 2004 to 31 October 2005, 552 closure forms were completed and recorded on YISPMIS, relating to approximately 40 per cent of children and a third of all referrals to YISPs in the thirteen pilots. Again, there was much variation between panel areas in respect of their use.

Initial ONSET Scoring in the Thirteen YISP Pilots

Possible scores ranged from 0 (low risk of offending) to 48 (high risk of offending) and children were allocated scores on a continuum between these points. It is reassuring to note that there is an almost normal distribution of scores overall, aggregated for the thirteen pilots, as Figure 4.2 shows.
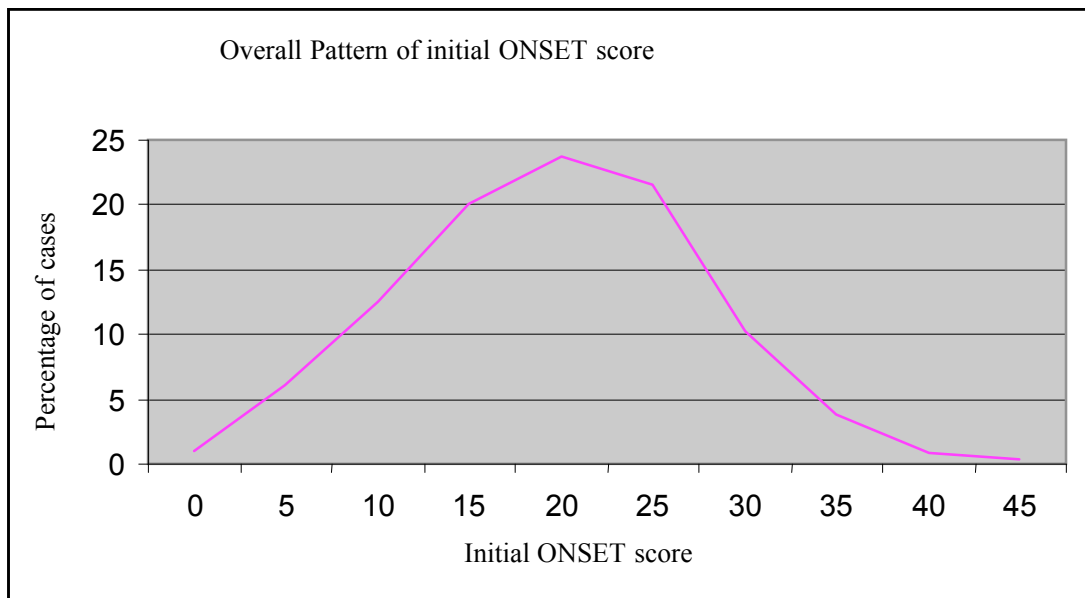
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[57] ibid.

Figure 4.2   Distribution of initial ONSET scores

ONSET scoring varied considerably between areas, however (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). Mean scores tend to sit around the mid-point, yet there were three areas that were allocating lower than average ONSET scores, and three that recorded some very high risk scores. We are tempted to question whether these scores reflect the risk of offending or whether they are a measure of the severity of the problems identified, irrespective of the actual link to offending propensity.

It is difficult to discern why the scores vary so much simply by analysing the data contained within YISPMIS. Nevertheless, we might suggest that these differences may arise from any one of the following conditions:

1. Genuinely different at-risk populations from which the pilots have received their referrals

2. A policy decision by pilots to concentrate their work on children with different levels of risk.

3. Differences in practice when it comes to making decisions about children and their level of risk and to filling in the ONSET scores.

4. Variations between pilot areas in terms of commitment to using YISPMIS, and attention to detail when scoring (leading to proliferations of negative values)
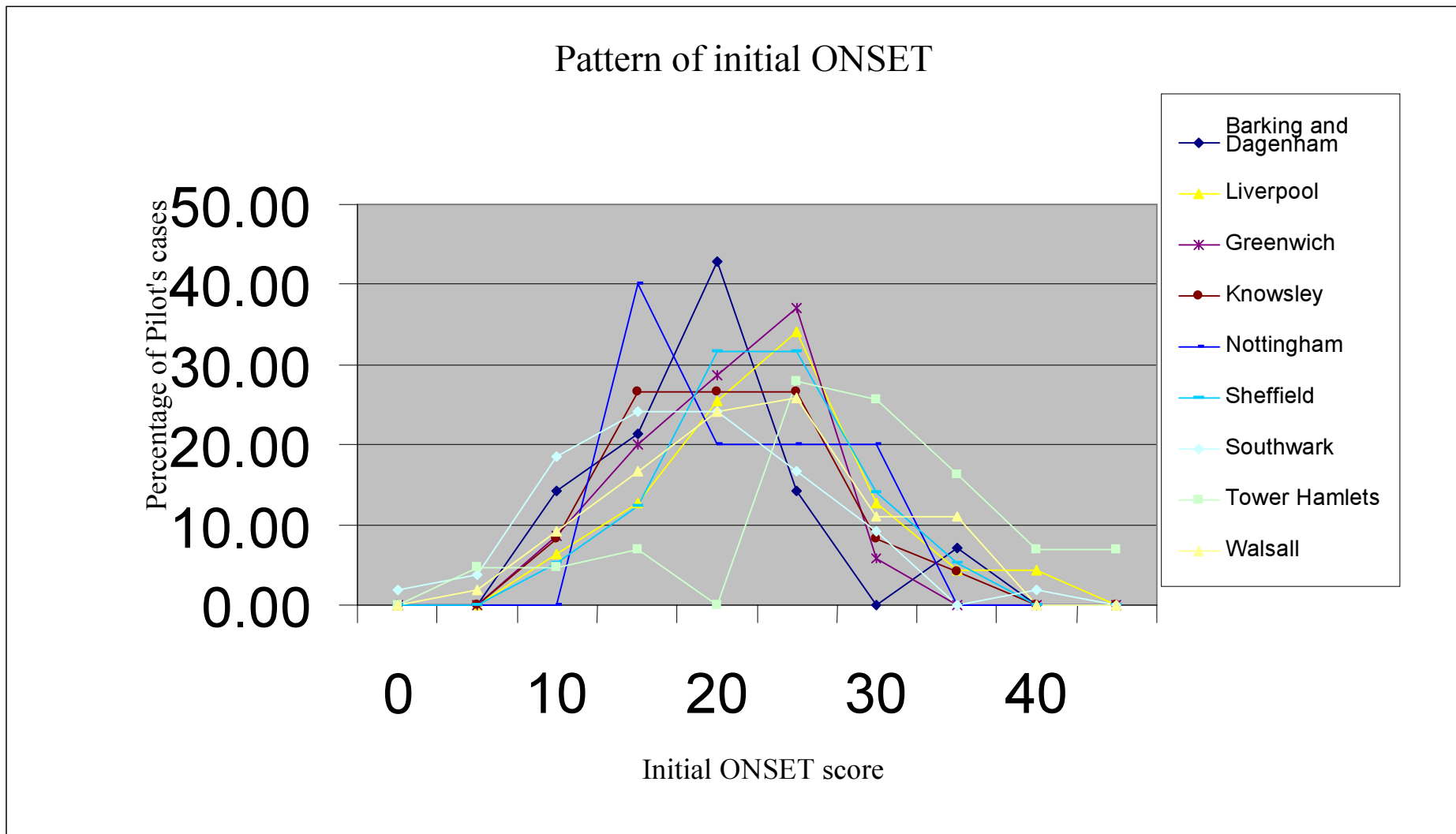
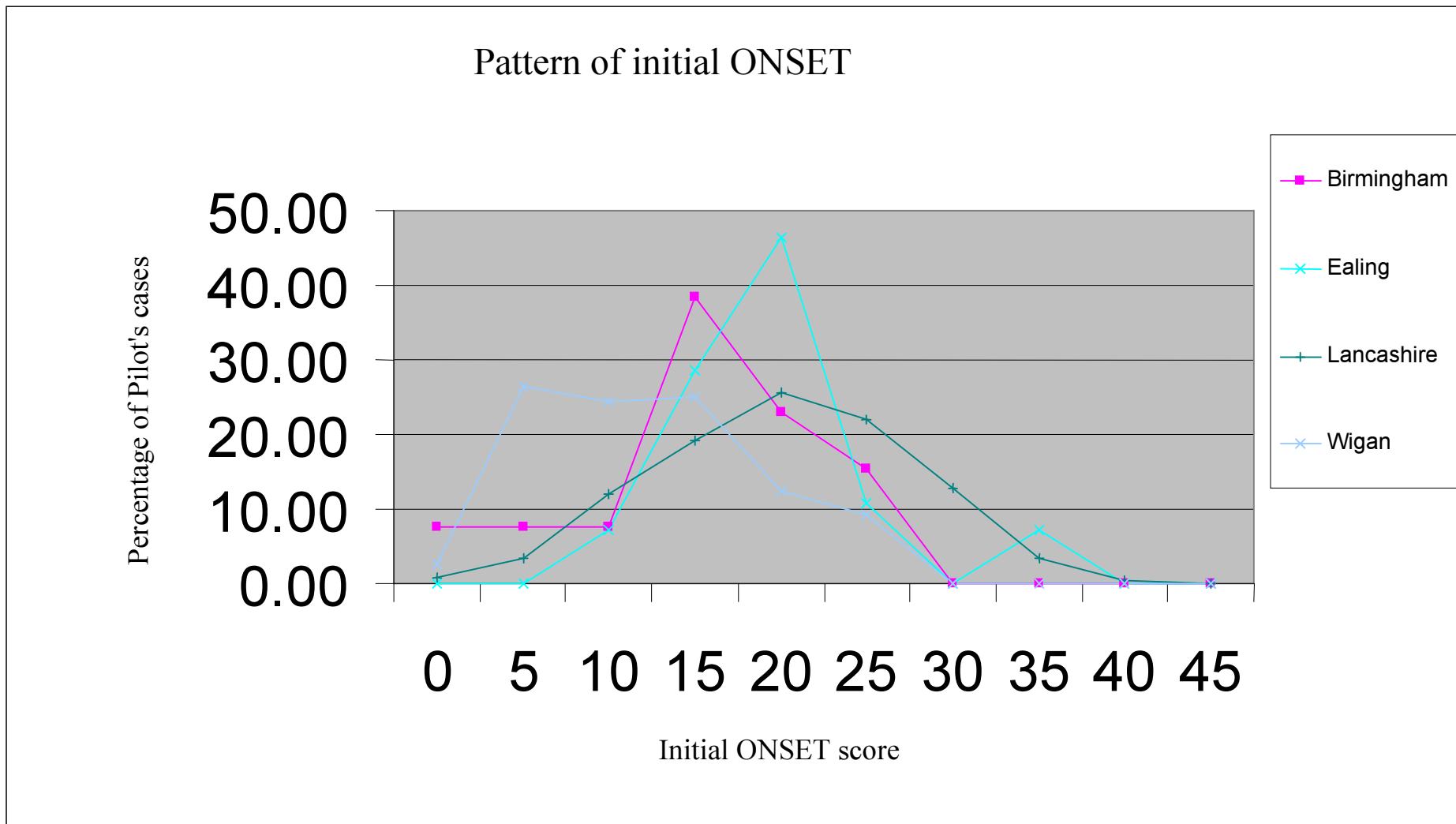Figure 4.3   Initial ONSET scores by pilot

Figure 4.4   Initial ONSET scores by pilot (case study areas)

If ONSET scores are recoded into the categories used by the Oxford team for their validation of ONSET, it is possible to compare the distribution of scores within the four case study pilots. Figure 4.5 shows how the pilots compare with each other in terms of their assessment of risk. Most cases were assessed as falling within the scores of 11 and 20, but Wigan has a higher proportion of lower scores than other pilots. Indeed, no child in Wigan was assessed as having a score above 30. There appears to be no significant difference in ONSET scores in respect of the gender of the child, however. In Wigan older children (aged 11 to 13) were more likely than younger ones (aged 8 to 10) to be assigned a risk score over 20.
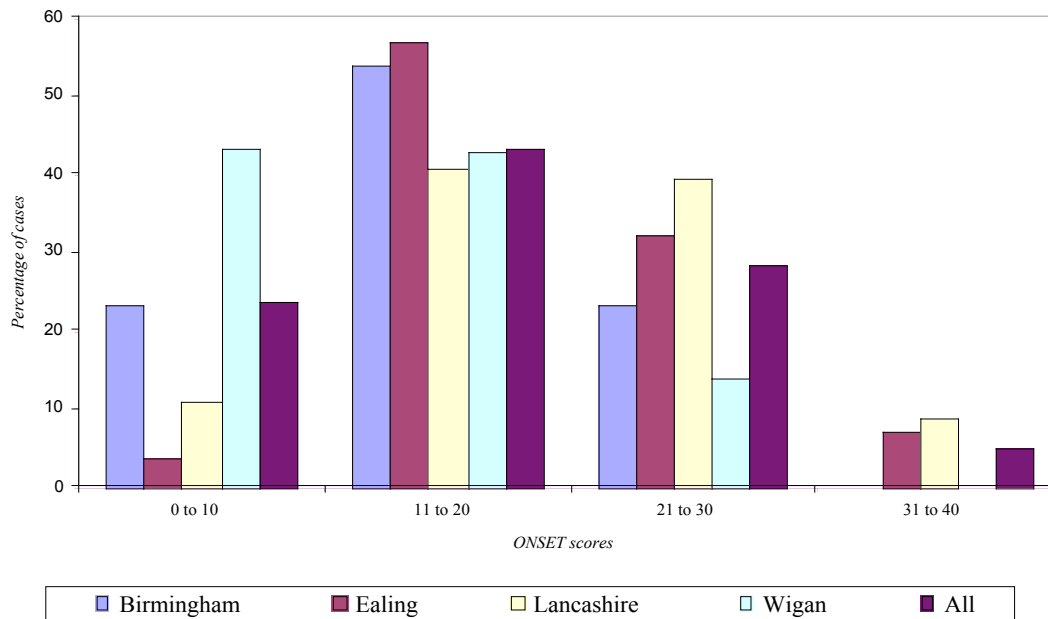

Figure 4.5 ONSET scores in the case study pilots

Individual ONSET Domains

The ONSET scores were calculated from twelve individual domains associated with the likelihood of offending. These domains were: living arrangements; family and personal relationships; statutory education; neighbourhood; lifestyle; substance misuse; physical health; emotional and mental health; perception of self and others; thinking and behaviour; attitudes to offending; and motivation to change. These domains have been examined in turn with respect to scores in three of the case study pilots where sufficient data were available. We believe that it is helpful to ascertain which indicators seem most prevalent in the lives of those children referred to the YISPs. Comparing the assessments of risk for children in three case study areas across the twelve domains of risk, show that substance misuse and physical health were the domains in which children were the least likely to be considered at risk of offending. The majority of children were considered to be at risk of offending in relation to their thinking and behaviour.

Pilots varied significantly in terms of their assessment of whether children had a history of offending or antisocial behaviour. Overall, nearly a third (31.6%) of children had a history of offending and antisocial behaviour at the time of the assessment, but this was significantly higher in Ealing (40.0%) and Lancashire (57.1%) than in Birmingham (13.0%) or Wigan (7.2%). A specific incident of contact with the police was recorded on YISPMIS in respect of 6 per cent of children, although this was

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significantly higher in Lancashire (11.1%). Overall, 4.4 per cent of children were recorded as having a police reprimand, although in Birmingham no child was recorded as having a reprimand. The highest proportion of reprimands was found in Lancashire (7.5%).

There was evidence of non-attendance at school in respect of 27.4 per cent of referrals across the case study pilots. However, non-attendance at school was more likely in Ealing (44.8%) and Birmingham (38.5%) than in the other case study pilot areas. The case study pilots also varied in terms of their assessment of vulnerability, which might flag up the need for a child protection assessment. Ealing recorded particularly high levels of vulnerability in comparison to the other pilots.This pattern was repeated in terms of the indicators of harm recorded by the pilots, with Ealing tending to record higher proportions of referrals posing a risk of harm than the other case study pilots.

The Views of Children

The ONSET assessment process requires assessors to summarise the views of children. The way in which these summaries were made varied between pilots. Some pilots used the *Over To You* questionnaires as a means for reporting the child's views, whereas others, such as panels in Lancashire, summarised conversations with the child. In Birmingham children's views were rarely recorded. By contrast, Ealing tended to record detailed accounts of children's views based on four main themes, including the child's perception of their own behaviour and of problems. This was generally followed by a description of the positives in the child's life and any ambitions the child had for the future. Ealing assessors also recorded children's views about family relationships and their interests. Keyworkers in Ealing also provided very thorough reports for the YISP panel. In cases in which Wigan assessors provided a summary of the child's views the comments tended to concentrate on three main areas: the child's perceptions of their own problems; the important people in the child's life at the time of the assessment; and whether, in the assessor's opinion, the child understood the consequences of his/her actions, or demonstrated willingness to change their behaviour. In other pilots children's views tended to focus almost exclusively on whether they were keen on engaging with YISP or not.

The *Over To You* self-completion forms for use by parents and by children are not a mandatory part of the ONSET assessment process. The forms clearly provide additional information for keyworkers, but they also offer an opportunity for children and young people and their parents to express their own views. The *Over To You*s also ensure that the child's views are taken into account during assessment and can highlight issues and concerns which may not have emerged during the main ONSET assessment process. The guidance indicates that the self-completion forms should be administered before the keyworker has completed their assessment and before the YISP panel considers the case. We found several different approaches to their use. Some keyworkers have embraced the *Over To You*s as an integral part of the assessment process. By contrast, others regarded the questionnaires as 'disabling' and felt that they could elicit better information without using them. Keyworkers who did use the forms felt that they helped to fill in some of the gaps in information as well as empowering parents and children to express their own views and needs. Nevertheless, the impression given by many YISP staff was that they had reservations about the language in the questionnaire, felt that parents and children need to have a high level of literacy, and regarded the questionnaires as being far from user-friendly, and a bit patronising.

The Oxford team are well aware that some YISP staff have considered the *Over To You* questionnaires to be overly negative in the way they are structured and often too difficult for children to cope with. Some people we talked to were nevertheless doing their best to use them positively and to reassure parents and children that they provide a way of saying what they think about things. One keyworker suggested that the *Over To You* forms would benefit from a more visual approach with the use of flash cards.

In total, 221 *Over To You – Child* questionnaires were recorded across the four case study pilots. This suggests that 36.4 per cent of children referred to these YISPs, and just over half of those who were assessed (57.4%) completed an *Over To You* questionnaire. However, there were variations between pilots. One panel did not record any *Over To You* assessments, whereas another panel recorded them in respect of all their assessments. Analysis of responses has been conducted on all 221 *Over To You*s, but the findings should be considered with caution.

The *Over To You* form is divided into several main sections: your family and where you live; school; where you live and friends; smoking, drinking and drugs; your health; and how you think and behave. Children were asked to respond to a series of statements and about the best and worst things in their lives, and what they would like to be different about their lives in three months' time. The consistency of responses across the pilots suggests that children referred to YISPs were undergoing similar experiences and had similar attitudes. We examined each of the sections in turn, and summarise the findings below.

Family and neighbourhood

Children tended to feel safe in the area where they live and to have family members that care for them. It is noticeable, however, that many children expressed an inability to talk to adults about their problems, and a large proportion of children stated that they had lost someone special in their lives. This loss may have occurred for any number of reasons, such as a parental separation or divorce, parental imprisonment, bereavement, older siblings leaving home, or the child being taken into care, all of which can be a contributing factor in negative outcomes for children. Over half of the children indicated that there were issues about a lack of contact with their 'real dad'. Children with higher ONSET scores were more likely to live with people who got into trouble with the police.

School

Approximately half the children and boys more than girls felt a need for help with reading and writing. Younger children were more likely than older children to say they enjoyed learning and working, and to say that they get on with their teachers at school. The majority of children did not seem to be regular truants, although 40 per cent had been excluded from school at some point. Children with higher ONSET scores were more likely than children with lower scores to say that they had been excluded from school. About 18 per cent of children said they were bullied and 30 per cent did not like their school.

Friends

Children's views about where they live and their friends show clearly that children generally perceive that there is not much to do where they live, but that most children are always busy doing something after school. Most children had friends who got into trouble, yet seemed to realise that they had choices about what to do in life. Younger children seemed less likely than older children to say that they lived in places where it was easy to get drugs, almost certainly indicating that older children have more knowledge of, and/or easier access to, drugs than younger children. Children with lower ONSET scores were less likely to say they did things they knew were dangerous than were children with higher ONSET scores.

Smoking, drinking and drugs

The majority of children were not regular substance mis-users and did not associate with people who were. There is a variation among pilots, however, in respect to responses about drinking alcohol. Children in Birmingham and Ealing were more likely than children elsewhere to say they did not drink alcohol. We have no way of knowing why this variation in responses occurs, but it may be related to the cultural diversity within these areas, policing strategies, or the availability of alcohol. As might be expected, younger children and those with lower ONSET scores were less likely to say they drank alcohol or used cannabis.

Health

Most children seemed to be aware of their own health, and did not tend to worry about the future. Most children felt good about themselves, but children with higher ONSET scores were significantly less likely to do so than children with lower scores. Furthermore, many children did not seem to perceive themselves as being good at coping with problems. Girls were significantly more likely than boys to describe themselves as doing things that were bad for their health.

Thinking and behaving

Children often admitted to rushing into things without thinking, and to getting angry and losing their temper. Nevertheless, most children seemed to be sorry for any trouble they had caused and wanted to resolve the problems in their lives. Over half of the children did not see themselves as offenders, and most seemed to know people who would help them to stay out of trouble (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1   Children's views – how children think and behave

Some young people	Not like me (%)	A bit like me (%)	A lot like me (%)	Just like me (%)	All (100%)
Rush into things without thinking	14.0	26.7	19.0	40.3	221
Often get angry and lose their temper	7.7	20.8	19.0	52.5	221
Threaten or hurt other people	33.0	37.2	6.9	22.9	218
Get into trouble because it's exciting	50.2	25.6	8.2	16.0	219
Damage their own or other people's things	43.9	24.9	10.0	21.3	221
Are sorry for the harm they cause	19.5	24.1	17.7	38.6	220
Want to sort out the problems in their lives	15.4	23.4	17.3	43.9	214
Think of themselves as offenders	58.6	26.5	6.0	8.8	215
Can see reasons for not getting into trouble	18.6	31.4	15.0	35.0	220
Know people who will help them to stop getting into trouble	11.8	20.8	19.8	47.6	212

In summary, the responses across our case study pilots suggest that many of the YISP children found it difficult to talk to adults about problems, and significant numbers were experiencing problems related to their schooling. On the whole, the children were not involved with drugs and alcohol, which is not

surprising given their ages. Over half did not perceive themselves as being offenders, but many admitted to getting angry and losing their temper. Most were sorry about any trouble they might have caused and were keen to resolve matters at the point at which they were becoming involved with a YISP.

As might be expected, the majority of children and young people we interviewed were unaware of having been formally assessed for YISP intervention. Many children could recall that they keyworker had talked to them and talked to their parents, and some recalled completing an *Over To You*, often with the assistance of the keyworker. Most children, however could not remember any of the questions on the *Over To You* questionnaire, but their responses suggest that they did not find them difficult. One thirteen-year-old told us that he had 'expected loads of forms to fill out'. Generally, the children and young people seem to have felt comfortable with the process, but few had much idea that they were actually being assessed and only one found the process intrusive. The findings suggest that the workers conducting the ONSET assessment handled it very sensitively, enabling the children, as well as their parents, to negotiate what is a fairly in-depth assessment process without any sense of being labelled, blamed or patronised.

The Views of Parent/Carers

In parallel with the summaries of children's views, the summaries of parent and carer views were recorded differently in the case study pilots. In Birmingham, views of parents were rarely recorded. In Ealing, summaries were longer, and although they usually outlined what parents wanted, they also tended to record how parents described their child and any concerns they had regarding their child's behaviour. The summaries were similar in Wigan, where assessors usually recorded parents' concerns about their child's behaviour, what parents wanted in terms of help, and whether they were willing to accept help from YISP. There were a few cases in Wigan in which the records show that parents had felt let down by other agencies they had approached for help in the past.

The *Over To You* questionnaire for parents and carers was similar in design to the children's version, although the questions were not divided into sections as in the children's questionnaire but consisted of 40 statements about parenting, the parent's relationship with their child, their child's education and the child's lifestyle. Parents were also asked to describe any aspects of their child's behaviour that caused concern, the support and advice they felt they needed, and what they hoped would be achieved by working with a YISP. In total, 181 parent questionnaires were recorded during the study period in the case study areas. Birmingham and Ealing recorded responses regularly whereas Lancashire and Wigan recorded them for less than a third of referrals. For ease of analysis, we divided parents' responses into seven sections, as follows: school and education; monitoring and supervision; parental worries and concerns; attitudes to parenting; parenting practices; help and support; and lifestyle. We summarise the findings below.

School and education

Most parents recognised the value of education, said that they encouraged their child to do their homework, did not allow absences from school and supported schools with discipline. However, nearly half of the parents had experienced a certain degree of difficulty in getting their child to go to school. These difficulties seemed most salient for Birmingham parents: two-thirds of parents in Birmingham had experienced difficulties getting their child to school, as against a quarter of parents overall.

Monitoring and supervision

Although most parents said that they did not allow their child to stay away from home regularly, nearly two-thirds seem to have found it difficult to get their children to return home on time, and a substantial number did not always know where their child was or who they were with. Parents in Birmingham were more likely than parents elsewhere to say that they could not look after their child in the summer holidays.

Worries and concerns

Parents were most likely to be worried about their child's emotional or mental health. This appeared to be a big issue for nearly half the parents. This response may reflect the high numbers of children who had already been referred to mental health services at the time of the YISP referral. Worrying about a child's physical health also seemed to be an issue for parents, particularly in Birmingham and Ealing. Over half of the parents in Birmingham, and 40 per cent in Ealing, stated that they worried about their child's physical health, as against 14.5 per cent of parents in Lancashire and 15.4 per cent in Wigan.

Nine out of every ten parents reported that they were likely to get upset at their child's behaviour, indicating that the behaviour of children referred to YISP was probably having a negative impact on the emotional health of parents and carers. Parents in Ealing were significantly more likely than parents in other areas to get upset by their child's behaviour. On the other hand, over half the parents were not worried that their children might be involved with drugs and alcohol. Over half had some concerns about bullying, however.

Attitudes to parenting

Our analysis of parents' attitudes to parenting indicates that, on the whole, the parents of children referred to YISP were seeking the best for their child. Many parents wanted their child to have more in life, and expressed a desire to have a better relationship with their child. Many parents in all the areas said that they had tried everything to keep their child out of trouble, and over 90 per cent of them felt that their child's behaviour impacted on the whole family. Nearly 40 per cent of parents did not think their child showed good judgement when choosing friends.

Parenting practices

On the whole, parents whose children were referred to YISPs saw themselves as encouraging their child and praising their child when they were proud of them. Nevertheless, over 80 per cent parents expressed some difficulty in understanding their child's behaviour, although they seemed to be able to identify reasons why their child might get into trouble. The vast majority of parents claimed to spend time doing enjoyable things with their child and said that they could talk with them easily. Nevertheless, the majority also admitted to nagging their child to do some things and felt that they were unable to change troubling aspects of their child's behaviour.

Help and support

Significantly, approximately two-thirds of parents felt that they did not have enough help and support, and that they did not know where to turn for help with their child. Parents in Birmingham and Ealing were more likely than those in Lancashire and Wigan to experience a lack of help and support. Nearly

two-thirds of parents said they would like to meet and talk with other parents like themselves. Parents in Ealing were most likely to want to meet other parents.

Lifestyle

Most parents felt that they provided a good example to their child. Nevertheless, over half of the parents admitted to arguing in front of their child, and nearly a quarter to using racist or sexist language in front of their child. The use of racist or sexist language was significantly more prevalent among parents in Wigan and Lancashire, it seems, than among parents in Ealing or Birmingham. Indeed, no parent in Birmingham said it was just like them to use racist or sexist language in front of their child. It may be that in areas with significant numbers of minority ethnic groups, there is heightened sensitivity about using such language.

Three in five parents indicated that they had trouble paying the bills each month. Moreover, parents in Ealing were significantly more likely to say that they had trouble paying bills each month than parents elsewhere.

Support with parenting

Parents were asked to comment on the support and advice they needed as parents, and what they hoped would be achieved by working with a YISP. Responses tended to fall into three main categories: advice for themselves about how to deal with their children; help for the children themselves; and more specific requests for particular services, for example help with finances, help with learning English and medical help. Many parents were looking for advice because they felt that they had done all they could, had run out of ideas, and were worried that the behaviour of their child would deteriorate, as the following comments indicate:

> I am at the end of my tether with [my son's] behaviour, and I feel that I need support with him to teach him why he should be less aggressive and more aware of people's feelings. (Ealing parent)

> I need help with my two sons as I am scared of them going out and never coming back as they both smoke cannabis and drink. I am also scared of it going to bigger things. (Wigan parent)

Parents rarely framed their need for support in terms of preventing their child becoming involved in offending although some parents did mention this, but more often referred to immediate pressing concerns such as encouraging good behaviour in their children, providing them with more skills or interests, or helping them to achieve their potential; and establishing discipline so that children develop respect for their parents, teachers and others.

Parents framed their hopes for what YISP could achieve very much in terms of positive outcomes for their children. In this respect, staying out of trouble was an outcome they wanted for their child. They also referred to the hope that their child would develop better relationships with others, develop confidence, and simply have more to do. However, a few parents were clearly sceptical about what YISP could achieve. One mother commented:

> I don't hope anymore. What is hope? No one wants to know. No one understands. Everyone promises to help and doesn't, how can I hope for anything? No one ever comes back.

This parent had had contact with other agencies that had let her down in the past, and was in danger of losing hope that any intervention would be offered. Parents such as this mother had become disillusioned that services would ever offer help and so were unwilling to expend any effort in

engaging with them. For these parents, it is imperative that YISP intervention has clear, achievable goals and that parents have realistic expectations of what the intervention can offer. One parent poignantly stated that the only thing she was hoping for was 'a miracle'.

During our interviews with parents/carers we wanted to find out whether they were aware of the YISP assessment process and how they had experienced it. We were not able to ask about the ONSET assessment *per se* because many parents/carers had not been aware that a *formal* assessment process was taking place. The only real formality for some of them related to the completion of *Over To You* self-assessment forms. Some were unable to remember the assessment discussions and had only hazy recollection of the early visits by a keyworker. Others had completed other forms since the assessment took place and could not distinguish between them. This may be a highly relevant finding in the light of the drive to establish a common assessment framework. Most parents had some awareness that their child was being assessed for their suitability for acceptance on to the YISP programme but did not seem to be aware of the scoring process. Moreover, most of the parents we spoke to felt that they had an opportunity to express their concerns and a number were appreciative that someone had been willing to take time to listen to them, as the following comment shows:

> I found them [keyworkers] human beings. Do you know what I mean by that? You know – I found them not looking at you like weighing you up, kind of thing, just talking to me as a human and not as somebody who is less of a person to them … they didn't give the impression that they thought they were better. (mother of Jack, aged 10)

By listening to what parents have to say, keyworkers are also expressing concern for and interest in the family, involving them in the assessment process. This is reflected in the comments made by Ian's mother about her son (aged 8):

> Both of them [the YISP co-ordinator and keyworker] obviously care passionately about what they are doing and believe in what they are doing, believe in the kids they are helping… [The keyworker] involved Ian as well, which was good. And Ian never knew anything of [YISP], so I think he was a bit wary, and he didn't know what to expect. But [the keyworker] put him at ease, no problem. (Ian's mother)

When we asked parents if they had found any of the questions posed by the keyworkers intrusive, everyone confirmed that they had not. The questions seemed sensible and relevant to parents, who generally wanted help with their child. Most parents told us that they had not been assessed by other services prior to YISP assessment, although some of them had met other professionals. If they had been assessed elsewhere they described the YISP experience as very different. One parent contrasted the YISP experience with an assessment by the social services department, during which they had felt they were being judged, because the social worker seemed to be looking for faults. For this parent, the YISP assessment had been a far more positive experience. It may be that because parents know that YISP is a voluntary option it does not carry the same fear factor as interviews with social workers can do. The YISP keyworkers clearly came across as supportive and caring, and willing to listen. Overwhelmingly, the parents' experiences of YISP assessment processes were positive, and some parents particularly valued the fact that their child had been included in the process.

Using ONSET – Keyworker Perspectives

During our interviews with YISP personnel we asked YISP co-ordinators and keyworkers about their use of ONSET and how it impacted on their work. Across our case study areas YISP staff generally regard the ONSET assessment form as a useful tool, particularly when compared with other pre-offending assessment tools currently available. Keyworkers felt that ONSET clarified thinking and helped to highlight risk and protective factors. The YISP staff were in agreement that the ONSET assessment, used in conjunction with the information provided by the referrer, can give a good preliminary picture of the case. However, they were less convinced about the ultimate value of the

scoring system. Considerable concern was expressed about how to rate the risks identified: inevitably professionals from different backgrounds and with varying degrees of experience in working with children at risk of offending are likely to score from their own perspective. There was a perception that keyworkers with a social services or YOT background might score risks of offending lower than those with youth work or education backgrounds because the former are used to dealing with much more difficult cases. The lack of consistency in scoring almost certainly points to the need for ongoing review and training.

Some keyworkers who endeavoured to follow the ONSET process and used midway reviews after six weeks (on the assumption that YISP intervention is supposed to be contained within a three-month period), stressed that the midway review scores are a more reliable assessment of the young person's risk of offending, primarily because the keyworker has got to know the family better as time has passed. This indicates the importance of regarding assessment as a continuing process and not taking scores at a particular moment in time as necessarily providing more than an indication of risk. Indeed, midway reviews sometimes resulted in lower scores because of the increased knowledge about the child and the family. Risks may not seem as serious as they first appeared to be.

The tendency in some YISPs to keep cases open for long periods means that ONSET closure reviews may never be undertaken, and when they are done the time period between the initial and the closure assessment is so vast that attributing changes in risk scores to YISP intervention becomes impossible. Without reviews and closure assessments, however, it is unlikely that YISPs will be able to discern whether significant changes in risk have occurred. In the absence of closure assessments, little other objective evidence is available of the impact of YISP intervention. Keyworkers also recognised the importance of initial assessments, midway reviews and closure assessments being undertaken by the same person. While in some YISPs efforts were made to do this, it was not always possible, and even less likely when cases were kept open for long periods of time and staff had moved on.

Keyworkers pointed out that, while overall scores might not have changed by the end of YISP intervention, components of the score might have shifted, for example as a result of improvements in behaviour or family relationships, for example. This indicates that subtle, but positive, shifts may not be captured in the overall score and that individual aspects/domains of a child's life need to be considered separately. There was some continuing concern among staff that ONSET fails to measure the relationship between risk factors. Thus, one risk factor might be dominant in a child's life but the scores do not necessarily reflect this.

Assessing Risk or Assessing Risk of Offending?

Assessing a young person's risk of offending or antisocial behaviour is at the heart of the YISP referral process. Unfortunately, the lack of consistency across the pilot YISPs relating to the recording of ONSET assessments has rendered it difficult to be certain that we have captured a true picture of how assessments have been undertaken with children and young people referred to the YISPs. We appear to have a somewhat patchy picture of the assessment process, with some pilots adhering more closely than others to the recommended procedures and using the full suite of ONSET instruments. The use of midway review and closure ONSETs was particularly varied and many YISPs had not embraced the notion of conducting follow-up assessments in order to examine change over time. Partly, it seems there is a fear that increased scores may be viewed as indicating the failure of YISP intervention.

It does appear that there were differences in terms of how keyworkers scored the risk of offending. We strongly suspect that the scoring may have been the most arbitrary part of the initial ONSET assessment, and YISP staff were aware that not everyone necessarily made the distinction between scoring the risks *per se* and scoring their potential for precipitating offending or antisocial behaviour. It is difficult to know whether children in some YISPs were lower risk than children in other YISPs, or

whether the variations in scoring merely reflected variations in assessment practice. Making a judgement about future offending behaviour is very difficult and it may well take time for the ONSET assessment process to be used in a more standardised manner. We can tell from our case study pilots, however, that a higher proportion of the children referred in Ealing and Lancashire had a history of offending or antisocial behaviour at the time of their YISP assessment than those referred in Birmingham and Wigan. So it is likely that the cases varied between the pilots, with some pilots, such as Wigan, receiving lower risk referrals.

In our conversations with YISP staff a number of general points were made which should be considered for the future. The assessment provides very detailed knowledge, but unless services are available for families there is often a gap between the services which might be appropriate and what YISPs are able to deliver. The assessment process is highlighting gaps in service provision, but YISP staff felt that there was little prospect that the services needed were going to become available or would be developed in the near future. If assessment of a child can be shared and used as a dynamic tool by a range of different professionals, then the fact that ONSET is very detailed may well be a positive factor, since it could be used by agencies which might continue to support children and families well beyond YISP intervention and assessments relating to the risk of offending. The fact that such detailed assessments are time-consuming should not be regarded as necessarily negative, unless of course children and families are being subjected to repeat assessments which are not joined-up. It seems essential, however, that assessments should be undertaken by fully trained staff, irrespective of the agency in which they work, who approach the task with a clear understanding of the purpose of the assessment and the uses to which it might be put.

Scoring appears to be a particularly variable element, and there is a growing body of opinion that this is not in itself particularly helpful or meaningful as it is inclined to represent an arbitrary judgement at a specific moment in time and likely to be influenced by the experience and professional background of the assessor. Assessing risk is a somewhat hazardous task, but one which merits continued investment and continuing evaluation. There is a danger that assessment will be regarded as a chore and its real value underestimated. Repeat ONSET assessments provide a valuable tool via which to monitor change, and it is disappointing that not all YISPs had gone beyond initial assessments, which have more limited value, during the period of our evaluation.

Chapter 5   Youth Inclusion and Support Panels in Action

Janet Walker, Christine Thompson and Karen Laing

Youth Inclusion and Support Panels are described in the YJB Management Guidance as multi-agency planning groups. The main emphasis of a panel's work is on ensuring

> that children and their families receive, at the earliest opportunity, mainstream public services, together with complementary interventions from voluntary and community groups, as appropriate to their needs (e.g. education, social services, youth service and mental health services).[58]

It seems that panels have several responsibilities: first, to ensure that the most appropriate services are available at the earliest opportunity to each child/family referred to a YISP; second, to monitor changes in risk and protective factors during YISP intervention; third, to ensure that the children and their families are satisfied with the help they receive; and fourth, to make sure that children are maintained in full-time education. These are very specific tasks at the heart of each panel's work. The YJB Management Guidance suggests that the boundary of each YISP should take account of and be aligned with other neighbourhood management partnership structures and the organisation of local children's services, reflecting the important role panels have in ensuring that children and families can access services as soon as possible. Moreover, each YISP is expected to develop reporting lines to and/or representation on key strategic partnerships within the area in which it operates.

In this chapter we consider first the composition of panels, the involvement of parents and children and community representatives, and the frequency of panel meetings across all thirteen YISP pilots. We then examine the operation of the panels in our four case study pilots, drawing on the quantitative and qualitative data available on YISPMIS and the qualitative data obtained through our direct observations of panels in action and subsequent interviews with parents, children and keyworkers.

Panel Membership

The pilot YISP panels have varied in terms of the size of the catchment areas served, with some, such as Wigan and Ealing, covering a whole borough and others, such as Lancashire and Birmingham, establishing a number of separate panels within one YISP pilot area. Pilot YISPs have been tasked with setting up their own local panels to include a breadth of agency representation at a senior level and representatives from the community. When establishing panels, YISPs were advised to consider a number of factors,[59] including: the catchment area to be served; the anticipated workload; the roles and responsibilities of panel members; how children and families will be involved in panel decision-making; the strength and efficacy of relevant local strategic partnerships; and information exchange and confidentiality. The YJB has argued that, because of the specific remit of YISPs, certain agencies should form the core membership of every panel, with additional specialist and other agencies invited to join according to local circumstances. The core agencies are: YOTs; the police; social services; health (CAMHS); Children's Fund; and schools/education. In addition to these, other significant agencies are likely to be: the youth service; housing; Connexions; and voluntary and community groups.

This inclusive approach to panel membership suggests that each YISP panel is likely to have a minimum of eight members, and most will probably have rather more. Gathering senior representatives

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[58] Youth Justice Board (2005) *YISP Management Guidance*, p. 6.
[59] ibid. p. 33.

of agencies together at the panel meeting is regarded by the YJB as an important mechanism for ensuring commitment to the provision of services specified in an ISP. It follows, therefore, that attendance is expected to be regular and that panels will meet at least once a month. Pilot YISPs have had to strike a balance between keeping panels effective and having representatives of sufficient seniority to commit resources, and ensuring that panels are not unwieldy and potentially intimidating. Moreover, a further balance has to be struck between the size of the panel and the quality of discussion and decision-making. This balance comes into sharp relief if, as the YJB intended, children and families attend panel meetings. As we recognised during our scoping work, large panels can be intimidating for families and counter-productive in terms of their participation in discussions about the most appropriate interventions to include in an ISP.

Securing agency representatives at the right level – able to commit resources but with sufficient local knowledge to inform decision-making – has presented a challenge for some YISPs. Not all, for example, found it easy to engage police representatives in the early months and others have struggled to involve headteachers. Nevertheless, the panels we have observed in action have managed, for the most part, to secure appropriate membership, although attendance has sometimes been sporadic in some areas. Inevitably, panels which take place in more rural or smaller catchment areas, as in Lancashire, are likely to have smaller numbers of regular members and involve staff who work at an operational rather than a strategic level.

Involving the local community in the development, delivery and operation of YISPs has presented another challenge. Although members of the local community have contributed to other Youth Inclusion Programmes, not all YISPs have engaged community representatives on their panels. The YJB has argued that the involvement of the community on the panel can: enable a community to take responsibility for, and support, their at-risk children; promote citizenship and social inclusion; contribute specific local knowledge with regard to needs and services; break down barriers, and myths and misconceptions about children in trouble; make it more relevant for children and their families referred to the YISP; provide additional leverage (i.e. the desire to avoid popular disapproval) to ensure services deliver what they should, or say they will; and ensure that the diversity of the community is represented within the decision-making and delivery elements of a service, as well as its recipients.[60] Nevertheless, some YISPs decided not to involve community representatives, citing confidentiality as the main reason for their decision. Where members of the community have been regular members of a panel, we have observed that they have contributed a good deal of local knowledge both about specific neighbourhoods and about individual families living in them. These community members have signed up to information-sharing protocols and have been checked through the Criminal Records Bureau in the same way as panel members from statutory and voluntary agencies. Each panel has had to appoint a chair, and while many YISPs have selected the chair from within their own structure (e.g. the YOT manager or YISP co-ordinator), others have appointed the chair from a local service such as the police) or education.

We expected pilots to record on YISPMIS detailed data about when panels were held, who was invited to them, and who attended. These data, however, were extremely poorly maintained within YISPMIS, with the result that we have data about panels that were planned and about who was invited to them, but cannot be confident about how many panels took place or who actually attended on the day. For this reason, the data we present here relate to panels that were arranged and were recorded on YISPMIS, and the agencies that were invited. The number of panel meetings recorded on YISPMIS during our study period varied considerably between pilots. By far the most prolific pilot was Lancashire, but this is not surprising given that it contains six different panels covering the whole of the county.

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[60] ibid., p. 38.

The majority of pilot areas held approximately one panel meeting per month. The number of people invited to attend each panel varied between panel areas. The maximum number of invitations issued for any one panel meeting was 41, for a panel in Walsall. Fewer professionals were routinely involved in family group meetings in Wigan than in most panels elsewhere. Invitations were spread across a range of different agency types. The agencies most frequently invited were YOTs, followed by schools. Unfortunately, a large proportion of invitations (approximately one in five) went to people whose agency was simply coded as 'other', so we are unable to ascertain the type of work in which they were involved. It is interesting to note that 157 invitations were sent to Connexions staff. The age range for YISP falls outside the remit of Connexions, but we know from our fieldwork that Connexions was sometimes invited to panels to offer a service to older siblings. Pilots were often critical of the poor attendance record of some agencies, particularly social services.

In our case study areas, the panels varied quite considerably. By far the largest panel was that in Quinton, Birmingham which sustained a regular group of attendees of around 23 professionals. During our 21 month study period (February 2004 to October 2005) the two panels in Birmingham held 60 panels between them and issued invitations to 1,240 professionals. By contrast to Quinton, the average number of acceptances per panel in Ealing was five. Panels in Lancashire attracted between three and thirteen attendees, but tended to be smaller than in the other areas. Wigan YISP did not hold panel meetings, having adopted a family group conferencing (FGC) approach. The mean number of people invited to each FGC meeting was four, with a maximum of nine and minimum of one for any one meeting. In total, Wigan issued 345 invitations to 98 meetings during our study period.

Involving Children, Young People and Parents

The full participation at all stages of children and young people and their parents/carers is critical to the success of YISPs. Pilots were encouraged to think creatively about ways of involving children and families and to include them in panel meetings. One proposal made by the YJB was to establish family group conferences or meetings within a restorative justice approach. The family group meeting model can provide a framework within which children and families can take ownership of the YISP process and be empowered to develop their own ISP, thereby increasing the likelihood of compliance and positive change. Although many pilots set out with the intention of inviting children and parents to panel meetings, most abandoned this approach fairly early on. Only Wigan among our case study pilots adopted the family group meeting model, resulting in a different kind of YISP operation, but one which has consistently involved YISP children and their families in all stages of the process.

Research Observations and Reflections

Although the YISPMIS data provide a limited profile of the panels, our observations of panels at work gave us a very vivid picture of the different approaches taken in our case study areas. A number of themes emerge from our analyses of the observations of panel meetings and of other meetings held in the pilots at which the YISP initiative was discussed by panel members. We consider these here, drawing out similarities and differences between the panels. We discuss our observations of Wigan YISP separately, however, as the family group meeting model is distinctly different from that operating in the other pilots, and direct comparisons are not particularly helpful.

The Size and Composition of Panels

The majority of YISP panels operated monthly, with between around six and sixteen members attending. The numbers attending most panels appeared to fluctuate, and we detected some evidence of 'panel fatigue' in some areas, with membership in decline. The YISP staff were aware that panels need

to be nurtured, and this nurturing was very much in evidence in Birmingham, particularly in Quinton, which maintained by far the largest panel. At the panel meetings we observed in Quinton between 25 and 30 people were usually present, and since YISP keyworkers did not normally attend panel meetings almost all the attendees were representatives of agencies and the local community. There was a very strong sense of YISP ownership by the Quinton panel – perhaps stronger than elsewhere, although we observed considerable commitment in all the case study areas. The larger the panel the greater the variety of perspectives that can be offered on each case, although some members were likely to contribute to discussions more often than others. Not all YISPs were successful in ensuring regular attendance by representatives of mainstream agencies such as social services, CAMHS and education. This lack of commitment was a source of frustration in some areas. Less frustration was expressed by the Quinton panel, and it is the only panel we observed which also included representatives of the local community, including a councillor. Their contribution had primarily been to provide local knowledge and offer residents' views about crime and antisocial behaviour in the community. The community representative members often knew the children referred to YISP, and this was viewed as a positive advantage since it enabled them to offer a personal dimension and to offer support themselves to the families whenever it seemed appropriate. Other YISPs seemed wary of community representation because of what were regarded as difficult confidentiality issues, but we did not detect any obvious conflicts of interest or breaches of confidentiality in Quinton, where all the panel members were signed up to the confidentiality agreement relating to information-sharing and appeared to respect this requirement.

The larger the panel the more the chairperson needs to ensure that everyone is able to contribute, but the stability of the membership of most panels has meant that panel members got to know each other well, engendering an informal atmosphere at meetings. What appeared to be unhelpful is instability in membership, with representatives attending once or twice and then not again. This was evident in some YISPs and meant that some agencies remained on the margins of involvement, contributing little unless their representative happened to know a particular family. The chairperson also plays a strategic role in encouraging agencies to commit resources, so it is essential that panel representatives are sufficiently senior to do so.

We have sensed that panel members may not always be fully aware of YISP targets, the YJB guidelines and the wider policy agenda, preferring to focus on local issues and extend the panel agenda to include discussions which go beyond YISP referrals. In some areas, panel members may themselves become keyworkers for some children, and it was not always clear where accountability lay in respect of, for example, ONSET assessments and reviews, the development and delivery of an ISP and outcomes. What we have seen are panels which are locally owned and alive to local needs and concerns, at one end of the spectrum, and, at the other, panels which are YOT/YISP-dominated, with little local involvement. The challenge, it seems, lies in encouraging and fostering local ownership and commitment but not losing sight of YISP aims and objectives and their place within a wider youth justice framework.

Panel Processes

Each panel developed its own *modus vivendi*, which is now well-established and understood by the panel members. There were considerable variations in approach, however. Some panels received detailed information about each child referred, much of which was prepared and circulated in advance of meetings. Other panels received copies of referral forms only. Some panels kept minutes; others relied on action points being recorded for each case by the panel administrator. Some panels required referrers to attend the panel meeting to present the case, but we observed that they did not always turn up. Keyworkers in some YISPs prepared detailed presentations, and elsewhere did not appear to have much input. Keyworkers in Ealing also made recommendations to the panel for the ISPs which were formulated in the panel meetings. In some areas (e.g. in Lancashire) the ONSET assessment had been

completed prior to the panel meeting, but in others (notably in Birmingham) the ONSET assessment had not taken place. The agenda for panels in Lancashire was focused on agreeing ISPs. In other panels, members rarely mentioned or noticeably contributed to the ISPs and, when there were no written case reports, discussion tended to be more open-ended and less focused on outputs. In Birmingham, ISPs were not developed in or available to panel meetings, and reviews of progress tended to be less focused on outputs.

While, in some pilots, cases were reviewed at appropriate intervals through the use of ONSET reviews and closures, in others each case was updated monthly, but without the help of any ONSET review assessments. In Lancashire, cases were reviewed at six weeks and closed at twelve. The strict adherence to short-term intervention in Lancashire was in complete contrast to processes in other case study pilots, where cases were kept open, often indefinitely. The YISP staff in Lancashire believed that they could and did make a difference as a result of 6–12-week intensive engagement with a family, and that their responsibility was to ensure that statutory services took over if ongoing support was needed. The ethos in other pilots was very different: panel members elsewhere seemed willing to keep cases open because 'families usually need long-term support' and it is helpful if YISPs 'can keep an eye on the case, even if the child is not engaging in any interventions'. We noticed that some panels continued to monitor cases even after YISP keyworkers closed them. We sensed a real reluctance on the part of several panels to close cases because of an awareness that problems often recur. Some children stayed on the agendas, therefore, either in case something went wrong or because it proved difficult to engage a child and/or the parents in YISP intervention. Measuring the impact of YISP intervention is virtually impossible when cases are allowed to drift on.

Tensions and Challenges

A number of elements are central to the YISP programme. Targeting high risk children is not an easy task and panels have not always been clear about who YISP intervention is for. Without routine assessment using ONSET, judgements were made by some panels on the basis of referral information and what was known by panel members about the family and/or the neighbourhood. Decisions about who to accept and what interventions to put in place were not always made as a result of an assessment of the risk of offending and antisocial behaviour, and in some panel meetings subjective perceptions and generalised views tended to guide decision-making. This can lead to explicit tensions between different professionals from contrasting backgrounds, who may take contrasting views about a case and how it should be dealt with. A dominant caring ethos, evident in all the panel meetings we observed, can also be a double-edged sword: panel members become increasingly 'involved' in the cases and have a strong sense of 'not wanting to let the family down' even though appropriate services may not be available. We observed that some panels lost sight of the focus on preventing crime and antisocial behaviour on occasion and adopted a more welfare-oriented approach to long-term care and support.

Some panel members expressed strong views that the suite of ONSET forms is likely to lead to labelling and that seeking so much information is in itself abusive of children and families. Others found the evidence ONSET assessments can provide very helpful in enabling appropriate decisions to be made about the kind of help from which each child and family might benefit. This kind of evidence can also help panels identify gaps in service provision – notably the long waiting times for CAMHS referrals – and to look for alternative interventions. A common theme to emerge was the fact that YISP children were often below the thresholds for other agencies, so it was difficult to secure support from statutory services. This has added to the feeling in some YISPs that they are being 'dumped on' because other agencies have turned children away or being used as a back-up service during school holidays, for example. There was a good deal of scepticism in some areas that, although agencies signed up to the preventative agenda, they were not prepared to commit their own resources to it. There is a danger that YISPs could be left with cases for which there is no appropriate support available.

The Involvement of Parents and Children

There was a clear expectation on the part of the YJB that children and parents would be involved in YISP panels, but it seems that for the most part the majority of YISP pilots have not followed this guidance. In our case study areas, only Wigan developed a model which directly involves families through a family group meeting. In the other three areas, parents reported that keyworkers had explained the panels to them, but in Ealing and Birmingham few could remember anything about where the panel would be held, who would be attending, and its purpose. More of the parents in Lancashire recollected which agencies were represented on the panel. One mother explained that she had been concerned when she had been told that a representative of social services would be on the panel. However, she had been reassured that it was not within the remit of the panel to take her child into care.

In Birmingham and Ealing, parents and children had not been invited to attend a panel meeting, and most told us that they would not have wanted to do so. Some parents, however, would have liked to attend, and felt strongly that they should have been invited to the panel. One parent said, 'I'd be there tomorrow.' Stephen's mother was even more emphatic:

> I think it is a bit unfair, because if somebody's talking about my child … If it's to do with my son I should be allowed to be there. You know, I'm not a professional but I should be allowed to hear what's being said.

Ryan's carer explained that she would have liked to have attended the panel to find out more about who was running the activities to which she was sending Ryan every day during the summer holidays:

> If I'd been invited I probably would have gone. I do like to know who's looking after him. I mean when I got there [to the activities], there was like these people in jeans and shirts with little badges on and I'm thinking, 'Well who are these people?' Cos you don't know them. I mean they were ever so nice but there was like nobody to introduce you.

In Lancashire, most parents had been invited to the panel, although several felt that the invitation was something of a formality and the majority had not wanted to attend. We were given a range of reasons for this decision:

> I'm not good at talking to people. (mother of Michael, aged 13)

> I'm no good with words. (father of William, aged 8)

It seems that parents knew that the keyworker would be present and trusted them to represent their views at the panel.

Across all the case study areas, all the parents except one told us that they would not have wanted their child to attend the panel because they believed that the experience would have been either, in the words of two of them, 'too intimidating' or 'a bit daunting'. One parent, however, had been encouraged by the YISP team to present her son's case at the panel meeting (which we were able to observe). The YISP co-ordinator had told her that she would be a powerful and effective advocate for her son Ian, and that she was more likely to get responses from agencies than if the keyworker presented the case. The mother said she was grateful for the opportunity to talk when all the agency representatives were together – a situation which had never occurred before in all the years she had been seeking help for her son. She was delighted that somebody listened to her at last, and found the panel meeting both empowering and cathartic. The YISP intervention resulted in Ian, aged 8, being able to access a CAMHS residential assessment centre six months later. The CAMHS representative offered a referral for a residential placement and the mother remarked that having all the agencies together in one place had been very helpful. She felt that Ian would have liked to attend with her and that this would have been helpful for the panel members.

It is clear from our observations in Birmingham, Ealing and Lancashire that the format of the panel meetings would have had to change considerably if families had attended routinely. It would be extremely difficult for a family to be faced with up to thirty professionals at a panel meeting. In Birmingham, the YISPs considered the value of convening mini-panels when families could be present, but no such panels took place during our evaluation. In Ealing, children and parents were invited to panel meetings in the early stages of the pilot, but this was thought to be too intimidating for families and the practice was abandoned.

Family Group Meetings

Only in Wigan do children and parents routinely participate in meetings involving professionals. The family group meeting model used is adapted from the model first developed in New Zealand in child welfare work with Maori families, and involves bringing key family members and professionals together to talk about the issues and to construct an action plan (ISP). We observed five family group meetings in Wigan, all of which followed a similar format: information sharing, family time, and development of the ISP. It became clear that often quite a lot of work had been done by the YISP keyworker with the child and the family by the time a family group meeting was held, and the YISP keyworker was an important participant at the meeting. The meetings were all very relaxed, informal and friendly occasions in which food chosen by the child was an important feature. The child and family decide which professionals should attend and the child writes the invitations with the help of the family group meeting co-ordinator. In reality few professionals actually attended the meeting, and we observed several in which key professionals, such as the social worker or the teacher, did not turn up. The children in Wigan are routinely consulted about the meeting. The decisions about venue, time, invitees and food are taken by the young people themselves. The agenda for the meeting involves four key questions for the young person: Why am I here? What needs to change? How is it going to change? and Who is going to do what?

When the young person has chosen who he or she wants to be present, other agencies which have not been invited are asked to give feedback via the co-ordinator. Parents appreciated the fact that the children were involved in setting up the meeting. Despite being pleased at being consulted, some of the children, particularly the older ones, said that they had felt nervous before the meeting:

> I felt shaky, but excited. (Melanie, aged 13)

> I was nervous anyway because I always am when I go to new places. (Zac, aged 11)

The information-sharing part of the meeting provides an opportunity for family members and professionals to discuss the issues and concerns about the child. The child is also given an opportunity to contribute, although we did observe one meeting which did not include the child because of concerns that he would sabotage it. Our observations suggest that information was shared openly and candidly and in a non-judgmental manner. Children were helped by the co-ordinator to draw up ground rules which were presented at the beginning of the meeting. The children talked to us about the ground rules they had set:

> Don't swear, I think was one of [the ground rules]. Try not to put me down and listen to what I've got to say and listen to what mum's got to say. (Zac, aged 11)

> No drinking for me dad. No smoking, no spitting, no shouting out, no talking when other people are. (Sophie, aged 12)

The ground rules were normally adhered to, and the meeting co-ordinators had done a good deal of advance preparation for each meeting so that the atmosphere was conducive to open and supportive exchanges and there were 'no surprises' for the family.

Although family time usually indicates time for family members to discuss issues by themselves, in Wigan the co-ordinator and professionals rarely left the room and family time coincided with eating the food that had been brought in. Family members tended to continue to chat while eating, and sometimes the co-ordinator and professionals joined in the discussions. When the discussion was drawn to a close, everyone participated in drawing up the ISP, which was typed up and circulated after the meeting.

There is no doubt that the children and their families were fully involved in the family group meeting and had as much time as they wanted to talk about and explore their concerns. Rarely, however, were many professionals present, and the YISP keyworkers were pivotal in providing information and drawing up the ISP. Our sense is that the family group meeting is often used as an intervention in itself – a way of getting family members together and moving YISP intervention on. The YISP keyworkers were frequently held to account in the meeting, being asked to explain exactly what support was being or would be offered to the child and to the family. It was not always clear whether other key agencies were held to account, however. The ISP may contain references to what other agencies will do, but if they are not present at the family group meeting they may not have the same commitment to deliver. Cases are reviewed by the YISP keyworker, and for some children a second family group meeting is convened. There is no YISP panel as such, however, and the Wigan model is distinctly different. The multi-agency aspects are less clearly defined, and since only professionals involved with or known to the child and family attend the meeting there is little opportunity for other agencies to contribute to the thinking or to offer other kinds of support. The primary focus is on helping the child and family work on the key risk factors, which often revolve around home and school.

Parents described the purpose and remit of the family group meeting in terms of their own concerns, which often related to education issues. As Zac's mother told us, the family group meeting was set up to

> sort out about school and everything because he's on a PSP at school. They was going to kick him out of school … because he was wagging it all the time and he'd only just started [secondary] school. … So [the FGM co-ordinator] arranged it so that we could sit down and sort everything out together and come to some arrangement we could all stick to. (mother of Zac, aged 11)

Parents and children all seemed positive about the preparation time spent with the family group meeting co-ordinator, which they had enjoyed. We were told:

> Melanie enjoyed [the preparation] because she was involved one-to-one with somebody and doing things, so that helped. (mother of Melanie, aged 13)

Feedback from the families we interviewed was very positive. Most appear to have enjoyed the family group meeting. We received comments such as the following:

> He enjoyed it – he were dead chuffed. (mother of Gavin, aged 10)

> Brilliant – what did you think of the train track I made? I like it when everybody laughed [at something I said]. (John, aged 8)

> It was all right … it weren't the best thing ever, but it was OK. (Dan, aged 9)

Only one young person reported that she had not enjoyed the meeting. She had found it embarrassing, and she had felt 'got-at'. She also felt that her grandfather had dominated the meeting, while others had not said enough. Most children were hard-pressed to say what effect the family group meeting had had on them. Two responses stood out, however, because the meeting had resulted in the children being

resolved to change their behaviour, although for very different reasons. First, Sophie reported that she had decided she had better improve her behaviour so as to avoid the necessity of having another family group meeting. Sophie's father, however, had felt disempowered, having been harangued by another family member about his alcoholism. He had not felt good about the meeting and indicated immediately afterwards that he wanted to withdraw from any further engagement with social services.

Second, Zac, aged 11, said he had found the meeting very positive and that it had motivated him to change:

> It were OK … best meeting I ever had … I'm actually glad I had it because they discussed what we need to do and then I need to do that and I'll be fine.

Zac's mother had found the meeting affirming and empowering because someone had listened to her concerns about his schooling:

> The way [the school] were treating him … I mean if you get told you're bad over and over again, you're just going to be bad, aren't you? And that's what were happening. Not a single person had a good word to say about Zac … But [the YISP parenting worker] is dead positive and so's [the family group meeting co-ordinator] and they just … I think he's chuffed that they're for him … Somebody's for him besides me … (mother of Zac, aged 11)

Other parents commented on the way the meeting had helped to improve family relationships. Sophie's father was fairly unusual in his views and most parents had valued the family group meeting, particularly being able to meet representatives of statutory agencies in a non-threatening environment. Some parents were disappointed that certain agencies were not represented at the meeting and had not provided any information or feedback. The greatest disappointment was directed at schools. Other parents were disappointed at the lack of response from social services.

Family Group Meetings: Keyworker Perspectives

One of the key factors in Wigan's model of family group meetings is that they are run by a practitioner who is committed to the independent value-base and principles surrounding this approach. While considerable effort is invested to keep the family group model as pure as possible, the model is fully integrated into the YISP. The process of integrating family group meetings with the YISP has inevitably evolved over time. At first, keyworkers selected families that they believed were most appropriate for a family group meeting, but now all new YISP referrals are given that option. Every effort is made to give the young person and the family a sense of ownership and responsibility. Wigan staff acknowledged that the family group meeting within the YISP context is driven by the need to produce an ISP which addresses offending issues and is not simply a family plan *per se*. They also accepted that the meetings have to be more professionally driven than a purer family group conferencing model might imply. So there is a degree of balance which has to be struck to remain true to the model and, at the same time, meet the YISP objectives.

YISP staff in Wigan believed that their approach empowers families and promotes good multi-agency partnership working. The meeting constitutes an informal environment in which family members and professionals can talk together. These exchanges can result in the children, young people and families concerned feeling good about the process. The meetings are non-confrontational, but no one beats about the bush. The focus is on providing an affirmation of the young person, and on commenting positively wherever possible. In addition, the family members can engage directly in the development of an ISP, giving them responsibility for the plan. The YISP staff felt that the meeting helps family members to communicate with each other, and can bring extended family members together. This can

be crucial to effective family functioning and enhancing support networks. One example of this was given by the family group meeting co-ordinator:

> I discussed with [the young person] how to involve dad who is in prison … I suggested he write to him, which he did with my help. Mum was very pleased and it also gave dad a chance to say what he wanted to say. We will have dad's photo and his response in the meeting because he's got a view on [his son's] behaviour. It's so simple but so effective – it also links with the preventative stuff because his dad doesn't want him going down the same route.

There is a belief, also, that the professionals learn more about the family by working in this way. The agencies and the YISP keyworkers also have to be accountable to the families and have to explain exactly what services they can offer.

Although the keyworkers and other YISP staff are very proud of their model, they were able to point to some disadvantages. Perhaps the most significant drawback is the lack of outside agency involvement. Social services rarely attended family group meetings because they were said to be understaffed, and social workers were reluctant to attend if the child fell below their threshold for intervention. YISP staff regretted this and felt that, since YISP cases are high risk, social services should be concerned. Other agencies, such as education, were seen to be quick to refer children, but to be less keen on participating in the family group meeting process. When school staff did attend YISP workers felt that they sometimes had their own (alternative) agenda, perhaps to exclude the child from school. Family group meetings were frequently held in the evenings and at weekends to suit the needs of families, and this could be a problem for agency staff who do not want to work after hours.

Another key issue we were told about centred on the extent to which professionals are prepared to trust the process and whether they regard it as undermining their own work with a family. To some degree, this concern may well diminish as the YISP gets more established and confidence in it grows locally. There were few mechanisms for holding agencies to account for failures to deliver services to families since the YISP did not have sufficient resources to conduct follow-up reviews as a matter of routine. Occasional delays in an ISP being written up and the family agreeing to it and signing it could result in partner agencies not receiving a copy for several weeks after the meeting. This could also cause problems in service delivery. We also noted comments about tensions between dealing with offending issues and dealing with wider social welfare issues. The willingness to go beyond offending issues is fully consistent with Wigan YISP's philosophy:

> We have to deal with a lot of welfare issues – attending school etc etc, diet, mediation, supervision of the child etc etc. There are a wealth of risk factors which lead to offending.

We were left with some unanswered questions about the extent to which the ONSET assessment shaped the family group meeting process and the subsequent ISP, and how onward referrals to mainstream services were actioned and followed through in a model which places emphasis on the family developing its own ISP. It would appear that some of the real benefits associated with YISP panels in other areas might be lost in Wigan, although there is clearly an adherence to the expectation that children and parents should be central players in the YISP process.

Keyworker Perspectives About Panels

We talked to keyworkers about their perspectives of YISP panels in action and some common themes emerged during our interviews relating to multi-agency working, the lack of services, and panel attendance. We discuss each of them below.

Multi-agency Working

All the keyworkers, YISP co-ordinators and YISP managers were firm believers in the principle of multi-agency working and regarded YISPs as an excellent model of this kind of approach. Several made remarks such as the following:

> I think it's a perfect time, not only for us to work with appropriate kids about crime and antisocial behaviour, I think it's also a perfect time for education to get involved and say, 'Right, there are some very early problems [with a particular child], what can we do about that?'… This is the time you want to get involved. Don't leave it till it's happened.

> One of the biggest things YISP has to offer is working collectively We're not an agency that works on its own, and we endeavour to work with everybody who is working with that child. And that is a strength.

When asked what they regarded as being the key benefits of multi-agency working within conventional YISP panels, YISP staff identified six:

1. *Ease of information-sharing*. The information shared at panel meetings, which includes the knowledge accumulated from a range of statutory agencies is regarded as vital in terms of panel members being able to gain an understanding of each case and planning ISPs. Even when information is not brought to panel meetings, the fact that there are named liaison persons in each agency makes it relatively easy for YISP keyworkers to contact them and find out about a child and his or her family.

2. *Provision of professional advice and guidance*. Panel members with different professional backgrounds provide valuable advice on a range of relevant issues, such as child protection and housing, and can offer guidance on how to access statutory services. This benefit is seen as particularly valuable for keyworkers who do not necessarily have social work or social welfare backgrounds themselves.

3. *Existence of named agency representatives*. Keyworkers value the input different agency representatives offer to the ISPs and the fact that they are able to follow up with those people during YISP intervention. When monitoring progress in a particular case, it is especially helpful to have a named person to contact in each agency.

4. *Opportunities for networking*. YISP keyworkers regard the networking that takes place both within panel meetings and during YISP intervention as important in terms of enhancing their ability to deliver appropriate interventions and execute ISPs.

5. *The provision of local knowledge*. Panel members are regarded as a valuable source of information about local activities and opportunities for young people.

6. *The provision of professional support*. Panels can act as a useful sounding board for ideas about how to help children and young people referred to YISPs.

YISP staff generally stressed the fact that time needed to be invested in order to build up confidence and trust between agencies and ensure more effective multi-agency working. As one YISP keyworker put it:

> It's that building trust as well, isn't it? … especially with health, it was quite difficult initially, I think, building trust, and issues of confidentiality and how much information to give and how much not to give…

Many YISP keyworkers regarded good relationships as central to multi-agency working and other professionals, 'going the extra mile' out of loyalty to YISPs. One of the keyworkers who did not attend panel meetings in his YISP felt that he had missed out on the opportunity to build up close working relationships with panel members and to discuss cases with them face to face. This is clearly one of the disadvantages of a model which does not include keyworkers in panel meetings.

While YISP staff could readily articulate the potential benefits of multi-agency working, frustrations were also expressed when panel members did not fulfil their obligations. Chasing panel members for information was regarded as a major source of frustration. Some YISP staff felt that they ought to be much tougher with colleagues in other agencies in order to push them to deliver, but were concerned that being more demanding would 'put people's noses out of joint' and could risk losing the goodwill to make YISPs work. They also commented that some of the information provided by statutory agencies was too vague to be really helpful and that agencies such as CAMHS would not actually share detailed information about the inputs they had made. Variations in catchment areas can also pose problems for panel representatives who are unable to access information about a child living in another area. For example, one of the ISPs we examined spanned two CAMHS areas and the CAMHS panel member did not have access to both information systems. Clearly, there is a need for YISPs to ensure that panel members are able to provide information about the children and young people referred to them.

Lack of Services

Another theme to emerge from our interviews with YISP staff relates to agencies' ability and willingness to allocate resources to YISP families. One of the key objectives of panels is to ensure that children and their families receive services at the earliest opportunity. During our interviews, YISP keyworkers emphasised what they perceive as a gap between commitment at a strategic level – agencies have signed up to the concept of YISPs – and the allocation of resources, including staff time, to allow these agencies to engage in service delivery. There was a sense that the more senior agency staff sign up to multi-agency working but then walk away from YISPs without making sure that front-line workers have the time and capacity to deliver services. The sympathy of YISP keyworkers generally laid with the front-line staff – the social workers and health professionals on the ground.

While multi-agency working is regarded as a distinct benefit of YISPs, it became clear to us that the lack of resources/services offered by partner agencies can be a source of serious frustration for YISP staff. Networking can be very positive, but, if services are not being offered to YISP children, good relationships alone cannot provide the services a child might need. Some keyworkers told us that they had given up asking for certain resources from some partner agencies because they knew that these agencies would not deliver them. Keyworkers sometimes acknowledged that the panel had not been helpful with a particular case because no one had any resources that they could commit. The YISP staff could recognise the goodwill of colleagues in other agencies but told us that some agencies had little else to offer. Concerns were raised by several YISP keyworkers and co-ordinators about the extent to which agencies 'dump' cases on YISPs when they themselves have not got the resources to offer appropriate interventions.

The issue of resources is one which needs to be addressed if YISP panels are going to be able to function effectively and if YISP staff are to witness other agencies working alongside them to support families. It may be that partner agencies offer very little in the way of intervention because the cases YISPs deal with fall below the usual threshold of involvement with the statutory services. If YISPs are successful in targeting children and young people before they get into trouble in order to undertake preventative work, there is a conundrum for statutory services. Do they offer resources to children and families who would otherwise not be eligible for such services? Some YISP keyworkers believed that

YISPs were highlighting gaps in the ability of existing mainstream services to offer early intervention. Social services increasingly have to focus their efforts on children at risk in need of child protection rather than on children and families in need of more general support. The demand for CAMHS services is such that there is often a long waiting list – up to 18 months – for treatment/therapy. With those kinds of pressures on mainstream services it seems unlikely that they are going to be in a position to commit resources in YISP panel meetings to work with children and families whose needs are apparently less urgent. If referrals are made to these statutory services it may well be that YISP families find themselves in a queue and they may well not receive interventions during YISP involvement. For example, one YISP keyworker commented:

> If you could put a referral in and then get a service within sort of a five/six week period, that would be fine. But a lot of the time people are waiting. So you put a referral in, and it's three months… You can do one-to-one work with young people, but if you do that in isolation it doesn't necessarily achieve what you're aiming for. The support services need to be in place, and if you've got good services to access, which is appropriate for whatever the issues are, and then after three months you can leave that case with a support network in place, then it can be successful. I think if you don't have those services in place it's very, very difficult. …

Panel Attendance

We have noted earlier in this chapter that some panels achieved regular and committed attendance while others struggled. The sporadic attendance of social services representatives was a source of frustration in many pilot YISPs. One YISP co-ordinator told us rather bitterly:

> Social Services attend 50 per cent of the time, and then for only 50 per cent of the session.

Another YISP keyworker explained:

> I don't think we've had a social services representative for about four months, which makes a big difference… we're not getting the information back about whether the young people are involved with social services… The social services, especially the Family Centre, hold so much information about these young people that we don't get to find out about otherwise.

Another keyworker felt strongly that school representatives need to attend panel meetings, but acknowledged that it is not realistic to have 'every Head of Year come to the meeting from every school'. Education welfare officers can make a valuable contribution if a child has attendance problems, but they cannot provide more general information about a child's education. This appears to present a particular challenge for YISP panels, which value education involvement but are unsure how to pitch this at the right level. While poor panel attendance and the lack of the most appropriate representatives can both cause frustration, the turnover of panel members was seen as a particular problem which breaks the continuity of the panel. Sending a 'stand-in' is not regarded as a helpful solution, and nor is it conducive to effective panel working. Finding the right level of membership can pose a dilemma for panels.

Research Reflections on the Work of Panels

Some YISPs have developed from other multi-agency panels and some have begun *de novo*. Nevertheless, all the YISP pilots have had to think about who to involve and how to sell the idea to busy professionals whose main task is not related to preventative work in the youth justice arena. When panels work well information sharing is a key benefit, and this can result in agencies which would not otherwise have become involved with a family committing resources which can reduce risk factors and increase protective factors.

It takes time and effort to build effective panels, to secure commitment and foster a shared vision. We were impressed by the dedication of panel members in some areas and their belief in early intervention which may keep children and young people out of the criminal justice system. Our interviews and observations indicated that some YISPs continued to struggle to get all the key agencies to contribute to YISP interventions, and that there is a danger that YISP keyworkers become long-term careworkers because other agencies fail to offer much-needed services to the kinds of children and young people referred to the YISPs. Only in Lancashire have we observed a YISP model which adheres to the YJB timelines for short, focused intervention. Panels there had the ability to ensure that YISP intervention remains focused on crime prevention and did not stray into more general welfare support work, but to do this panel members needed to be fully aware of the youth justice agenda and to avoid seeing YISPs as being able to do all the work. It was not always evident in panel meetings elsewhere that members were realistic about what YISP intervention could achieve, and YISP staff often had to inject realism into panel discussions. However, panels can offer advice on a wide range of issues and they can and do ensure that cultural diversity is taken into account. Some panels demonstrated considerable cultural sensitivity and made real attempts to meet the needs of minority groups. We noted that in some areas, notably in Ealing, members of different ethnic communities have been invited to panel meetings to contribute to discussions about specific families.

All the panels have the potential to be very influential in local communities and to act as a change agent, but this places considerable demands on YISP staff and requires ongoing development and energy. We have observed strengths and weaknesses in most panels and suggest that they may benefit from learning from each other. All have taken their remit seriously, but frustrations remain that there are gaps in service provision locally and that YISPs do not always receive the support needed to offer preventative services to children and young people at risk of becoming involved in offending and antisocial behaviour. There are unresolved challenges regarding how to involve children and families in the YISP process: the family group meeting model offers one solution, but it seems clear that it should not be a substitute for multi-agency YISP panels, but rather a valuable element in the YISP programme. In other research we are examining the use of family group meetings within the YISP process which also involves YISP panels.

The relatively low referral rate has enabled the pilots to develop in a careful and considered way and to adopt the model to fit local circumstances. If throughput increases, panels which review each case each month will need to change their agendas. This may be a positive move which places responsibility for the cases with YISP keyworkers rather than with panel members. Some panel members may become too involved with some families and may be unable to let go. On the other hand, the dedication of panel members to regular attendance at meetings and their willingness to offer support to children and young people is a very important factor which facilitates and strengthens multi-agency working and appears to contribute to the success of YISP intervention.

Chapter 6   Planning, Delivering and Receiving Preventative Services

Christine Thompson, Karen Laing and Janet Walker

Youth Inclusion and Support Panels seek to prevent offending and antisocial behaviour by offering voluntary support services to high risk children and young people and their families. Panel members are expected to be sufficiently senior in their organisations to commit their agencies' resources in the development of an integrated support plan (ISP) for each child. In this chapter we examine the ways in which the pilot YISPs went about their task of developing or endorsing an ISP, the kinds of support services offered to children, young people and their families, the take-up of services offered, and the experiences of families and keyworkers during YISP engagement.

Agreeing Interventions and Committing Resources

The main emphasis of a panel's work is on ensuring that children and families receive mainstream public services, together with complementary support from voluntary and community groups, as soon as possible. The YISPs have had to discharge this duty within a broader strategy for preventing offending and antisocial behaviour which includes the use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). Generally, the ABC is regarded as a precursor to an ASBO, with the expectation that compliance with an ABC will render the imposition of an ASBO on a young person unnecessary. In Chapter 1 (Figure 1.1) we indicated the strategic location of YISPs as occupying the middle ground – the point at which concerns about welfare, youth offending and community safety meet. The essential task for the YISP is to prevent a child moving into the youth justice system and the community safety arena by making sure that he or she can access appropriate mainstream services. Ideally, YISP intervention should precede both ABCs and ASBOs, and only if YISP activity is unsuccessful in preventing offending or antisocial behaviour should more intrusive responses be invoked. Nevertheless, a carefully constructed ISP can be implemented alongside an ABC to help the child avoid court action and to address risk factors. The YJB pointed out in its Management Guidance for the pilot YISPs that there would need to be effective communication and information-sharing between the panel and those considering applications for ASBOs to minimise the risk that more serious interventions do not inhibit early intervention via an ISP. Both ABCs and ISPs are voluntary and flexible in content and format. By contrast, an ASBO is a civil order which carries legal force – breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence.

In considering the type of early intervention that might be appropriate for a child, YISPs were expected to focus on the provision of mainstream services. The YISPs do not have a substantive role as commissioning bodies or, directly, as service providers, but they do look to ensure that a holistic service is made available. This is a challenging remit, and the pilot YISPs have varied considerably in their approach to service provision. In order for YISPs to execute their role effectively they undoubtedly need the support and commitment of a range of statutory and voluntary services. Mainstreaming is not always straightforward, however.

The ONSET assessment has been designed to help panels and keyworkers decide the key targets for intervention. It follows, therefore, that the ONSET assessment should provide the information on which decisions can be taken about where services should be targeted and how they should be packaged. An integrated support plan pro-forma was developed by the YJB for use by the pilots. The ISP should set out the expectations for the child, the family and the service providers. All parties

should then sign up to the plan. The YJB suggested that an ISP could be developed in a number of ways:[61]

- by keyworkers in consultation with the child, family and key stakeholders

- at a small interactive meeting involving the child, the family, the keyworker and key service providers

- at a panel meeting, with all parties present and contributing

In the first two approaches, the draft ISP would be presented to the panel for consideration and ratification following consultation with the child and the family and key service providers. The development and/or ratification of an ISP has not featured as a major element in the work of some of the panels we observed during the evaluation. Our observations in Wigan suggest that it sits neatly in the second of the two approaches above, but other case study pilots have tended to adopt a more flexible approach to the development of an ISP, and not all routinely complete an ISP form for each child. Since, in most YISPs, children and parents are not normally asked to attend a panel meeting, their involvement in developing an ISP is less transparent, and very much dependent on the extent to which keyworkers engage with families.

The YJB Management Guidance lists three key decisions that YISPs must make about their ISPs: how the panels will help to ensure that children have access to mainstream services; the extent of keyworker involvement in direct service delivery; and the extent to which the panel will have a commissioning role.[62] The YJB recognised that simply bringing agency representatives together for a panel meeting would not necessarily open doors for children to gain access to mainstream services. Beyond this, keyworkers are expected to play a major role in 'facilitating, driving and monitoring ISP delivery, especially where mainstream services are involved'.[63] Service-level agreements are one mechanism for setting out how mainstream services might be accessed and in what circumstances. Keyworkers normally took on a broader role than that of facilitating, driving and monitoring service delivery by others, however. Deciding whether, and how, they should be involved in direct service delivery to children and families was an issue with which many pilots have had to grapple. Resource and workload considerations have resulted in some keyworkers being unable to devote much time to direct work with YISP children. Furthermore, the professional qualifications and practice skills of keyworkers vary and impact on the kinds of direct work they may be able to offer. We examine the roles undertaken by keyworkers later in the chapter and we consider this to be an area in which best practice guidelines might usefully be developed.

It is important to remember that YISPs are not an alternative to mainstream services, and commissioning interventions via voluntary agencies can extend the range of help and support offered to families. Working in partnership with other providers has been an important feature of the pilot YISPs, and adherence to service standards is a central element in monitoring the quality of interventions with YISP children and their families. Panels also have a responsibility to monitor and review the progress of ISPs. The YJB anticipated that the average length of an ISP would be between three and six months, although the length of time must be influenced by the child's individual needs and circumstances. Regular reviews were built into the YISP process, and a formal review is required no later than six months after the start of an ISP. It was anticipated that, during the course of YISP engagement, ISPs may well be modified or extended as the child's circumstances change. The ISP, therefore, is a key document for everyone involved in a particular case and it ought to ensure that those responsible for monitoring its delivery are well positioned to observe impacts, outputs and outcomes.

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[61] Youth Justice Board (2005) YISP Management Guidance, p. 43.
[62] ibid., p. 44.
[63] ibid., p. 45.

Interventions Offered to Children and Their Families in the Case Study Pilots

Relatively little data were available about ISPs on YISPMIS. Instead, data were recorded about whether children or families were offered services that fell within predetermined categories. In this section we consider the information available on YISPMIS about the interventions offered in our case study pilots. Data fields were not always systematically completed, so these are unlikely to reflect full records of the activities which took place. These data were only recorded in respect of approximately half of the cases referred to YISPs. As with other analyses based on YISPMIS data, we need to be cautious about drawing generalisable conclusions. Nevertheless, we have extracted information relating to a range of interventions for which a data field exists. There is evidence of some children receiving interventions related to one or more of the following: alcohol management; anger management; group work; cognitive behaviour work (which was particularly prevalent in Wigan and Lancashire); community programmes (such as arson reduction); community psychiatric support (usually via CAMHS); drugs education; mentoring (popular in both Ealing and Lancashire); and different types of counselling.

In addition to these interventions, many leisure activities were mentioned in ISPs, and much of the work focused on holiday activities. A wide variety of activities were mentioned, including: basketball; hairdressing; police cadets; FIT4 sport and play course; PAYP; boxing; football; kayaking; self-defence; Positive Futures; intuition; computer club; table tennis; swimming; horse riding; Hoops4health; army cadets; ice skating; Beyond Sport; drama; rugby; tai kwon do; cycling; fishing; and girls groups. The provision of a youth worker or a mentor was often mentioned in this category, perhaps as a way of engaging children in activities, or facilitating their access to them.

Parenting interventions were also offered in some pilots. Parenting work seemed to fall into two main categories: first, a direct referral for parenting work outwith the YISP, for example at a family centre, via social services, a parenting worker or a family support group; and, secondly, in-house parenting work by the YISP keyworkers themselves. Much of the work undertaken by YISP keyworkers involved parents in regular one-to-one sessions. Some of the parenting support offered by YISP keyworkers was directed at practical problems as well as at enhancing parenting skills.

The YISPMIS database included an 'Other' category, and a large amount of work was recorded as 'Other', particularly in Wigan. Some of the interventions recorded in this category could probably have been attributed to one of the other categories, since it included, for example, mentoring, parenting work and counselling. Nevertheless, this category recorded details about work that could not be fitted into the categories defined previously. In Wigan, much of the work categorised as 'Other' involved the offer of a family group conference. This is somewhat curious, because YISP panels in Wigan were family group conferences. It seems that the family group conference has been regarded as both a model of YISP process and an intervention. In addition, references were made to interventions relating to diet and healthy eating on a number of occasions, and referrals to a GP, health visitor, school nurse or CAMHS were also mentioned.

It would appear that it was not necessarily easy for YISP workers to define the work they were doing in order to record it on YISPMIS. Some of the interventions spanned more than one category, and there was considerable variation in definition. Nevertheless, we have conducted analyses on these categories to build a picture of the work being done in each case study area. We have data about interventions in respect of 215 cases in Ealing, Lancashire and Wigan, but unfortunately Birmingham did not include any data on YISPMIS about the interventions offered to families, so we were unable to include the Birmingham pilot in our analyses. The most frequently recorded interventions came under the categories of cognitive behaviour, constructive leisure activities, parenting work and mentoring. In addition, over 80 per cent of Wigan cases had been offered an intervention recorded in the 'Other'

category. There were significant differences between the pilots in respect of which categories of intervention were offered.

Ealing YISP appeared to offer constructive leisure activities and mentoring the most often. Indeed, constructive leisure activities were offered at least once to nearly all YISP children in Ealing and, in many cases, more than one leisure activity was offered. This contrasts sharply with Wigan, where constructive leisure services were offered in just 37.6 per cent of cases, and mentoring in just 2.2 per cent. Ealing YISP were more likely than either Lancashire or Wigan YISPs to offer families counselling and groupwork. According to YISPMIS, the interventions offered most in Lancashire were constructive leisure activities, cognitive behaviour work and mentoring. Wigan, on the other hand, provided focused interventions primarily on cognitive behaviour (which was offered to the majority of children) and parenting work. Moreover, Wigan was more likely than the other pilots to offer parenting work, and was the only pilot to offer a restorative justice intervention.

Number of Interventions Offered

The children accepted by Ealing YISP seem to have been offered a whole raft of interventions in their ISPs. All but one of the children recorded as having been offered an intervention were offered at least three, and some are recorded as being offered up to twelve. Over a third of YISP children in Ealing were offered three or four interventions (34.5%), and a similar proportion were offered over seven (34.5%). There was no significant difference in the number of interventions offered based on children's initial ONSET scores, gender or age.

In Lancashire, children and families tended to be offered a maximum of four interventions: just 7 per cent were offered more than four. This contrasts strikingly with Ealing. The number of interventions offered in Lancashire did not vary by gender or age, but there is evidence to suggest that children with higher ONSET scores were likely to be offered more interventions than children with lower ONSET scores. Approximately two in five (43%) children with an ONSET score between 11 and 20 were offered either three or four interventions, as against 68 per cent of children with an ONSET score of 21–30. All children with an ONSET score of over 30 were offered three or more interventions.

In Wigan, children and families tended to be offered a maximum of six interventions, although three children were offered more than this. Fourteen per cent of children were offered one or two interventions, 59 per cent three or four, and 24 per cent five or six. The number of interventions offered in Wigan did not vary by gender or age, but there is evidence to suggest that, as in Lancashire, children with higher ONSET scores were likely to be offered more interventions than children with lower ONSET scores. Thirty-one per cent of children with ONSET scores of between 0 and 10 were offered fewer than three interventions, as against 4 per cent of children with ONSET scores between 11 and 20. All the children with an ONSET score of over 20 were offered three or more interventions.

Unfortunately, data about which interventions were ultimately accepted by children and families, and which were subsequently provided, were not systematically recorded on YISPMIS. The ONSET closure form records information about whether children engaged well with the services that were offered to them, and whether there were any difficulties in arranging work with agencies. There is also space to record a brief summary of the work done with each individual child. Unfortunately, the ONSET closure forms do not appear to have been entered on to YISPMIS, so we are unable to provide any analyses from YISPMIS data relating to the engagement of children with ISPs. Although YISPMIS contains some data about the length of each individual intervention, it has proved impossible for us to use the information in a meaningful way because of the highly complex construction of the YISPMIS programme. We have been very limited, therefore, in terms of the analysis we can undertake, which is extremely disappointing.

Length of Involvement with YISP

The YISPs should have recorded on YISPMIS the date each case was closed. This would have enabled us to consider the variations between pilots in respect of the duration of YISP intervention. Unfortunately, only one closure date was recorded on YISPMIS in respect of both Birmingham and Ealing, so we are unable to assess the length of YISP involvement for children there. We know from our observations, however, that there was a tendency to keep cases open for a considerable time. Indeed, it would appear from our fieldwork that Ealing YISP rarely closed cases, but tended to monitor them for long periods. This may well explain why Ealing children were offered more interventions.

By contrast, a closure date was recorded on YISPMIS for 140 of the 253 referrals to YISP in the Lancashire case study pilot's panel areas. Owing to the extent of the missing data, we have no idea about how long the other cases stayed open. Where we do have data, however, the majority of cases were closed between 13 and 20 weeks after the date of referral. A further 27 per cent of cases were closed at some stage between 21 and 40 weeks after referral. Two cases had not been closed until over forty weeks after referral.

As regards those cases for which we do have closure information, the length of intervention did not vary with respect to the child's age or gender, or the number of interventions provided, but did appear to differ significantly with respect to initial ONSET scores. Cases appeared to be closed more quickly in Lancashire when ONSET scores were high. Eighty-five per cent of cases with ONSET scores of between 31 and 40 were completed within 20 weeks of referral, as against 73 per cent of cases with scores of between 21 and 30, 68 per cent of cases with scores of between 11 and 20, and 66 per cent of cases with scores of between 0 and 10.

As in Lancashire, a closure date was recorded on YISPMIS for only about half of the Wigan cases. The majority were closed between 13 and 40 weeks from the date of referral, while 28 per cent were closed between 13 and 20 weeks, and 33 per cent between 21 and 40 weeks, from that date. Eleven cases (10 %) had been closed after the fortieth week; 16 per cent had been closed between 7 and 12 weeks after the referral date; and 13 per cent within six weeks of referral. The length of intervention in Wigan did not differ in terms of the child's age or gender, or the number of interventions offered, but there was variation with regard to initial ONSET score. By contrast to Lancashire, cases with a higher ONSET score tended to remain open for significantly longer than those with a lower score (less than 10). Thirty-two per cent of cases with an ONSET score of 10 or below were still open after 20 weeks, as against 70 per cent of cases with a score of between 11 and 20 and 50 per cent of cases with a score of 21–30.

Families' Recollections of ISPs

It was expected that children and parents/carers should be involved in the design, implementation and review of their ISP. This is clearly resource-intensive for keyworkers, but research would suggest that their not engaging with families may reduce their willingness to comply with plans, particularly if interventions are imposed rather than agreed. It follows, therefore, that children and parents should be empowered to take authorship and, thereby, ownership of ISPs. In our interviews with children and parents/carers, we asked them about their ISP and the process by which it had been developed. Not all could remember. We found that many families were in receipt of a range of interventions from a range of agencies and they could not always distinguish between those that were being organised as part of the YISP and those which were being provided as a result of other engagements with other agencies. Wherever possible, we used the family's ISP as an aide-memoire, but we did not always have access to the ISP at the time of our interview. Quite often, families could not really remember the content of the

ISP, particularly when some time had elapsed between the time when they had been told about it and our subsequent interview.

In our case study pilots, ISPs were developed variously, and the level of involvement of children and parents also varied. In two pilots, Lancashire and Ealing, ISPs were formulated at YISP panel meetings, without the direct involvement of children and parents, since they did not attend panels in these pilots. In Birmingham, the ISP was constructed after the case had been discussed and accepted at the panel meeting: the keyworker then undertook an ONSET assessment and formulated the ISP with the family. In Wigan, family members normally developed the ISP during a family group meeting.

Panel Involvement in the ISP

In those pilots (Lancashire and Ealing) where ISPs were formulated by YISP panels without the family members being present, we found that the keyworker in each case usually made recommendations to the panel which were drawn from earlier consultations with the family. To a large extent, the panel endorsed those recommendations. In Lancashire, all the families we interviewed confirmed that their keyworker had contacted them, usually within 24 hours of the panel meeting, to discuss the ISP. Families then received a written copy of the ISP, which they signed. Parents in Lancashire were familiar with the main elements of their plan and knew that YISP intervention would last about six weeks, with the possibility of an extension for a further six weeks after a panel had reviewed progress. Most of the children, however, were less clear about the ISP and had only a vague recollection of what it contained. While a few children knew how long YISP involvement would last, most could not remember this when we interviewed them.

Parents in Ealing told us that the keyworker had rung to inform them about their being accepted on to the YISP and to explain that she would be in touch once she had made all the necessary arrangements for the ISP. Sometimes this had led to a delay of several weeks. Unlike parents in Lancashire, parents in Ealing did not receive a written copy of the ISP, nor were they asked to sign it. The reason the keyworker gave for this practice was that 'YISP intervention is voluntary' so parents are not asked for a 'full-on agreement'. None of the Ealing parents knew how long their involvement with YISP would last, and some were equally uncertain about the timescales for different kinds of support. Not surprisingly, perhaps, children in Ealing did not seem very aware that an ISP had been developed. They expected to be offered some activities and some expected to get a mentor. Like their parents, they had no idea how long YISP involvement would last.

In Birmingham, most parents had signed a written copy of the ISP, and while most of them were clear about the main elements of the plan few had any idea about how long it would last. Most of the children we spoke to in Birmingham had signed their ISP but had no clear recollection of having done so or of having received a copy. Most told us that they expected to do some activities and some one-to-one work with the keyworker. A few referred to having a 'buddy', and a couple talked about a referral to CAMHS.

In Wigan, families formulated their own ISPs at the family group meeting. After the meeting the family group meeting co-ordinator, wrote up the ISP and then the keyworker discussed it and agreed it with the family. Most, though not all, parents could remember the YISP. Some sense of family ownership was evident in the comment made by Paul's mother:

> Yeah, it's [the ISP] for the family. It's for us all. That's what it's all about. It's all about helping us to try and do the best for the kids, that's what it's all about. As long as we – we'll be happy if we know they're doing well and they're being happy … That's all we want. 'Cos it wasn't always like this.

Most parents in Wigan did not know or could not remember how long YISP intervention would last, but the matter of duration is complicated by the fact that the parenting worker in Wigan often continues to work with a family after the YISP keyworker has closed the case. Zac's mother told us she hoped that the YISP would last a long time:

> I don't want him to stop it … If Zac was about to be naughty or whatever … have I got to start all over again? … I don't want [the parenting worker] to go yet either … They don't have a time limit do they? I don't want a time limit.

Zac's mother was clearly anxious that the support might end and that she would have to start all over again with different services if Zac got into trouble. Children, like Zac, had fairly hazy recollections of the written ISP, but most expected to engage in some one-to-one sessions with their keyworker, do some activities and be assigned to a mentor.

The Significance of ISPs

In Wigan, the ISP was probably a more significant document for the families than it was in any of the other three case study pilots. We became aware that YISP engagement changed and evolved over time, especially in areas which keep cases open well beyond a three-month period, and we found some but not much evidence that revisions had been made to ISPs or that they had been updated. Even in Wigan, we did not find that ISPs were any more effective in involving wider family members in the delivery of the plan, although there was evidence of the ISP being modified. Across all the YISPs, children had far less understanding of their ISP than their parents. Only in Lancashire did families understand that YISP involvement is relatively short-term. Nevertheless, the majority of families in all the areas were satisfied with their ISP and with the way it had been developed, feeling that they had been adequately consulted and had been free to discard elements of the plan which were not considered helpful. A strong theme to emerge across all the case-study pilots was that parents generally felt that the ISP had been developed for their children rather than for them. The YISP was regarded as a child-focused service which might offer some support to parents. Most children could identify that the ISP was about improving their own behaviour. When we asked parents if they had been offered support for themselves we received several responses which suggested that family support was not always welcomed:

> That's the trouble, you don't know what they are going to offer. They [YISP] say they are going to offer family therapy … because all the time they are trying to say it's the parents' fault when it's not our fault … it's the kids'… that's what people can't get into their heads … and, therefore, what's the point of family therapy? (father of Sam, aged 8, and Stacey, aged 10)

> I don't know if they help because I'd still do it my own way, anyway. Because I'm that stuck … I'm set in my ways. I'm just Taurus, you know. Stubborn. I hate myself 'cos I know how grotty I get, bad temper … I'm stubborn as a mule. It goes in one ear and out the other sometimes with me. It depends if it's something I want to hear or something that I don't want to hear. (mother of Lee, aged 10)

Although some parents were not keen on the idea of support for themselves, many keyworkers felt strongly that some parents needed support but were reluctant to admit it. In their view, it is a matter of building trust with a parent over time before parenting support can be offered:

> When you look at the age of the children. I mean an eight-year-old, morally … is it right to just challenge that child about its behaviour, and whose responsibility is their behaviour? My concern is, is it right to do crime-focused work with the child when the child is only showing you what is happening in their lives? We need to work with how they are looked after and the effects [of this] on their behaviour … If we don't change the environment of the children, then we are sending them back to fail.

This co-ordinator is accurately reflecting the importance of addressing the risk factors in all the domains of a child's life, but because YISP involvement is voluntary there is no power to enforce parents' participation in activities designed to improve their parenting skills or the ways in which the family functions. So the YISPs may offer supportive interventions for parents but parents may choose not to take them up. The pilots which were inclined to keep cases open for a longer period of time were more able to build the kind of relationships with families which encourage them to address specific needs. It can take time to build a relationship with parents and with children. If a rapport is built, it is more likely that new problems will be revealed and that the family might be more amenable to different kinds of supportive interventions. The acceptance by some YISPs that they are in it 'for the long term' raises questions about whether this is actually an appropriate model and whether other agencies should be taking over the longer-term monitoring of a family's needs, providing the support services necessary at different moments in the child's development, and addressing changes in family circumstances. We return to this critical issue in our final chapter.

Even with additional time, however, not all families were motivated to participate in YISP interventions. When parents believe that it is their child and not them that has the problem, it may never be possible to work directly with the parents. Interestingly, Wigan YISP regarded interventions as crime-focused, but with the recognition that much offending and antisocial behaviour stems from deep-seated family difficulties. The YISP manager favoured a psychodynamic approach which seeks to address the causes of the problem, which may go back several years. She felt that, in order to make an impact, YISP teams need to be multi-skilled and go beyond the provision of diversionary activities. Wigan's model includes a keyworker for the child and another keyworker for the parent.

Delivering Interventions

It is generally agreed that multiple interventions across the range of domains relevant to a child's life are more likely to effect change than single interventions which address just one risk factor. As a result of our observations of YISP panels and interviews with keyworkers, parents and children, we have identified a number of categories of intervention, although they are not mutually exclusive. These categories have been constructed on the a priori assumption that YISP intervention is primarily child-focused and that support for parents is designed to ensure that the child's risk factors are reduced and protective factors increased. The two overarching categories we have identified are, first, direct work with children and, secondly, indirect work on behalf of children. Within each of these categories there are a range of different kinds of services. We examine each category in turn.

Direct Work with Children

Direct work with children includes activities for children, one-to-one support, mentoring, and issues-based sessions/programmes. In two case study areas (Ealing and Birmingham) positive activities were central to the parents'/carers' and children's perceptions of what it meant to participate in a YISP. The children reported engagement in a wide variety of structured activities including sports, arts, media and computing. The length of time children were involved in these activities varied. They included summer schemes, which some children had accessed for the whole of the summer holidays, other children for a week or two, and some just for a few days. The young people told us:

> The summer schemes were like different activities. Like you do different stuff, like you can go to a school and there'd be different activities there to do and stuff … It was like every day of the week for about six weeks. We did … graffiti, street dancing, acting, circus stuff and stuff like that – conjuring. (Kelly, aged 13)

> [When we went go-karting] we started the engines – you know, string start, and we're not allowed to pull 'em, are we? So they pulled 'em … 'cos they wear gloves … We wear gloves as well, just to drive

it. And we wear helmets as well and all of us sit in them … and all of us went in the go-karts and we did thirty laps. We just kept going and it took about half an hour. Like a proper race track, indoors though … We slammed on our brakes … When we was coming up thirty laps … do you know what? The floor's wet in there and everyone else was slipping … And there was [a] spanner there [with which] you could tighten the brakes up … I tightened mine up – the floor was slippy and I put my brakes on and I stopped just like that … I done good at it. I was first. (Lee, aged 10)

In addition to summer holiday activities, some YISPs organised activities during the school half-term holidays:

> Me and me brothers went DJ'ing at half term … We did some scratching and we recorded a song and just did loads of DJ'ing … We got a certificate and a CD. (Logan, aged 12)

Two children we interviewed had been on an activity which took them away from home, one for two nights and another for two separate weeks:

> What did we do? We went bird-seeing I think … yeah, we seen an owl … We were going to the beach a few times … oh, yeah, and we went walking quite a lot … it was the first time I've ever been away from home for that long without me Mum and Dad … [The second time] … can't remember where we went … but it was kind of far … and we had our own hut so we did our own cooking. We went bike riding … like up and down hills and lots of stuff. (Stephen, aged 11)

From keyworker interviews and the file data it was clear that many of these activities were the result of onward referrals to agencies such as youth services and Connexions, PAYP, Positive Futures, YIP, EASE (Empowerment Action and Self-Esteem Project), local voluntary projects and sports clubs. Most activities had developmental and social learning aims as well as providing fun and diversion. Several of the children in our sample from Ealing were involved in a boxing course and had clearly become quite passionate about the sport. A keyworker described the involvement of one child as follows:

> Sam is such a success story … because we've been able to identify something which he likes and it's his passion. He lives for boxing. He goes with [his mentor] to boxing tournaments. It's really taken off.

Parents and children in Wigan and Lancashire reported comparatively less participation in structured activities organised by outside agencies, although these kinds of activities still formed an element of many ISPs. Such activities also tended to be occasional or weekly, and none had lasted for an entire summer or half-term holiday, possibly reflecting the more limited resources of local service providers. Children and families in Wigan and Lancashire told us about their participation in many more informal, unstructured activities with keyworkers, or with mentors, such as visits to parks, cafés, and local places of interest. Occasionally, YISP keyworkers brought families together for organised outings. The focus seemed to be as much on building the relationship between families and the keyworker as it was on accessing specific activities.

The YISPs differed in the extent to which they made structured activities the focus of an ISP. In Lancashire and Wigan activities formed a significant but not predominant element of children's ISPs. In Ealing and Birmingham, however, these often formed a major part of many ISPs, with keyworkers making every effort to individualise the activities and to match them to children's preferences. There was a recognition, however, that organised activities were not the appropriate intervention for every child. We became aware that activities were regarded differently in the pilots. Some keyworkers referred to structured activities as 'diversionary' while others described them as 'constructive' or 'positive'. Since most service providers aimed to provide an educational or developmental experience, as well as fun and diversion, it seems likely that these were no more than differences in terminology. Keyworkers across all YISPs regarded structured activities as helping to build self-esteem, improve social skills, offer one-to-one attention and enhance the social inclusion of YISP children, as well as offering fun and diversion. In two YISPs there was some evidence of activities also being used as rewards for a child's engagement with one-to-one work rather than as interventions in their own right.

In all but one case study site (Ealing), direct one-to-one support was offered to the children by the keyworkers. In these YISPs most children seemed to have had a period of regular contact/sessions with their keyworker, spending the time accessing activities, chatting informally and/or doing worksheets. In one YISP, the young people showed us their work files. The topics covered by the latter were variously described as addressing antisocial behaviour: anger management; victim awareness; peer pressure; offending; stranger danger; and behaviour management. The following exchanges and remarks made during interviews illustrate these various aspects of one-to-one work. The first exchange related to an intervention designed to address William's antisocial behaviour, and the second to an intervention relating to anger management.

William, aged 8	I like that game we were playing, 'Naughty and not naughty'. I like the colouring in because it were fun.
Interviewer.	What were you doing?
William.	We were separating the good ones and the bad ones.
Interviewer.	The good things to do and the bad things?
William.	Yeah.
Interviewer.	Can you remember any good things?
William.	Hanging around in a gang and walking the dog sometimes.
Interviewer.	And the bad things?
William.	Spitting and smashing people's windows.

Interviewer.	So what kind of things did [the keyworker] suggest you do that helped you?
Peter, aged 13.	Think before I talk.
Ken, aged 11.	Count to ten in your head … Just ignore them
Gavin, aged 10.	When I get wound up off my brother and sister, I just go to my room and put my head under my pillow.

Ian (aged 8) had been taught how to control his anger and he explained that the keyworker had given him a shark's tooth to remind him:

> This would have been one of the front teeth of a shark. I got these so that when I go anywhere I take one of these with me, and if I start to get angry I feel in my pocket and I remember [the keyworker] and I remember what she told me to do.

Children were introduced to strategies to deal with specific behavioural problems at home. Parents described ways in which behavioural issues had been tackled:

> He [the keyworker] did them charts. One for home and one for school. Yeah, they tried to be good just to get stars. (mother of Ken aged 11)

Clearly, these one-to-one sessions had given many children a chance to talk to someone outside the family about issues which they had not thought about previously. Many parents were keen for their child to receive this kind of help.

We are not sure how much awareness of the criminal justice system was a feature of YISP intervention. Many of the children and young people had not been in any trouble, but some children described work they had done on a youth offending ladder:

> And it was like if you did something wrong, then you get a reprimand like I got, and then if you did something wrong again, final warning, and then … She explained it that a Referral Order was where you got – you've got to … It was this thing where people come and look after you – no, people come and see you, and then they talk to you more and more about the offending thing. A Reparation Order is where you have to go to court. (Michael, aged 13)

Michael had probably not fully understood the hierarchy, but he had grasped the meaning of the ladder. Neil's version was as follows:

> … like that offending ladder, that's like I thought that I might go to jail if I do that … because I know after one thing there'll be the next thing, and then after that. (Neil, aged 12)

In addition to specific interventions to deal with particular aspects of a child's behaviour or to tackle known risk factors, keyworkers often offered other kinds of one-to-one support. This included accompanying children and young people to appointments with other agencies and mediating between home and school. Laura told us how she had walked out of her first appointment with the educational psychologist. Her keyworker had subsequently agreed to find out if she could have a new appointment with a different psychologist, and went with her to the first appointment. It seems that this kind of support was frequently vital in helping children and families to access statutory services.

It should be stressed that in Ealing, although direct one-to-one support was not a major part of the keyworker's remit, it was still recognised as an important element of a child's ISP. The intention in Ealing was for intensive one-to-one support to be supplied by sessional workers (often used as escorts) or by mentors. However, the lack of available sessional workers and mentors in Ealing had led to frustrations among the staff regarding their inability to deliver one-to-one support to a number of YISP children. In one of our cases the young person had been accepted at the YISP panel in July 2005, but then excluded from summer activities for bad behaviour. The YISP was unable to help him access any further activities for most of the autumn term because no YOT assistant or mentor who could accompany him to activities was available. This situation may help to explain why cases in Ealing tended to remain open for very long periods of time.

All the keyworkers believed that a one-to-one relationship is crucial to the success or failure of most ISPs. However, differences of approach emerged within and between YISPs regarding what were considered to be appropriate interventions. Many keyworkers made use of programmes for addressing risk factors, which they had bought in (e.g. Teen Talk), downloaded from the internet or designed themselves. Some keyworkers stressed that the 'crime and consequences' work, as it was often termed, was only of value when integrated into an ISP which addressed deeper issues, such as family functioning:

> The challenge to those who offer brief 'causes and consequence' is, what will have happened in a year's time if we have not changed family functioning? (YISP manager)

A few keyworkers, however, told us that they refused to use such 'cognitive behaviour' programmes altogether. One keyworker questioned whether younger children were at the right developmental stage to be 'equipped for making choices'. Several workers emphasised the value of the 'therapeutic relationship'. As one said, 'Relationship is what counts. Then maybe you can address the issue.' They

drew upon their own, often extensive, experience to develop innovative techniques for addressing issues with young people on a one-to-one basis.

All our case study pilot sites made use of mentors in the ISPs. Birmingham and Wigan had been able to develop an in-house mentoring service, although the Birmingham buddy scheme envisaged the mentor as a 'family friend' rather than as a mentor for an individual child. Ealing and Lancashire had to make a referral to an outside agency to obtain mentors for their YISP children. The YISPs often used mentors as an exit strategy, so some children we interviewed had not yet met their volunteer when we undertook our final interview. Parents valued this intervention because it offered pro-social modelling, social skills and one-to-one attention to their children:

> Ken had a buddy and he could come on a Monday and play games with them. Yeah, and it did them a world of good talking to another man 'cos all the men in the past beat me up – my ex-partner did as well – so all they thought was men were just going to beat me up. Then [the keyworker] and [the buddy] came and they changed their views. (mother of Ken, aged 11)

Some parents also valued the mentoring service because it afforded them some respite. Marisha's keyworker explained:

> I explained to Mum and to Marisha that a buddy is a family worker and it's not just for Marisha alone. But I think the way Mum would like it to work is for the buddy to take both of the kids out and give her a break … I think that's how she'd like the support.

Some YISP workers debated whether it is the role of YISP to offer respite to parents/carers, although most felt that it was a positive, albeit indirect consequence of the activities and interventions they organised for children. Marisha's keyworker went on to say:

> A lot of these parents are at their wits' end and they're not getting very much support from anywhere … Like a lot of single parents as well … they haven't got a partner where they can share the strain and the pressure … so if it's possible and it's within our resources then why not? If it's going to help Mum out … if Mum's going to get two or three hours to herself on the weekend or in the week and that helps her to sort of … if it helps her in any way … gives her time to think about herself and not always about her children… it can only be a positive… Maybe it will give Mum time to go out and actually do something that she enjoys… Maybe go to the gym or meet some friends … go and see relatives but not having to worry about the kids … I just think it's better for her, and in the long run it's better for her children as well.

Issue-based Interventions

In addition to the range of activities offered to children across our case study pilots, some YISPs offered one-off issues-based interventions, often provided by partner agencies. These interventions included visits and mentoring. Some children were taken on visits designed to address specific aspects of their behaviour. For example, Ian, aged 8, was identified as being at risk of shoplifting and antisocial behaviour. He told us that he was taken to the local police station so that he could see what it would be like to be arrested, put in a cell and interviewed on tape. The following exchange took place during one of our interviews with Ian:

Ian.   I went [to a police station] and I had to stay in one of the cells for a couple of minutes … After a few minutes I got a bit bored. I got the mattress off the bed because all there was was a thin blue mattress and a wooden bed. I got that down and put it up against the bed and started sliding down it. They came in, shouted at me and took it away. I took one of me socks off, tied it in a knot and pulled the string out and started using it as a yoyo …When I went into the cells, he told me to think about something [I'd done wrong], but I didn't really think because I didn't really like being in the cells and so I thought about other things rather than being in the cells.

Interviewer.	Did you think about what would happen if you got into trouble?
Ian.	I knew already.
Interviewer.	Do you think you learnt anything from going to the police station?
Ian.	Yeah … not to hurt anybody. Hurting people is wrong.

It was a measure of Ian's parents' desperation that they gave their consent to Ian being taken to the police station. They had agreed to ensure that every avenue of help would be explored, rather than having any conviction that this strategy would have any lasting impact on their son. Ian's father found the experience traumatic, commenting:

> I think I've got to say I was more traumatically disturbed by the whole thing than Ian was. I mean in Ian's sort of crazy mixed-up world where realism doesn't seem to count a lot of the time, he seemed to think that this was a little bit of a jolly and he took it all as a bit of fun, on the whole.

Michael, aged 13, had taken a knife to school and the YISP arranged for him to visit an armed-response unit. Michael's parents agreed to this visit 'as long as it's not going to be fun'. Children and young people who had been involved in setting fires were often taken to visit the local fire station. The families were given smoke alarms for their house, and the children were given the responsibility of maintaining them. Ian was taken there as well as to the police station. He told us:

> The fireman came as well … he showed us a video and he meant to burn the room down, the living room, because I sometimes play with matches and it takes three minutes for the whole of the living room to burn down … They gave me some worksheets and some fridge magnets. And I've got to check the fire alarm every month.

Other visits included to a Healthy Hearts Club for children who were overweight. This emerged as an issue for a number of children interviewed, and seems to have been linked to aggressive behaviour and bullying and/or being bullied at school. Unfortunately, it was clear at the time of our follow-up interview several months later that none of the children interviewed had actually been to one of the clubs, despite it being on their ISPs.

Two older girls reported having taken part in girls' groups, partly or wholly run by their YISPs. The groups involved team-building exercises and activities, and dealt with issues such as community safety, sexual health and drug and alcohol use. Other areas of issue-based work included interventions to address school transition (primary to secondary school), drug and alcohol abuse, community safety, sexual health and smoking.

Indirect Work On Behalf of Children

One of the main aims of YISPs is to ensure that children have access to mainstream services. Thus an important part of the ISP is to facilitate onward referrals to statutory agencies. This aspect of their ISP went largely unnoticed by the children, except in a few cases. Some parents, however, were extremely grateful to the YISP for fast-tracking their access to services such as CAMHS. The other services to which parents/carers sought access for their children included specialist educational assessment, alternative educational provision and, occasionally, social services family support. Keyworkers also made referrals to services relating to family counselling, bereavement counselling, domestic violence and services for young carers.

Nevertheless, the capacity of YISPs to facilitate access to mainstream services seemed to vary from area to area, perhaps shaped by local statutory agency capacity and thresholds. Access to CAMHS

seemed particularly variable. While Wigan and Birmingham YISPs were able to refer directly into CAMHS, via the YOT, Ealing keyworkers seemed unable to do this. In Lancashire it was accepted that the service was so understaffed that it would be impossible to take on most YISP cases. Parents valued the fact that keyworkers would liaise with other agencies on behalf of their children. A particularly strong theme to emerge during interviews related to the importance of keyworkers helping parents to liaise with schools. For example, when Laura, aged 12, was threatened with exclusion, the keyworker acted as a mediator between her mother and the school. Laura's mother told us:

> [The YISP keyworkers] have listened, and they've understood the way Laura feels. Where sometimes I could get angry with her, you know, like saying, 'You've got to do it.' Well, they've worded it differently, and they've been on her side. Well, they went to school, instead of me … I mean they were seeing Laura regularly as well, so they put their bit in about her.

Keyworkers were in a strong position to mediate between home and school when relationships had broken down. Keyworkers could act as an advocate for the child and help to put the child's point across:

> Well, I got in a bit of trouble at school and I saw [the keyworker] and she just helped me …Yeah, I'd never be able to talk to my Mum if I had a problem or something in school. [The keyworker] will talk to her. (Melanie, aged 13)

Throughout our evaluation of YISPs we have become increasingly aware of the difficulties that can arise between parents and educational institutions. Communicating with schools can be daunting for some parents. Although most parents emphasised that schools had been supportive, they often did not understand why a school had taken particular courses of action. Parents described how they could feel powerless and patronised by teachers. Others felt that they were being harassed, especially on occasions when they went to the school to collect a child. Melanie's mother told us:

> The problem we have is, if the school had a problem with Melanie it was down to us to come and sort it out for them. Well, if both of us are working how can you do that? You can't just say to your employer 'I'm sorry, I've got a lot of problems at school with my daughter. I've got to leave the job' – off I go. It's impossible, you can't do it. It's just really impossible, the amount of stress that we were under, it's just … because the school wanted you to drop everything and fly down there and sort it out. It was like every five minutes ringing us up, weren't they? 'Will you come and sort it?', 'Hold on a minute. She's in your care – you sort it.' … Because my understanding is, when you go to school and you've got problems in school, school should deal with it, at school. When she's not in school that's our problem then, 'cos she's at home. That's our responsibility.

It seems that, when children were troublesome at school, staff increasingly emphasised the responsibility of parents for the behaviour of their children and so called parents to come and address the problems or to take the child away. Parents found this expectation difficult and it often led to a breakdown of communication between parents and schools. A few parents felt that teachers did not always appreciate the difficulties parents were facing at home, and in trying to deal with their children's problem behaviour.

In addition to liaising with schools, the YISP keyworkers had also liaised with other agencies such as the police, housing authorities and social services departments, on behalf of families. Keyworkers saw this as important in helping parents deal with situations which were clearly adding to the risks for children. We heard stories such as the following:

> The family were going to be evicted and social services, in conjunction with myself and the Travellers Project, said, 'Well, look. Basically, if you evict them you're only going to have to rehouse them. Why not rehouse them directly? You know what I mean. Take them somewhere and rehouse them at a different address.' So that was what happened, rather than them being evicted because of their antisocial behaviour and because of the community being in uproar about their antisocial behaviour. Fortunately housing agreed to rehouse them somewhere else in the borough. (YISP keyworker)

The YISP keyworkers also told us about the volume of valuable information they were able to bring to the table in any professionals' meeting, as a result of the ONSET assessment. One keyworker explained that when a teacher had visited the panel to talk about a really difficult case, they had found that the YISP had more information about the child than the school had:

> I think when it came to panel and I was going through the background, [the school] were really like 'Well, where did you get this from? We didn't know that, and where's that from, and how did you get that?' And then after the meeting they must have contacted the social worker and spoke to the social worker and she must have got a mouthful as well from them, because she said 'They were shouting at me, asking me why didn't I let them know about his family and his background – you know – and we need to have a meeting', and so they were able to get a lot of information from us.

Occasionally, keyworkers had perceived the need for parents to access help. In one instance, a mother was going into hospital to have a major operation and had made no provision for the care of her children, two of whom had been referred to the YISP. The keyworker worked successfully to overcome the mother's fear of social services in order for the case to be referred for family support. In another YISP, professionals agreed that a mother needed access to adult mental health services. She was unwilling to be referred at first, but time was being taken to build up a relationship of trust with her in the hope that she would eventually gain the confidence to accept a referral. Other parents agreed to be referred to parenting programmes or to parenting support groups. The YISP staff believed that these programmes would also benefit the children and help reduce risk factors.

Keyworkers often gave information or advice to parents about a variety of relevant services such as domestic violence, bereavement, debt counselling, college courses, support groups and local activities for their children. Ken's mother explained how his keyworker had encouraged her to become a volunteer on a local youth project:

> The keyworker got me the forms, filled them all back in, sent them off. Yeah, I'm doing a computer course with the kids – you know, after school. It's like a drop-in centre for kids, so on a Thursday night they go and play on computers and at the end they can win a computer. The keyworker got us into that as well.

In addition to helping parents access other services, many parents reported that YISP keyworkers had provided them with emotional support, 'a listening ear':

> If I needed to talk to somebody he [the keyworker] listened. Doesn't matter what time it was, I told him I was upset or scared and he said he was there if I needed him. (mother of Ken, aged 11)

> I can't believe that [the YISP workers] … they've just come into our lives and everything's changed … I feel like somebody cares. (mother of Zac, aged 11)

Although some keyworkers had received specialised training to work with parents (Birmingham YISP workers had been trained in Triple P), most described themselves as offering informal parenting advice and support. Wigan YISP was able to offer parenting support from trained/dedicated parenting workers. Zac's mother, who was a single parent, stressed how good it was to have 'somebody to talk to' regarding dealing with her children's behaviour, since she lacked wider family support. She described some of the strategies the parenting worker had suggested, stressing that she understood the need to persevere with them.

Most keyworkers across all the YISPs felt strongly that many of the parents of children referred to YISP were in need of parenting support. However, this issue highlighted differences and tensions in how different YISPs defined their service. At one end of the spectrum, one YISP co-ordinator stated clearly her understanding of YIPS's service boundary:

> We have to be very clear about what's on offer. We offer a short, focused piece of work for twelve weeks … In terms of parenting, we are not offering anything beyond some very basic support, strategies such as the star system, behaviour strategies, basic family work. If more is needed, we refer to the Family Centre … It's very important we are clear we are not social services … We have some input and then it is sustained by another agency … If social services say we can't take them over, we can't take on that role. We can't be responsible for that … it is not for us to take over their role. The danger is that YISP is seen as something for everybody. This is very dangerous – we must not take on board the responsibilities of others … We can't get too involved with things we can't change … all we can do is give the children some strategies to cope.

At the other end of the spectrum, a YISP with a bigger team, a greater mix of skills and a more flexible approach to timescales took a different approach. It offered parenting support from a dedicated parenting worker – for as long as was deemed necessary. The justification for this view was that family dysfunction is a major contributory factor to offending. What we are seeing here is the difference between a YISP which has followed YJB Management Guidance closely, offering short, focused intervention and moving the child on, and one which regarded YISP intervention as flexible, relatively open-ended and holistic. All the YISPs were mindful of the pitfalls of doing the work which should be done by other agencies, but some were keenly aware that if YISPs do not do the work no one will.

From Assessment to Service Delivery

By examining the ISPs for a number of cases we gained some insight into the experiences of young people in our in-depth study. The ISPs were clearly individualised, but we have not always found it easy to identify the links between interventions offered and the perceived risks articulated in the ONSET assessments. Frequently, the interventions were not structured in terms of dosage, duration and order of delivery. We have looked at the ISPs and tried to match them up with what we know happened subsequently to the child/young person. Nevertheless, we have some concerns that although the YJB advises that the targets for change should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and relevant, and time-limited ('SMART'),[64] there is little objective evidence that this formula is met in many cases. Not all ISPs met these criteria – partly because many of them were formulated and expressed in very general and unspecific terms. It was rarely easy to discern which interventions were focused on specific targets for change. Furthermore, not all issues and risks identified as key factors in the initial ONSET assessment were addressed in the ISPs. There may be legitimate reasons for this gap, such as a lack of appropriate services, but our findings suggest that there is some disjunction between assessment and intervention. Only those risks which could be addressed seemed to be noted in the ISPs. Others were simply left to one side and not addressed. It should be stressed, however, that our interviews with keyworkers indicated that they were usually very aware of the risks faced by each child and had a very good understanding of each case, irrespective of what was contained in the ISP. Keyworkers play a critical role in translating the ONSET assessment into active intervention and their work is not always captured within ISPs or case records.

Facilitating Engagement

We wanted to tease out which factors encouraged and which factors inhibited successful engagement with YISP interventions. A number of key themes emerged from our interviews with families and keyworkers.

Parental support

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[64] Youth Justice Board (2002) *Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision: Key elements of effective practice* (YJB), 1st edn, p. 12.

In our interviews with families, it became clear that some children and young people had engaged fully with their ISP, while others had not. Keyworkers regarded the support and encouragement of parents as absolutely essential to the engagement of their children. One mother, whose son had engaged successfully with his ISP, described how she had worked hard to encourage him to overcome his fears in order to go on a residential week:

> It was going away … and he just point blank said, 'Right I'm not going' … and I just tried to persuade him – you know. And I somehow persuaded him, and he loved, absolutely loved it. He gets quite nervous, you know … he finds it very difficult to [do new things]. Once he gets to know someone he's fine. He's good as gold. (mother of Stephen, aged 12)

Other parents of children who successfully engaged with YISP stressed how they took responsibility for ensuring their children accessed activities and interventions. The parents/carers who were supportive were often, though not always, those who were working hard to get help for their children. Many were also prepared to seek help to enhance their own parenting skills. Logan's mother indicated:

> I would really like to have something like that [i.e. a course in parenting] … Just to be able to control … a bit more control … the parenting thing … I have mentioned this to [the keyworker], that if there is anything available, I would like it.

The enthusiasm of the child

Clearly, it was also important that the young person was motivated to engage with the YISP. One mother described her son's total enthusiasm for and commitment to engaging with his summer activity programme as follows:

> He never missed none unless he was bad – he even went canoeing the day after a car crash that nearly killed him … We had a car crash with my step-daughter …in August this year and he was going canoeing next day, we were all rushed into hospital. Next day he goes, 'Mum, come on, we've got to go canoeing.' (mother of Ken, aged 11)

The relationship with keyworkers

Another facilitating factor is a positive relationship between the young person and the YISP keyworker. The approach and commitment of keyworkers has emerged as one of the most important aspects of YISP interventions. A successful relationship with a keyworker can enhance motivation to comply with an ISP and make changes in behaviour. One mother told us how her nine- year-old son's loyalty to his keyworkers had been a strong factor in helping him to sustain attendance on a week-long football course:

> I mean, [the keyworker] is totally brilliant … he's the only one who ever got Jenson into any social things … That football … I mean, that went on for a week and I didn't think it would last that long with Jenson and it did. He went every single day … He said, 'But if it wasn't for [the keyworker] I wouldn't be here and that' … I mean, he's got a lot of respect for [the keyworker] … I've never seen him to have so much respect for an outsider as what he's got for [the keyworker] … but [the keyworker] talks to him … Doesn't talk down to him, he talks to him as a person. (mother of Jenson, aged 9)

Simply getting to activities could be a challenge for some children. Some activity schemes to which the children were referred were within walking distance, while others provided transport. Keyworkers in Ealing told us that the panel had specifically encouraged them to ensure that the young people could access activities over the summer, arguing that it was particularly important to help the 'hard-to-reach' children. This had posed challenges in terms of resources and personnel, and keyworkers had taken

time out of their case work to organise transport and accompany the children to these activities. In other YISPs, keyworkers routinely drove children to activities on a weekly or one-off basis. Keyworkers recognised that their going with the young people was a major facilitating factor in terms of enhancing engagement. They often tried to ensure either that the YISP children had a friend or a sibling to go with or that they had a sessional worker or a mentor to accompany them.

Some keyworkers routinely stayed with the children during an activity, usually one-off or weekly activities rather than those which lasted for the whole summer or half-term holiday. The availability of mentors and sessional workers also facilitated engagement. Many keyworkers also regarded it as important to help the family to keep appointments and support the children. One mother told us how the keyworker had helped the family by driving her son, Paul, to counselling sessions and bringing him home afterwards. Paul's mother has six children and explained that she would never have been able to get Paul to counselling without the keyworker's help.

Inhibiting Engagement

Lack of parental support

If we look at the factors which could inhibit engagement and compliance with YISPs, most are the inverse of the facilitating factors. For example, keyworkers regarded the lack of parental encouragement and support as a major problem. Although they appreciated that parents/carers differed in terms of their abilities, emotional and mental health and levels of family responsibility, most felt that without parental encouragement and support children found it very difficult to access activities and interventions. Speaking about one family with eight children, one keyworker commented:

> I think even though mum might have difficulty in supporting her children to do an activity … at the end of the day, in order for the kids not to be isolated, mum at some point is going to have to be involved in supporting the kids to do other things … She is not meeting their support needs at the moment in terms of them making constructive use of their spare time. But it is something I constantly need to speak to mum about and discuss with mum.

The children's dependence on their parents' support in accessing activities was evident from some of their responses at our second interviews. Melanie (aged 13) explained:

> I think we were meant to be going on a trip tomorrow … it's with your parent, but my Mum doesn't want to go.

Lee (aged 10) explained that he was supposed to have gone on a trip to 'mini-motors' but did not get there:

> I wanted to go but … my Mum forgot … Just forgot.

At our initial interview with Lee's mother she had stressed how much her son was looking forward to doing activities in the summer. Because of her fragile emotional and mental health, however, she consistently failed to ensure that he and his brother attended, even withdrawing them from a summer-long football activity after an incident. She also failed to keep appointments with the keyworker and to ensure that her son was there to be picked up for sessions and activities. Other parents admitted to failing to ensure that their children were in when mentors, sessional workers or keyworkers called to collect them. Indeed, a few children reported that their parents punished them by refusing to let them attend YISP activities. It was also noticeable from second interviews that some parents seemed to simply accept their child(ren)'s refusal to go to activities, without attempting to encourage them to overcome their inertia.

The YISPs look to parents to play their part in the delivery of the ISPs. One YISP co-ordinator commented that it is impossible to deliver YISP interventions without parents supporting their children:

> [The YISP] is a voluntary arrangement … it's not just a question of [parents] signing up and saying 'Yeah I agree to it'. We've had some parents who have done that, and dropped out. We've been asking them for a little bit of support, in terms of improving their home life, their family life. And they're like – for lots of different reasons – they're just not happy, not many of them. Most want to do something … I mean, you need some back-up at least. You can't do it in isolation.

In discussion with keyworkers we found that they were uncertain about the extent to which offering support to families in order to help them access activities might create a sense of dependency on YISPs, rather than empowering families to make changes for themselves. Some keyworkers were reluctant to offer too much support, while others felt that they needed to be supportive in order to meet the children's best interests. It is a dilemma which may need to be resolved if YISPs are to be effective in helping high risk children to access mainstream and other services. Some families are simply unable to provide the necessary motivation to access key services, and so need someone to support them. The issue of lack of parental support led Ealing YISP to construct a written agreement which parents and children are asked to sign so as to ensure that the young people attend activities and behave themselves. Some keyworkers were more comfortable with this process than others. Some felt that this was not the way they were used to working, and that it had too much of a flavour of 'enforcement' about it:

> The management we have is more enforcement 'cos … our staff deal with young people on statutory orders and YISP children are not. An example is, when our young people are excluded from an activity …we can't just re-engage them, just like that. We now have to do a visit with them with a senior manger to re-enforce the boundaries and get them to sign a behaviour contract before we continue to work with the family… Maybe because I've worked in a different way … it's almost like we're criminalising them, you know what I mean … Sometimes it means we're not working with them in a non-judgmental way – that's my concern.

A few children reported that they were unable to attend activities because their parents needed to be cared for. Sophie (aged 12) explained that she could not do half-term activities because she wanted 'to be there' for her father:

> [The keyworker] was giving me a sheet saying what we were doing this half term, but I didn't want to go 'cos my dad's starting detox … when he starts detox we don't have to go out. You've got to stay in for three days to make sure all the alcohol's out of your body.

It was clear that some parents we interviewed were unable to sustain involvement with a service. One mother reported that she had missed her child's CAMHS appointment because she was 'hopeless at remembering appointments'. One mother told us that she had withdrawn herself and her daughter from the psychotherapy service YISP had arranged for them, after just a couple of sessions. Another mother and father, with six children, told us how difficult it was to keep appointments for family counselling over a 12- or 14-week period when they had so many children to care for.

Children's lack of interest

Keyworkers also saw children's lack of interest or motivation to engage as a major factor in non-compliance. A few children reported that they 'couldn't be bothered' to attend activities, or found them 'boring'. Interest and motivation could fluctuate. For example, Marisha attended six weeks of activities one summer but refused to go the next, claiming she 'couldn't be bothered' and that she had 'no one to go with'. Keyworkers and parents alike perceived lack of transport to be a major factor which could

hinder children's successful engagement with activities and interventions. The problems seemed to affect urban and rural YISPs alike.

Children and young people having no one with whom they could go to activities was a recurring theme in interviews with children and parents. One mother explained that her child had been given a free leisure pass to use to go swimming by the YISP keyworker, but because he had no one to go with he did not use the pass. Other parents explained that their child lacked confidence to go to a new place on their own. All the YISPs recognised the problems.

Disruptive behaviour

Some children had been excluded from activities because of their disruptive behaviour. Service providers also asked for workers to stay with difficult children throughout an activity, which was not always possible, and so hindered the child's attendance. This seemed to be a particular problem in Ealing, although there were occasional examples of it happening elsewhere. An Ealing keyworker explained:

> The feedback I got from [the activity] is that Ryan was very demanding of the leader of the programme, and because her attention needed to be with everybody else she didn't feel it would be appropriate for him to come again to another trip unless he had one-to-one, so that kind of restricted him in what he could and couldn't do.

In Ealing this led to frustration, and the YISP co-ordinator commented that if these schemes could not fulfil their remit to deal with 'at-risk' children some of their funding should go directly to YISPs, which would then commission their own activities. Ealing had very successfully commissioned its own boxing intervention.

Lack of resources

Inevitably, YISPs have to work within the constraints of their own resources, and deal with local service environments which may not be particularly supportive of YISPs. We noted that ease of access to both statutory and voluntary services varied from area to area. Sometimes services had long waiting lists. This was particularly so for CAMHS. In one panel area the waiting time for a CAMHS appointment was eighteen months. In other areas, the YISPs had managed to find ways of fast-tracking YISP referrals. In some areas PAYP activities were available after school and in school vacations. In other areas, they were available only during the summer vacation and half-term holidays. In some areas, relatively few activities were available, especially for children aged between eight and twelve. Moreover, some keyworkers were hesitant about exposing younger children to the influence of older ones, who might have been referred to PAYP by the local YOT. The national evaluation of PAYP has indicated that in the first year of the programme (2003–04) it had been difficult for some Lead Development Agencies to recruit keyworkers and to sauce suitable activity provision, and that other factors hampered initial delivery of PAYP.[65] This may explain why some YISP pilots found that PAYP activities were somewhat restricted. We noted also that, in some pilot areas, there was a lack of culturally specific support for BME children or children in traveller communities. Even where activities were available, the lack of sessional workers, mentors and escorts available to take YISP children to them might inhibit engagement. This appeared to be a particular problem for Ealing YISP, where, at our time 2 interviews, we talked to several children who had not yet received a mentor because of a problem with recruitment. It was clear that two high risk children who needed support to engage in YISP activities had received little input after several months because of a shortage of sessional workers.

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[65] CRG Research Ltd (2006) *Positive Activities for Young People: National Evaluation.* (DfES)

Other factors which keyworkers from all the YISPs highlighted as impinging on service delivery included staff absences, staff shortages and heavy caseloads. Most YISPs had experienced these problems in some measure. More rural YISPs referred to the geographical size of their catchment areas. Keyworkers also referred to practical issues, such as a lack of suitable venues. One keyworker explained that she had begun one-to-one sessions at the child's home, but that he lived in a hostel for the homeless and so she had had to sit 'in a corridor with things going on all around us'. She decided to conduct the sessions at school, but that too became difficult.

The case study YISPs adopted differing policies regarding whether keyworkers should deliver one-to-one work during school time. Wigan and Lancashire keyworkers did work with children during school time, but those in Ealing and Birmingham did not. The latter two YISPs also stressed that they did not deliver activities and services to excluded children during the day because they did not wish YISP to be seen as alternative educational provision by referrers. One keyworker raised interesting issues about the purpose of activities when she explained that she was unhappy about arranging weekend activities for a child who refused to go to school.

Labelling children

Concerns about criminalising children arose in respect of some activities, particularly groupwork. Some keyworkers recognised the dangers associated with groupwork because at-risk children will inevitably have to mix together, and were concerned that this could result in them being drawn into antisocial and criminal behaviour. Some parents also shared these concerns. One mother told us about a trip her child had gone on as part of his YISP activities:

> That trip we went on … I hated it. I found, to put a child like Dan with a load of other children that are from different backgrounds and they are all mad…a lot of children with problems. 'I kicked the teacher. I did this.' It wasn't what I wanted. I actually walked away and said to [the keyworker] 'Don't ever invite me to a trip like that again.'…. Some of those kids, [they're like] 'Oh, I'll take your number'. I'm like, 'Oh no you don't!' I don't want these kids round my house. That's how I find it … 'cos if you stick a load of naughty kids together they are going to fire off one another. (mother of Dan, aged 8)

Closing Cases

It is evident that compliance with ISPs is heavily dependent on the attitudes, motivations, and abilities to engage in YISP activities of children and parents. If they are committed to getting help, and if keyworkers establish positive relationships with the children, compliance is likely to be higher than if motivation is low. Dilemmas still exist, however, for some YISPs in respect of the extent to which they should stay involved with YISP children for long periods, irrespective of whether compliance is high.
As we have noted, YISPs varied in their approach to case closure. Some limited intervention to about three months. Others kept cases open for anything up to two years. Nevertheless, despite these differences, all our case study YISPs felt that it was important to develop an exit strategy for each case. This strategy might include an onward referral to another agency or to a mentor. One keyworker told us:

> I always aim to leave them with something – so we'd try to give them Connexions or Social Services – but they'd go with a plan, an exit strategy. We never just cut them off and leave them to their own devices.

However, the YISPs differed in the criteria they used in respect of case closure and the procedures they implemented. The Lancashire YISP model used time as the indicator for closure (except in exceptional cases). Thus, most cases were automatically closed at panel after twelve weeks, with a few being closed after just six weeks. Any outstanding issues from the action plans, whether cases were closed at

six or twelve weeks, were passed on to YISP panel members to deal with or passed back to the referring agency. Keyworkers, however, told us that in some cases they continued to do a limited amount of work after formal panel closure: for example, when the ISP had been interrupted owing to a family holiday, or staff leave or absence. Most keyworkers in Lancashire were happy with these closure criteria and procedures. One commented that if the YISP intervention were to last for a longer period many more resources would be needed to make an impact. One or two, however, argued strongly for the need for more flexibility. This was seen as particularly important in cases where new issues arose just at the time of case closure or when other services were lacking:

> I think we need a lot more flexibility, and I think some cases can be freed up after six weeks, with a contact number left. Absolutely certain of that … And I think other ones … if you come up to your twelve weeks and, bang, Dad leaves home or something, you need the flexibility to continue until the worker feels that the family are stable enough to pass them over.

> The support services need to be in place, and if you've got good services to access, which is appropriate for whatever the issues are, and then after three months you can leave that case with a support network in place, then it can be successful… I think if you don't have those services in place it's very, very difficult. And one of the issues, I think … is CAMHS. If you've got a young person who desperately requires support in mental health you can put everything else in place, but if they can't get that service there's a great big gap there.

By contrast, the YISPs in Birmingham, Ealing and Wigan have chosen not to be driven by rigid criteria for case closure. The closure criteria used by these YISPs were essentially threefold:

1. The extent to which risks leading to offending have been reduced.

2. Whether onward referrals/access to other services are in place.

3. Whether there is good multi-agency working.

The first of these is acknowledged to be a matter of professional judgement:

> It's about measuring regularly whether the interventions are working and, when we do have reviews, there must be a point when we have to look at the level of risk of the young person and try and see if it's been reduced. (YISP keyworker)

> We don't aim for twelve weeks. Through supervisions we ascertain the 'distance travelled', whether risk factors have been reduced, and whether there is evidence of good multi-agency working. If these are in place, we pull out and let other agencies get on with it. (YISP manager)

Keyworkers told us that they found it challenging, when they were undertaking case closure, to have to focus on issues which might lead to a risk of offending rather than on those which are more welfare-oriented. One keyworker, talking about a specific case in which the young person was no longer involved in antisocial behaviour but had ongoing problems at school, explained that she needed to remind herself of her role and make sure she did not get 'drawn in' to dealing with school issues. Nevertheless, she felt it appropriate to wait until referrals to CAMHS and the Pupil Referral Unit had come through before closing that young person's case completely.

Keyworkers in all our case study areas appreciated the supervision process for discussing case closure, especially when cases were complex:

> I'm not happy about closing a case unless risk has been reduced … otherwise I don't feel like I've done my job … you do get successful … you turn kids round … in an ideal world you could turn every kid round but I think our job's done when we've reduced the highest risk around a child … We never want to admit defeat and say 'We can't help this child', and I think that's where supervision comes in … because sometimes I think we need someone to tell us 'You can't help this child any more … you

need to close it', because otherwise, us being the type of people we are, we don't want to admit defeat … (YISP keyworker)

In Birmingham and Ealing, closure decisions were discussed by the YISP panels, but in Wigan there was no such multi-agency forum. In Birmingham, closure was complicated by the fact that the panel might continue to monitor the case and could ask the keyworker to work on it again if new issues arose. In Wigan, closure was complicated by the fact that YISP parenting intervention often ran past the closure of the young person's case. Moreover, in Ealing, the keyworkers found the case closure paperwork daunting, especially in the light of their heavy caseloads:

> You've got so many forms to fill in. You've got the evaluation form for the referrer, the young person's evaluation form from the support panel, the parents/carers evaluation form, then you've got the ONSET evaluation forms … So there's all these forms you've got for closure and I don't understand why they duplicate that information – for what end? For me…it's not so much the closure, it's all the bits that go with closure, and we have to write letters as well, and you've got to put it on the Careworks system, so you've got all that to do. It takes ages. (YISP keyworker)

Working with Children and Families – The Centrality of Keyworkers

The panels in the pilot YISPs went about their tasks in various ways, and adopted different approaches to developing ISPs and conducting case reviews and closures. Some worked within YJB guidelines and closed cases within the three-to-six-month boundary, while others kept cases open for longer periods, sometimes indefinitely. In the evaluation, therefore, we have not been able to compare like with like, but sought to explore variations in both processes and outcomes in order to determine both the facilitating factors and the barriers to effective intervention.

Parents and children who were involved in pilots offering time-limited and more focused intervention generally knew that the help they were being offered was for a relatively short period. By contrast, families involved in pilots which did not place any limits on YISP involvement were generally unaware of how long YISP interventions would last or what was being planned for them. The ISP does not appear to have been a particularly significant document for most families, and it is likely that it is of more value for keyworkers and panels who review progress than for children and parents. Unless ISPs were regularly updated they were likely to become out of date as YISP engagement changed and evolved over time. Whatever the content of each ISP, however, it appears that interventions fell into two major categories: direct work with children, and more indirect work undertaken on behalf of children. A wide range of interventions were in evidence during the evaluation, although not all the pilots recorded their work on YISPMIS and we have been severely limited in terms of the kinds of analyses we could conduct.

Most children were offered some kind of activities during their YISP engagement. These were usually structured, and designed to offer diversionary activities and/or to help children develop new skills and interests. The YISPs differed, however, in terms of the extent to which they made structured activities the focus of their work. One-to-one support was equally, if not more, important in most pilots, and the role of the keyworker has emerged as a key factor in the delivery of effective preventative services. Indeed, keyworkers were greatly appreciated by parents and by children, particularly when they had developed rapport with the family, adopted a co-ordinating role to ensure support was available on a number of levels, and developed an effective relationship with the children who had been referred to YISPs. Some parents were extremely grateful when keyworkers acted as go-betweens with other agencies such as CAMHS and education and were able to fast-track referrals to mainstream services. Keyworkers often smoothed the path to more effective communication between home and school. Offering this kind of support to parents was regarded as a central feature of YISP work, as was being able to provide a listening ear to parents who were acutely stressed. A common theme that emerged across all our case study pilots was the need to offer support to parents if children were going to be

able to sustain improvements in behaviour and attitudes as a result of YISP intervention. Some YISP keyworkers believed that parents should be required to receive parenting support if this is deemed essential to a child's well-being. The evaluation provided strong evidence that the support and encouragement of parents is absolutely essential to children being able to engage effectively with YISP interventions and to benefit from them. Children also need to be motivated to change if they are going to benefit from YISPs, and in this respect keyworkers were very important in encouraging motivation. A positive relationship with a keyworker was a strong facilitating factor in YISP engagement.

On the other hand, lack of motivation on the child's part, lack of parental support and encouragement, and minimal keyworker involvement have all emerged as barriers to effective intervention. Some keyworkers were reluctant to offer too much support for fear of creating a sense of dependency in the family, but if YISPs are to be effective in the agenda for change they are going to need to offer a certain level of support to families who are clearly unable to deal with the risks children face by themselves. This means that YISPs have to develop a coherent exit strategy for each case, which might include onward referral to another agency or keyworker. Leaving families without support is not acceptable and could undo all the positive impacts of YISP intervention. The YISP panels took differing approaches to the issue of case closure, but the YISP model is such that it ought to be possible for each case to be passed on to the most appropriate local agency should ongoing support be considered necessary at the end of YISP involvement. Where there was no one to continue the work begun by YISPs this was frustrating for keyworkers and for the families. In these circumstances, there is a real danger that cases may simply drift, either when they are kept open for long periods or when there is no clear exit strategy in place. Such a strategy requires strong multi-agency collaboration, and, to be effective, YISPs need to be located within a continuum of support and/or preventative services.

Chapter 7   Multi-Agency Working

Stephen Procter

Multi-agency co-operation is an essential element if YISPs are to be effective. In order to examine this aspect of YISPs, we studied three panels and their areas in depth: Lancashire, with a particular focus on the Wyre and Fylde; Nottingham, with a particular focus on Area 3; and Birmingham, with a particular focus on Quinton. Data were obtained largely through semi-structured interviews with senior staff and panel members in agencies linked to YISPs. The objectives were to ascertain how the different agencies involved understood the operation of YISPs; the issues raised by multi-agency working; the roles played by different agencies associated with the YISPs; and how the YISP remit varied in different areas.

Origins, Structures and Processes

We began by looking at the origins of YISPs in the different areas, their structures and the processes for multi-agency collaboration.

Origins

We examined the differences between panels, the aim being to show how the same basic remit was made effective in different ways in the different areas. In all the three areas the YISP was developed out of existing structures of inter-agency co-operation in relations to youth offending. In Lancashire, this development from an existing programme was reflected in the YISP continuing to operate under the title of GRIP, which had started off on a relatively informal basis. This approach was then developed in two parts of the county, with particular involvement by education and the police:

> … there was this group getting together [the police with] social services, education welfare and looking at funding … the [police officer] had run an experimental period of realising that all the agencies carousel round after each other and would pass youngsters on, and a lot of youngsters were falling out of the net and between the agencies. (police service panel member)

Education staff had recognised that children at risk of offending were not meeting the criteria for social services intervention, and so family support workers were recruited to work with the children in schools. The police had also realised that young people were falling through the gaps between services and decided to experiment with a multi-agency approach. Responsibility for the initiative was transferred when, following the introduction of youth offending teams in 2000, the education representative arrived on secondment and championed the multi-agency panel approach. But GRIP was unlikely to have proceeded into YISP without funding from the Children's Fund.

In Nottingham the YISP had its origins in an initiative known as the Nottingham Youth Crime Reduction Agency (NYCRA). This had in fact started life as the Local Youth Crime Reduction Agency (LYCRA), but this name had had to be dropped after objections from the commercial organisation of the same name: 'stretching a point', said one panel member. For some in Nottingham, there was a definite sense of continuity. The YISP's most recent predecessor in Nottingham was a system of Early Warning and Tracking Panels (EWTPs), which a YISP key worker described as 'a very good learning experience for us'. He did, however, note significant differences in attitude between EWTPs and YISPs:

> … the EWTP were there [so] that members and workers would come effectively to look at tracking the young people, whereas YISP is workers … coming to work with the young people … it's more of a functioning panel, where before it was more of a kind of listening panel.

Birmingham offered us the opportunity to study two YISP panels that were constructed *de novo*. In Birmingham, the Quinton panel had its roots in more localised developments but there had not previously been a panel in existence dealing with potential young offenders. Nevertheless, partnerships were already in existence which provided a strong foundation for the establishment of YISP panels. The YOS manager was explicit about this:

> … we've developed to a point where we have two pilot Youth Inclusion and Support Panels, the Aston and Quinton panel. Both of them, again, we didn't go and try and invent something new. We went to build on existing structures and where we could see good practice that we could build upon.

The work in Quinton began with informal liaison between different agencies. More formal collaboration was based on two factors: 'Safe Haven' policing on an explicitly US model; and the 'Quinzone', which encompassed an Education Action Zone and a number of other initiatives. One of the school representatives on the panel said:

> … we used to have regular monthly meetings with the police, and this was just to share information about kids in school and kids who were arrested … The sharing of information … has always been superb here.

Structures

Partly as a result of their differences in origin, the three areas exhibited differences in how they were structured. In Lancashire, a three-tier system was in operation. Each of the GRIP panels had its own local steering group, which reported in turn to a county-wide steering group. The structure worked well for some. Of the relationship between the county and local steering groups, one member of the former said, 'I think because we've only got a smallish amount of staff … things are reasonably well communicated.' The local steering group, however, did not see the relationship in the same way: one police member said: 'I have no involvement at all … I would like to think that … the GRIP co-ordinator would have that relationship'.

Although the GRIP workers were part of YOT they were physically based in Social Services' Family Centres. The county service manager told us that it was felt that siting them in YOT offices would cause them to become associated with criminality and the criminal justice system. The accommodation was taken by YOT as indicative of Social Services' attitude to GRIP. We were told that social services had provided fairly small spaces in Children's Centres for the GRIP workers, and even this contribution had created a 'huge stir':

> Children's Centres were really nurseries … So the idea of these sort of young rogues coming in and kids with difficult behaviour, they sort of saw it as really threatening. And they still don't like us being there, they really don't.

In Birmingham, a characteristic of the YISP mode of operation was the split between the panel co-ordinators and the keyworkers. The role of the former was described by one of the two co-ordinators:

> … we have a responsibility for making sure that panel members have all the information that they need. We have to be able to provide all the links they need … we have to oversee and sort of advise the family support workers on cases.

According to the YOS manager this division of responsibility was necessary for effective multi-agency working:

> Multi-agency work is quite tender and delicate at the best of times, and to get everybody in the same room at the same time needs somebody, a champion that can just keep banging on at it. So co-ordinators are key for me and their role is to co-ordinate. It's not to engage with the families, it's to make those panels work … and then you complement with our support workers who physically engage … with the young people.

The intention, as the YOS manager went on to describe, was to make things as straightforward as possible for the panel members:

> … the onus is not on you as a partner to co-ordinate anything. All you have to do is receive the referrals off us a week before the panel, have a look at them, check your data to see whether that child is known to you, if so bring that information with you and turn up at the meeting.

The danger was that the YOS would be seen not as facilitative but as dominant. This concern was reflected in the decision that the co-ordinators, but not the keyworkers, should take part in panel meetings. One of the co-ordinators explained:

> The keyworker would come in the early days, but there was a problem in the sense that you could quite often get five people from the YOS – a fifth of the panel is your own organisation … first of all, it seems like a waste of resources to other agencies and other people within your own department, and secondly you're kind of over-subscribing. It becomes your panel not a community panel.

A second feature of the Birmingham set-up was that the chair of the panel was not necessarily from the YOS. In the Quinton case, the chair and vice-chair roles were held by a senior police officer and a deputy headteacher respectively. In other YISPs this practice was seen as a way of incorporating agencies which might not be so enthusiastic about the YISP.

Processes

In looking at the beginning and the end of the formal YISP process – the referral and the case closure respectively – we can identify a number of differences in the ways in which panels operated. The variation in the types of cases coming before the panels was remarked upon by a number of interviewees. At one end of the spectrum were trivial cases of misbehaviour. One Quinton panel member said:

> … there's only a small number [in which] the kid has done very, very little wrong … but mum or grandparent is absolutely obsessed that the child's on its way to maximum security prison when in fact they're probably going to do quite well at their A levels.

At the other extreme, according to this panel member, 'you have a number of cases … where there are a range of mental health let alone social issues' but, for him, the majority of referrals were seen as falling somewhere in the middle:

> You've then what I call the big bulge in the middle … the bulk of the referrals are cases where, with a fair wind and a little bit of good fortune and goodwill by people, over a period of months that child or that family is going to return – sometimes not return but experience for the first time – some kind of normality.

Others took the line that the bulk of cases involved more deep-rooted problems than this. According to another member of the Quinton panel:

> The majority of the cases we saw were at the heavy end of the spectrum … I think most of the things that we see are deep-seated … they are pervasive … they are to do with huge areas of poverty and unemployment.

The concern that panels were not competent to deal with the very difficult cases and might, indeed, make matters worse, was one that was aired during interviews. The same panel member was of the view that many of the children

> needed really good psychiatric social work intervention. That is not PC any more. Social workers are not trained to do it any more, they're case managers instead … these workers don't even know that there are chasms that you don't want to disturb … you don't want to get to what lies beneath.

In Birmingham, a tiered system aimed to capture some of these differences. Each case was classed as belonging to one of four tiers. The YOS manager described these as follows:

> So our Tier 1 … that would be purely 'You've come to our notice, there is evidence of risk in relation to your propensity but making mother and father aware of that, signposting you on to an activity that could just pick that up' … no keyworker intervention ...

> Tier 2, we're talking prevalence of two or three key risk factors … Again, that will not attract a keyworker, that will attract a visit to mum and dad, a discussion with the family, with the child, and to identify if there's anything underlying that we can address … We may be able to circumvent that system to get you that appointment a little bit quicker but we intervene very minimal at that point.

> Tier 3 and Tier 4, that's when you attract a full ONSET assessment … our workers physically go out to do the assessments … the ISPs and involve families in that and sign people up and then action that piece of work and then those young people are held on caseload on a voluntary basis.

As we indicated in Chapter 4, the tiers were allocated to cases prior to ONSET assessment, however, on the basis of the information provided by the referrer. This was in part driven by the desire to avoid the danger of stigmatising young people. One YOS manager said:

> We're very clear about that sort of approach as well, and we wanted to make sure that we intervene appropriately and we only do what's necessary at the right time.

At the other end of the process there is the question of sign-off and case closure. Twelve weeks or three months was the maximum period of intervention formally prescribed in the YJB Management Guidance. As we noted in the previous chapter, the Lancashire panels tried to adhere most strongly to this time limit. As the county co-ordinator in Lancashire put it:

> The maximum length of time we work with somebody is twelve weeks. And we're very clear about that in all our literature. When we go and see parents … we'll say, 'Now if it's successful after three months, the case is then closed'.

The county service manager saw this as a source of frustration for her team:

> … that's their biggest criticism. They say 'We can't close cases after twelve weeks. We've only got ourselves geared up, the kid's only beginning to know me and trust me' … they could work with some of these families for years.

The onus was placed on preparing the young people for the end of the intervention. This process begins at the mid-point review and, as one police representative on the panel indicated, needs to be regarded positively:

> … they do the initial hard work and assessment and then … we've got to prepare for six weeks'
> time [when] we're coming out of here – what will involve the agencies, what other agencies … ?
> They try and avoid closing the door and leaving the child – well, 'dumped', I suppose, would be a
> good word … A shutting of a door is positive, and they know it's coming and it is closed.

In Nottingham a slightly more relaxed view of the three-month limit was in evidence. A senior YOT manager conceded that panels might work up to six months with a young person, although this was seen as the absolute limit. The emphasis, according to the Nottingham YOT manager, was on flexibility:

> I've asked quite clearly that the action plans should be quite flexible anyway … I have to say that
> in the past before YISPs … we've had cases as long as eight or nine months, but they are very few
> … The flexibility thing comes into our work simply because it's not a statutory order and doesn't
> have to be complied with, and it sometimes takes longer to engage young people in the process.

In Birmingham it seemed that this degree of flexibility was even greater. One Quinton panel member, on being asked about this issue, said:

> I had no idea there was a time limit … I'm sure I was told it, but long, long since forgotten … I
> would think our average is somewhere [around] four to five months.

Moreover, the Birmingham YISP co-ordinators stressed the difficulties of adhering to the twelve-week limit:

> When you've got panels that meet once a month and you're looking for interventions of twelve
> weeks, that's only three hits on a case, and if things fall behind you find that cases are open a lot
> longer … we always said it was going to be twelve weeks but I can't think of a single case that
> ever closed on a twelve-week gap.

Two ways round this were to distinguish between different sorts of closure, or else to keep some other kind of intervention in force. According to one of the Birmingham co-ordinators:

> There's two types of closure. There's closure to panel and closure to the team … once the team's
> closed it, panel can keep it open for as long they like for monitoring purposes … It [the Buddy
> Programme]'s an extra strategy for the YISP, really. It's where the keyworker's completed their
> work but … where they're still concerned that … they're still vulnerable.

In Birmingham, the panel might continue to review a case each month even after the YISP keyworker has closed it.

Promoting Multi-agency Collaboration

All of the three case study panels selected for the examination of multi-agency working were based on existing structures for or commitment to collaboration in the area of preventing youth crime. For many of those involved in YISPs, this was also part of a more widespread experience of their own agency working in collaboration with a variety of others. Most fundamentally, the introduction of YISPs had the effect of making the system of collaboration a more formal one. In itself the greater formality could be looked at from a negative perspective, as one YOT manager remarked:

> The only difference I can see is … the paperwork and the way that things need to be filled in, right,
> and the kind of papers that we use.

For the most part, however, the greater formality required by YISPs was welcomed. We can identify five main reasons for this and we consider each in turn:

Greater Sharing of Information.

The first of these aspects refers to the opportunities YISPs afforded for the sharing of information between agencies. As the YOT manager in Nottingham expressed it:

> The goodwill of agencies turning up to these panels, they can see it as a positive piece of work, but it also contributes to what they do as well because it keeps them more informed, so they have a fuller picture of that child's life.

Although most people felt positively about information sharing, the more general sharing of information on children and their families was not universally welcomed. One education welfare officer (EWO) complained:

> It just seems like gossiping to me. You know, 'Oh, they've got ten dogs and they've got, you know, two parrots.'

Improved Co-ordination of Activity.

The second area in which YISPs were seen to offer benefits was in the co-ordination of activities between the different agencies. A number of interviewees described what had happened in the absence of this co-ordination. According to one YOT manager:

> So in the old days you'd find the social worker going through the front door, the education welfare officer coming out the back, somebody else coming out the other door, and nobody knew what the hell they were doing.

The benefits of co-ordination were easy for the professionals involved to identify:

> Now we're all in the same room at the same time talking about the same young people, rather than talking about them as if they're different groups of young people. (YOT manager)

The YISP co-ordinator in Birmingham pointed also to the increased speed of access to services resulting from panel members committing to the provision of support.

More Structured Intervention.

In addition to this greater co-ordination, others laid stress on a third advantage, namely the benefits stemming from a more structured intervention, as the co-ordinator in Birmingham put it:

> … this one has a bit more teeth – you know the one about Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 … That's what now gives us the leverage. On top of that, it's also seen as a coherent strategy where we never had one before.

Higher Levels of Accountability.

Fourth, and linked to the previous benefit, YISP was able to generate a greater level, not just of access to other services, but of accountability on the part of the collaborating agencies. The Nottingham YOT manager described this as follows:

> It's also reinforced to panel members that it's a multi-agency partnership, but they also have a responsibility as different departments to take on their role. … We have now said 'Where there is a

need for Education to be involved we'll identify that, and the Education Department needs to take the lead on that. Where there's a child in need issue, or child at risk issue, Social Services now need to take the lead on that.' And with the monthly review form, we are now able to say 'Has this been met?'

Similarly, in Birmingham, one of the two YISP co-ordinators gave the following views on the increased accountability:

I think it works on pride, in the fact that … it's very easy to phone Social Care and Health and say 'You need to take this case' [and get the reply] 'Oh, we're very busy, we can't', but if you've got somebody sitting in a room with a set of minutes and an action point and they've got to make themselves accountable to twenty-five other professionals, somehow they'll do it.

Carry-Over Into Other Work.

Fifth, and finally, the relationships established through YISPs facilitated communication for other purposes:

I think that at grass-roots level … we're very good at doing it, or try to be, because we could just pick up a phone and, like with going to these meetings now, you know who to contact ... you know a familiar face. (health services panel member)

One issue that remained open was the degree to which the different agencies identified themselves with YISP. This went beyond the day-to-day benefits the agencies received from the collaboration facilitated by the programme. This was a particular concern for a senior YOT manager in Lancashire:

There isn't a sort of vision for the future. Nobody's worried that the Children's Fund money is ending in a year's time and we've got a £1million project but who is going to fund it? I'm worried about it, because I see them as my staff and I see the work that they do as valuable and productive. But nobody else is worrying around the table. Education said, 'Oh dear, we might lose it', and social services, 'Oh dear, we might lose it'. There isn't a sort of corporate ownership of it.

The Agencies and their Role

On the whole, YISPs were regarded as having benefitted collaborative working. This is not to say that the development of multi-agency working was universally and unequivocally seen as a good thing. At a basic level, it was recognised that, at least in the short term, the work of the YISP might not be a priority for all agencies:

Unfortunately, sometimes agencies have their core work to do, and their core work may not be considered as crime prevention … (YOT manager)

For a senior YOT manager in Nottingham, the problem was the difficulty of getting high-status people on to the panel. Panels often consisted of those in middle management positions, it was argued, whereas what was needed was panel members who were able to commit resources. On the other hand, one YISP keyworker suggested that what was required of members was an ability to engage more directly with the work of the panel:

… people saw it as listening but now they're coming to do. So I think there's been a shift from the senior level, that the members are being kind of asked to attend who are … key players and will effectively get stuck in.

One measure of commitment which a number of interviewees raised was an agency's attendance at panel meetings. A number of panel members stressed their own attendance record and said that they

would always send a representative if for any reason they were unable to attend themselves. One YISP keyworker said that this kind of commitment was achieved only through hard work on the part of those running the panels:

> … we've got to the point now that if one of the key players is not going to attend … they'll send another representative. But it took us a while to get people to think like that … we've had to kind of make quite a few noises about that.

Others raised the lack of attendance as a more serious indication of lack of commitment:

> I go to these meetings [Lancashire GRIP steering group] and it just amazes me. They'll say, 'We haven't got anybody from Health. They've not turned up. Social Services haven't turned up. We haven't done this, we haven't done that.' (senior police officer)

The proportion of time people devoted to YISPs could also be taken as some indication of their attitude. The difficulty, in a number of cases, was that YISP work could not easily be separated out from other work. One panel member from the Education Welfare Service said:

> I wouldn't say it's done at the expense of anything else … you just take it on and you accommodate it, you accumulate it, and you just carry on and you move on, and it becomes part of your job.

For those able to make an estimate of the time given to YISP work, the figures were generally small but significant:

> I would say three hours' work [each week] plus the panel meeting every three weeks: three or four hours a week. (health services panel member)

Different Roles for Different Agencies

Instead of a model in which all agencies were equally active in YISPs and in which all played a role in all aspects of its operation, there seemed to be different roles for different agencies. In broad terms there seemed to be two key variables:

1. *The degree of involvement*. How actively involved in the YISP is the agency?

2. *The nature of the activity*. Does this relate to information provision (including referrals), or does the agency provide some kind of service?

A preliminary attempt to map these roles is provided in Table 7.1. Here, degree of involvement is classified as either active or passive, and the nature of activity as either providing referrals/information or as offering services.

Table 7.1   Modelling agency roles

Activity	Involvement	
	Active	*Passive*
Referrals/information	2	3
Provision of Services	1	4

This model gives us four possible combinations, denoted by the cells numbered 1 to 4, which we can use to illuminate the roles the different agencies play across the YISP panels in Quinton, Fylde & Wyre and Nottingham which we have looked at in depth. In this section we look specifically at the participation of YOTs, the police, education, social services and other professionals.

Youth Offending Teams

The YOTs are, in many senses, the lead agencies in most YISPs. Their work begins when a young person is referred to the YISP. There was some variation across our three case study panels in how these referrals were dealt with in the first instance. In the Lancashire GRIP, according to the county co-ordinator, referrals were circulated to panel members in advance of the three-weekly meetings:

> … the idea is that by the time we're actually discussing the young person we've got as much background information as possible. And in that interim three-week period, the GRIP staff will have done the ONSET assessment visit.

This process meant that some referrals could be rejected before they were considered by the panel:

> … there are some that are rejected before the panel, but it tends to be for factual reasons, like they've got a final warning, or they're off the age range, or they're not giving consent. (GRIP manager)

On receipt of the assessment and other available information, the panel decided whether the case should be taken on. One panel member stated:

> Once they've done that assessment, then it will be brought back to panel, discussed at panel as a new referral, and then the panel will decide whether it is appropriate that he/she be taken on by GRIP …

According to the county manager, it was important that this decision was taken at the panel:

> The first thing that the panel members do is actually decide whether a child fits the criteria, and we've been … quite rigid about that, saying, 'It's not the GRIP staff that decide, it's the panel that decides whether a child needs the criteria.'

While the Nottingham panel worked along the same lines as the one in Lancashire, a slightly different approach was adopted in Birmingham:

> Typically the referrals are sent out a week prior to the panel meetings so the members have got a chance to look at them, and then we would sit down and … have the referrer go through the case and then ask if other agencies know the child. (YISP co-ordinator)

The ONSET assessment in Birmingham was undertaken after rather than before the panel meeting at which a case is first considered. Consideration of the risk factors that need to be addressed was a matter for the YIST worker:

> We go to panel meeting first before we assess, whereas other areas will assess, take it to panel and the family will come in. (YISP co-ordinator)

If cases were allocated to a panel member to work with, however, no ONSET assessment was undertaken. Only cases taken on by YISP keyworkers were assessed.

As we have seen in the last chapter, interventions can largely be divided into two categories: inputs provided by members other than the YISP, and interventions provided by YISP keyworkers. In some cases, so the Nottingham YOT manager argued, it was down to all agencies to provide something:

> I would have thought that if an Education Welfare Officer is sitting round the table, and we realise that child is not in school, right, I'd say to the Education Welfare Officer, 'What contribution can you make to ensure they're in school?' … We would contact school … and find out how things are going there … What we also do is inform the Community Beat Manager in their local area ....and try and involve them in Crime and Consequences … If any of the young people are already involved with the family centres, we then meet with the family centre worker.

Cases could also be referred elsewhere within the services represented at panel. One EWO panel member said:

> If it's specifically around education, you can point them to the direction of, like, a learning mentor, or they can try a report. And if there's specific things within school I can refer it back to the EWO … Primarily it's pointing people in the right direction within the Education Department.

In line with the variation in the seriousness of cases, there are a wide range of services that can be accessed in this way. On the one hand, issues of mental health might need to be considered. At the other end of the spectrum, when it was intended to involve young people in a more productive or creative use of their time, other agencies, like Youth Services or the voluntary sector, got involved in service delivery. In Nottingham, for example, through Junior YIP, youth services could provide sports, arts and crafts, dancing, trips, creative mask-making, and other creative activities.

The second major component of a young person's support programme consists of one-to-one work provided by the YISP workers themselves. This involves engaging in a direct way with the young person in an attempt to try and get them to understand their behaviour and its consequences:

> They'll then look at the Integrated Support Plan, talk to the parents and kids about whether they think [they might use] anger management, things like one-to-one sessions around anger management, socialising and restorative justice, stuff around their offending behaviour. They use the Teen Talk stuff to do a lot of the one-to-one session. (YISP co-ordinator)

In terms of Table 7.1, we can thus place the YOTs who lead the YISPs in Quadrant 1. As we would expect from the lead organisation in this kind of initiative, the involvement is an active one, and its activity takes the form of provision of services rather than information.

Police

Like the other agencies involved in YISPs, the police benefited from the more formal inter-agency collaboration. One YOT worker put this down in part to the inherently bureaucratic nature of the police:

> I think the police interact well because they are used to paperwork and they don't see it as a problem. Certain agencies will look at you … and they just think, 'Oh, no.'

The sharing of information was another important benefit, and was stressed by a senior YOT manager in Nottingham:

> The relationship that we've developed with the police is one of information sharing. Yeah, the police get something from it as well. I mean, when they come to panel they hear all sorts of information that they would never have normally heard … But at the same time the police will come and they will tell you about families, about what's happening in the family household.

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The YISPs also give the police access to services provided by other agencies involved, as one Lancashire police officer indicated:

> I know they [YISP keyworkers] can go through stuff like 'crime and consequences' better than me. I know they can talk about health issues … It needs people in there who have got the type of nature, and care and concern and contacts and time - a big factor – allocated to work with a youngster for one, two hours a week.

In addition, the police were able to take advantage of the greater accountability afforded by the YISP structure:

> I think it is successful from the contact I've had with GRIP – it's one of the positive multi-agency meetings that I attend. At least you feel when you come away from it that there's clear actions and things will be done … Colleagues say they see the benefit on the ground. (police service panel member)

More than this, however, the police saw YISPs as important in terms of their strategy and performance objectives. The Nottingham YOT manager took the view that the police were increasingly concerned with prevention rather than with solving crimes:

> I think when they see up and coming stars … in terms of crime, they will say, 'Hold on a second, this child's starting to show signs locally. Their name keeps coming to our attention all the time, but we don't see them, we haven't caught them yet. But we've got an idea that something's going on. Mum and Dad's told us that … they go in his room and it smells of drugs. Or we've seen them with loads of money in their pockets.'

The YISPs can be part of this strand of preventative strategy. As one senior police officer in Lancashire told us:

> I think there is some frustration, because … we get a lot of criticism, the police force in general, for taking out ASBOs … But quite often it gets to us and we just have to do something, because we've got all the complaints from the public and whatever … So, on the prevention side, if there was more resources available, if there was more GRIPs and whatever, they would get channelled in.

There were seen to be advantages for the police in children being referred to YISPs, both inside and outside the police force. This was especially the case in dealing with those at the bottom end of the YISP age range or identifying younger siblings of offenders:

> There is a lot of cases that we're conscious of that there's perhaps younger siblings whose elder brothers and sisters are well-known to us but they're not even on the youth referral system because they're either too young or they're not into bother but they're at high risk. I haven't got a chance of identifying them… until they do something they won't come through to my notice. That's why I'm trying to encourage the beat officers who work in the community to identify perhaps those vulnerable children that live in a chaotic household or chaotic lifestyle but aren't offending. (police service panel member)

The benefits gained from YISPs can thus contribute to a police force being able to meet its own targets. In Lancashire, according to a senior officer:

> Ours [targets] tend to be based around reduction of antisocial behaviour. And within the antisocial behaviour group comes youth nuisance … The division will get assessed, so then I've done a methodology again, saying, 'A certain percentage of your antisocial behaviour spills out of youth nuisance. How are you going to reduce it?'.

One senior police officer was explicit about how the inter-agency working embodied in YISPs was important to the police:

> One of the big issues is antisocial behaviour … We have performance indicators to achieve for that … We can't do it alone, so really working in partnership though GRIP with other agencies … referring these people, these individuals, these kids, endeavouring to get them off their chosen path back on to some sort of righteous path, or give them some quality of life and make them decent citizens, is very important.

In addition to the strategic and performance aspects, there appeared to be a high level of consistency between YISPs and aspects of police procedure. In Lancashire, the YISP sat alongside the police Youth Referral system, which involved a three-stage system of warnings for youths involved in antisocial behaviour. Exhausting this put the young person on an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC), with referral to GRIP in the event of this contract not being adhered to. When asked under what circumstances referral to the GRIP would be preferred to imposing an ABC, a police officer replied:

> It's hard to sort of put into words, but you know some families, you just know that their kids aren't taking the blindest bit of notice when you're doing an ABC. You know for a fact that they'll be breaching it within two minutes, yet other ones you do know that the kids have just gone a little bit wayward … fairly decent families … I know it's all subjective … but it's just the sort of instinct that you get sometimes.

He portrayed the GRIP as the positive alternative:

> The GRIP is a positive – it's much more positive. That's why, more often than not, we'll go for GRIP and say, 'Well, let's see how you go with GRIP … If you don't work well with GRIP and you continue to come to our notice I'll have no option but to go down the ABC route.' (police service panel member)

Similar arrangements existed in Nottingham. Structure was provided by the relationship between police thresholds and YISP referral criteria, but in practice these were applied in a flexible way. The YOT manager told us that although they themselves would have no formal involvement beyond 'reprimand', this cut-off point was not rigidly enforced in practice:

> We found out in Nottingham that the police are now coming to panels and saying, 'We are considering a final warning of this young person. But if there is anything that is happening on this panel that we should be aware of then we will consider not to go down the final warning route.

One police officer in Lancashire made it quite clear what he wanted from GRIP/YISP:

> What we want them [the young people referred] to do is cease their activities, their antisocial behaviour if that's what it is … and try and get them into some form of activity, some form of interest that will … break them out of their cycle that they're in … Or it might just be that they haven't got the social skills to interact and get involved in sports, for instance, or computing. And this is where we see where those members of GRIP can signpost this individual to the respective organisation that hopefully can help them.

In other words, once a referral had been made, the police expected that the services would be provided by the other agencies involved in YISP. In terms of Table 7.1 this would put the police in Quadrant 2 – taking an active role, but one that was restricted to the provision of referrals and information. In Lancashire, this allowed the police to take a back seat once the referral had been made:

> I think with the majority of cases it's just monitor the work that is going on on the three-weekly panels, the six-weekly, nine-, twelve weeks, and listen to what's been done … I would say ninety per cent of it is done by the GRIP workers. (police service panel member)

According to the panel co-ordinator, when the police took on a specific role on an ISP

> they're more of a link person … similar to education really, they're not actually taking on a certain role.

In Birmingham, the particular make-up of the Quinton panel had given the police a role that, in terms of Table 7.1, takes in Quadrant 1 as well as Quadrant 2. In addition to the provision of referrals and information the police took an active role in a young person's support programme. The YISP co-ordinator explained:

> The police are massive and the Safe Haven Officer, he takes a lot of work from the panel in terms of going in, and he takes direction from the panel as to what needs to be addressed.

Education

The part played by education in YISPs illustrates the difficulties that sometimes exist in defining what precisely constitutes an agency. In looking at YISPs it makes sense to distinguish between the education welfare service and schools themselves. The former seemed, at most, to play a rather limited role in YISP panels. Although school attendance was seen as a particular problem, one EWO seemed rather resigned to the benefits of taking part in the YISP programme:

> … the issues are that you attend school. That's the law, and there's very little way round it.

Similarly, for another EWO in another pilot, participation in the panel was limited to providing information:

> It's brought to the meeting if it's relevant … as the school nurse does as well … So the health and the police do … but I'm not exactly sure what they ask of their department.

For EWOs, in terms of their overall work, YISPs had low priority:

> I don't think it's impinged on Education Welfare … as a service. I might be wrong, but there doesn't seem any correlation between GRIP and improved school attendance and behaviour in school … So I suppose we've just left it to them really. I just do my bit and [whatever] I've been asked, and then that's really all my involvement. (EWS panel member)

The difficulties experienced in getting schools involved with YISPs were stressed by a senior police representative in Lancashire:

> You've got problems with education, that all the schools now have … devolved budgets. So ninety per cent of the education budget goes straight to the headmasters and you've got ten per cent for the kind of support services… A lot of schools are judged on five GCSEs above Grade C, but when you look at the other end there's no performance indicator to say what they do on the pastoral care.

A senior YOT manager saw the benefits of school involvement as applying primarily at the local level:

> Education Welfare have been good, but the schools – I mean it's very rare you'd get a representative from schools … there's some very good local relationships going on and that's probably the best way to do it, because you haven't got one person that can represent all the schools in Lancashire on the steering group.

Similar kinds of conditions seemed to apply in Quinton. According to a senior YOS manager:

You've got police, education – and education can take the form of [the] LEA, but more realistically schools, head teachers, deputy heads – those sorts of individuals around the table.

In Quinton, an important factor seemed to be the area covered by the YISP. In Lancashire the areas covered by panels were large, making it difficult (and reducing the incentive) for individual schools to be involved. In Birmingham, by contrast, the Quinton panel covered a relatively small area, with one main secondary school. The identity of the school's catchment area with the panel area made its involvement much more feasible and effective. The representatives of the school often had extensive personal knowledge of the young people referred, and the education representatives were seen in this case as key members of the panel:

… we have the Deputy Head of the main high school who is Vice-Chair [of the panel] … an incredibly important role … sharing information with the schools is crucial. (panel chair)

Here, in contrast to the EWS, we can see the school taking an active part in the panel. In terms of Table 7.1 the role the school played in the provision of information places it squarely in Quadrant 2. The way the Quinton panel operated, with keyworkers being drawn from a variety of agencies, also opened up the possibility of Quadrant 1 as well.

Social Services

The key to understanding the role social services play in YISPs is the more general tightening of their thresholds for involvement with young people. Thresholds are concerned with issues such as taking children into care. The categories of children with which social services have to be involved are those for which they have a legal responsibility. According to one social service panel member:

So there's going to be quite a lot of things where people will be ringing in saying they've got some vague concerns about a child, but nothing specific. There will be people who will be saying, 'My child isn't attending school', and we've got better over the years [at saying], 'Well, actually that's not social services, that's education welfare.'

Other agencies often saw this kind of response in a less favourable light because children in need are signposted to other agencies:

[Social Services'] senior management, the upper management, are all for it, and saying 'Yes, we must take part. We are an integral part of YISPs.' But … the way social services are going is more towards child protection – they're moving away from prevention. So our threshold is below their threshold. So a lot of the cases that we are dealing with no longer fit, or no longer meet social services' criteria. (YISP manager)

This tightening of thresholds was often used to explain social services' lack of engagement in panels. Like other agencies, social services was accused of merely paying lip service to the principles of YISPs. One senior YOT manager expressed the tensions in this way:

So that's what they [social services] get out of it – they can say 'Oh, we're partners and we work in a preventative way'. In terms of their operational targets, it doesn't actually achieve – it actually causes them more work. Because we are bringing cases and saying, 'Look, we've worked with this kid, there is a whole raft of issues here', and they're saying, 'Oh, well, we closed that case because this child isn't at risk of serious harm … and there's nothing more we can do.'

Others were more concerned about a more direct lack of involvement in panel meetings and programmes:

> Social care and health are really hard. They're really hard because they are constantly firefighting … so they are serial apology-givers. (YISP co-ordinator)

> Now there are certain agencies which continually let you down. Social services, or Social Health and Care [*sic*] as they like to call themselves now, they are, and I understand they've got staffing problems [but] it really is … a waste of time when they're not there. (education service panel member)

Social services panel members did not see themselves in this way, and they also saw the panel as giving them the opportunity to make their position clear:

> … sometimes I have to explain what our policy is, our guidance and procedures, and I might explain what we've already done with the family. I might be able to say 'Yes, there is a social worker involved. They are at such-and-such an office. This is their phone number, ring them.' (social services panel member)

One YISP panel co-ordinator endorsed the value of making positions clear as follows:

> A key component of multi-agency working is clarity. If you give people clear parameters … I think they get a stronger buy-in. They feel a part of it and I think they're tolerant as well … I think you'll find situations where a panel member can say, 'OK, Social Care and Health case, is it?' They'll trust the judgement of that panel member … and I think on the whole they are understanding about it.

One social services representative was aware, however, of how other panel members might misperceive their role:

> Social services have just tightened up our thresholds … and at the last meeting I shared that, and there were some smiles around the table and knowing glances, as if to say 'Oh, here we go'… I didn't get a feeling of hostility, and I didn't get a feeling of … you know, 'That prat. Wait until he's gone – we'll have our view about this one.' But I think … there will be scepticism about this, however we flowery-language it up.

Tensions were also evident in the question of referrals – both the social services' referrals to the panel and vice versa. A social services panel representative said that social services would make referrals

> [o]n any occasion where we feel that there's somebody we are aware of who is on the edges of offending, and we're worried that that may escalate … It might be a case where we're not going to stay involved at all, but there is something there that needs further work. And the panel have been very good at picking that up.

The danger is that this behaviour may be seen as social services dumping cases on the YISP in order to maintain their thresholds:

> I had a girl referred to me a few weeks ago, and basically she was referred by 'Duty' in social services. Social services had rung because the stepfather had hit the daughter. And then the worker took it upon himself to refer to us … I went out and made the assessment, and the girl … shouldn't have come to it because she was not at risk of offending. She was at risk of emotional abuse but not of offending. So we sometimes get referrals from departments that are kind of knee-jerk reactions. (YISP co-ordinator)

Social services representatives perceived the problem as being the opposite one, with other agencies being too quick to offload cases on to them:

> There's always been the feeling that we are the lead agency for child protection, which we are, but it's also health visitors and the schools and other agencies are very quick to refer to us when they've got a

niggling doubt at the back of their mind, because then the anxiety has been passed on to social services, and if anything goes wrong we are the ones involved. (social services panel member)

Staff in other agencies felt, more generally, that social services made it very difficult for any cases to be referred to them:

On paper there is an agreement that if a panel agrees that a child is a child in need, then social services will do some form of intervention … In practice it has to go all the way back to the panel, and the panel has to do a multi-agency referral for them, that goes to the Initial Assessment Team, who then send out a social worker to do an assessment, who then might pass it on to the Family Resource Manager for some sort of work to be done. (YISP manager)

A view expressed by some was that many families would prefer not to be dealt with by social services:

No matter who the parents are, I'm not bothered how bad a criminal they are, what type of history they've got. No matter what hard drugs they are doing, they love their children. They do not want their children to go into this lifestyle, and even though you go into homes that are staunch anti-police they'll accept help for the children. They don't like the words 'social services' – that creates more fear than the police. (police service panel member)

These issues at panel level could be seen as indicative of the more general relationship between social services and YOTs. One senior YOT manager saw the two agencies as taking opposite courses to each other:

Basically, they [social services] screen every kid, and they're saying, 'You don't meet this threshold, we're not doing anything with you.' So while they were screening out, the YOTs came in and started to screen in. So we were saying, 'Right, you know, this kid's showing these risk factors … we've got to do something.' So there was almost a sort of agency mirror effect … Everything is assessed to thresholds, so you really have to be in a poor state to get any services … [But] whilst that was working in one direction, we were working in exactly the opposite direction.

In his view, social services were too quick to fall back to taking the position that the young people being dealt with by YISP should be in receipt of universal services. In the many cases where these services were not in fact being delivered, so the YOT manager claimed, this led to YOT moving into the areas that social services had vacated:

So the chances are that, if you get the right intervention at the right time with the right person – and it's like what all social workers used to do, it's like an old social work system … They're [YISP keyworkers] actually going to families and making a difference … it is almost like the old-style social worker that would come and … help the family and be a sort of link, mentor, support, non-threatening …

The danger from the social services' perspective was that this involvement might be, at best, well-meaning but ineffectual, and at worst actually negative in impact. One YOT manager recognised the former possibility:

You wouldn't have to have a social work qualification to be a [YISP] worker, so you're seen as a sort of second-rate service because you haven't got qualified social workers … The police aren't bothered … Health probably wouldn't be that bothered. Education might, but not particularly. But certainly from that social worker side, there would be a real sniffiness about them being able to deliver anything.

A senior social services manager characterised YISP-type intervention in the following terms:

It feels a bit like the old magic sponge in football terms … go on and slosh this stuff on to the injury, and you're not quite sure what's wrong … and miraculously someone gets up and carries

on playing but their leg may be broken … There is a sense of … 'Well, these things happen by magic'.

For this manager the YISP brought to mind the idea of 'intermediate treatment', which had first emerged in the late 1960s:

> It was intermediate between doing nothing and removing children from home. So the idea was that you would identify children … who were either involved with offending or … were potentially at risk of getting involved. You would then get them doing all sorts of other things. And it was very vague … And by doing that you would divert these kids from criminal activities.

This, he argued, had proved counterproductive:

> A lot of the research at the time indicated that … what it did was [it] sucked kids into the net. And then kids who hadn't been in trouble, or very mild stuff like shoplifting … got stuck in the intermediate treatment programme. If they then committed another offence, magistrates would look and say, 'Oh, we've already tried intermediate treatment. That hasn't worked, so we'll bang them up.'

Concerns about net-widening have also been expressed more generally in respect of YISPs because children as young as eight may well find themselves on management information databases held by YOTs and accessed by others.

In looking at the agency's overall place in YISP, one social services panel member conceded that they did not see themselves as taking a major role:

> A large number of the children mentioned have never come to our attention and never should, so I don't feel that we are a major player.

Other agencies sometimes shared this view. A representative of the YOT told us:

> Social services have come along because they really felt they've had to, but I'm not sure that it's in their heart, deep in there. They're there because they know they've got to be.

While this view might be accepted, it might also be seen as a misleading half-truth. What our interviews reveal is that it was precisely in terms of their absence or detachment that social services were important. While in terms of Table 7.1 we can place them very much in the passive column in regard to both information- and service-provision, an uncharitable interpretation would be that a further column should be added to the matrix: as well as active and passive involvement, we might add a 'negative' variant.

Other Agencies

Health services

Health services were present in the case study panels in a variety of forms. That there was no standard representation reflects the wide variety in health services itself and also the fact that the demographic areas covered by health service agencies were often the least coterminous with those of other agencies. In Lancashire, according to the county co-ordinator:

> Health is very difficult because we cross so many borders. I think there's something like thirteen different PCTs or whatever, so it's always been quite difficult.

Health services representation thus tended to be based on local factors. In Lancashire, school nurses were valued members of the panel. At a county level, health services were not always well-regarded, but one panel co-ordinator saw them as an invaluable source of information:

> 'Cos they've probably followed that young person through … they know the family histories well … We do get a lot of information from the nurses … We tend to get more information about the … social services part of it, if you like, more than we do from social services, So, if there's been problems like domestic violence … we tend to get more of that information from the nurses than we would from social services.

In terms of Table 7.1, health services can be placed in Quadrant 3, as being rather passive as providers of information and providing little or nothing in the way of services.

Where health services did emerge as more of an issue for YISPs was in the area of mental health. This comes back to the question of the nature of the cases with which YISPs are dealing. The seriousness of many cases was well-recognised:

> Once we'd been going a couple of months we realised that a high proportion of the young people that we were getting referred had either been referred to CAMHS or were being referred to CAMHS, or supposed to have had, or did have conduct disorders. (YISP manager)

In previous chapters we have pointed to the numbers of children referred to YISPs who were described as having mental health problems contributing to significant behavioural risk factors. This observation raises the question of the role CAMHS is able to play on panels. Professionals in CAMHS should be able to benefit from the information that a panel can provide:

> If we were working with a young person, we could give CAMHS more information, because we'd done an assessment as well. (YISP manager)

On occasion CAMHS did refer cases to the panels, but the nature of its work meant that it was less able to act as a provider of information:

> It's very difficult with CAMHS to actually access any information … they will let us know whether the young person's known to CAMHS or not, or who they are seeing. They don't give us any more information than that. (YISP co-ordinator)

The main role of CAMHS, which places it in Quadrant 4 of Table 7.1, appears to be as a provider of services to the children referred to it by the panel. We noted, however, that waiting times for accessing CAMHS were often in excess of the prescribed length of YISP intervention, which left a gap to be filled by the more YOT-based activities:

> … often what we're finding is that because there is such a long waiting list for CAMHS, if it's needed we will encourage a referral, but then we try … some work with that young person in the meantime … things on self-esteem mainly … we try and look at that and build on that … I mean, all work's positive, but positive work really, and try and get the young person involved in something. (YISP co-ordinator)

The role of CAMHS and the relationship with YISPs are both important factors for future consideration as YISPs are rolled out nationally.

Youth services

The youth service representative on the Nottingham YISP was part of a junior Youth Inclusion Project (YIP). Through his YIP involvement he had been in contact with YOT representatives, and

they had introduced him to the YISP. The youth service often formed part of the provision made for the young people referred to the panel. According to the YOT manager,

> they've come to the table with a particular reason why they're there – yes, to contribute to the plan around provision.

Contact was maintained with the YISP panel workers throughout their involvement with a case:

> Usually [the keyworker] comes in a couple of times a week to have meetings with other agencies here … I usually have a chat with him, and he'll say 'How is this lad doing, or that lad?', and I'll say 'Yeah, they're doing well'. (youth service panel member)

The youth service, however, was not an active referrer to the panel:

> I just go to those meetings. What happens after that … if the YOTs and the police get together anyway, or they might be in contact with each to say 'OK, here's a referral' … I just get all the names when I go to the YISP meetings. (youth service panel member)

But the youth service representative could be important as a provider of information. The youth service was frequently the agency that had the most direct contact with the young people. The youth service representative on the panel described his own role as follows:

> So, OK, we go through a list of names that have come to the attention of the police or whoever … and then I'll say to them, 'Oh yeah, I know this lad or this girl, because they come to Junior YIP' … or we might be working with them at the schools.

In this case, we can situate the youth service in both Quadrant 3 and Quadrant 4 of Table 7.1. In Nottingham, this level of activity was seen as having been hard-won by the YOT:

> The philosophy of the Youth Service … is that they are a bit sceptical about the reasons why we're having these panels in the first place … In the Youth Service they create relationships with young people in groups, and based on trust and honesty … But I think, as we've gone along over the last two or three years, we've managed to convince them that it [YISP] is really about supporting families and young people, and plugging gaps in services. (YOT manager)

In Lancashire, it seemed that this process had scarcely begun:

> They're … very, very much … stuck in their [attitude of] '[we] are the universal service, we are there for every kid. And actually, because you commit an offence it doesn't mean to say you get anything more – and, in fact … it would be like rewarding you for bad behaviour if we gave you extra provision.' (YOT senior manager)

Enhancing Multi-agency collaboration

This element in the research programme confirms what we have found elsewhere: that there was significant variation in the way in which different areas operate. In all the three cases we have examined here YISPs emerged out of pre-existing inter-agency working in the area of youth crime prevention, and it is these pre-existing structures that shaped the way in which the basic principles of YISPs were applied. In Lancashire, where even the name 'GRIP' has been retained, the model was highly structured and county-wide. In both Nottingham, building on the EWTPs, and Birmingham, the focus was much more on specific geographical areas.

We can see across all the areas that there were many advantages to be gained from multi-agency working. While many of these advantages could be gained from multi-agency working in general, what needs to be stressed here is the effect of the greater formality introduced by YISPs. This

applies especially to the more structured interventions that YISPs require and to the idea that YISPs encourage in agencies a greater degree of accountability to each other.

Multi-agency working, however, does not mean that all agencies have the same approach or derive the same benefits from participation. Differences were observed in the panel attendance records of agencies, in the time they devoted to YISP work, and in the frequency with which they made referrals. Trying to understand the differences between the agencies led us to the identification of two key variables: *the degree of involvement*; and *the nature of the activity*. Although differences between panels can be significant, there is enough commonality for the emphasis to be placed on the roles of agencies across panels. As we might expect, YOTs can be found in Quadrant 1 of Table 7.1: their role is an active one in the area of providing services. The police are the agency whose policies and structures are most consistent with YISP. Their role is generally an active one, also. Education was also active in terms of referrals from schools, although the EWS did not play an active role in most panels. Getting teachers involved in YISPs has been a challenge but they are key players in the preventative agenda.

Perhaps the most interesting of the agencies is social services. This was the agency that aroused the most passion among all those involved in YISPs. As we have seen, of key importance was the tightening of its thresholds for working with young people and the implication of this for its relationship with YOTs. Although often detached from the work of YISPs, it was precisely in this detachment that its importance resided. In terms of Table 7.1 we can place it very much in the 'passive' column. As we have already suggested, however, the views of a number of interviewees suggested that social services' impact on YISPs was not neutral, as 'passivity' suggests, but actually negative.

We can also look at our model in a different way, as representing the first two parts of a basic input-process-output model of YISP. The 'inputs' in this case are the young people referred and the information provided about them; the 'processes' are the structured interventions designed to deflect the young people from criminal activity; and the 'outputs' are the effects or outcomes of these interventions. It has been very difficult to establish both what these outputs are and what causal factors are important in their generation. While the insights presented in this chapter do not allow us to draw any definite conclusions on these questions, they do at least suggest some ways in which these issues might be considered. We can see this if we approach the question from the point of view of the lead agency in this case, the YOTs. What is it that they require in order for the YISP to operate effectively? In terms of our model there are two things, represented by the two rows of the matrix in Table 7.1: inputs of information (including referrals) and 'processes' of service delivery. The nature of the work means that to some degree they are reliant on other agencies to provide these things. Our attention then turns to the two columns of the matrix: what degree of involvement do the other agencies have? If other agencies are too active in providing referrals, the YISP is overwhelmed; if too passive, then either the YISP is idle or the YOT has to devote its own resources to generating referrals. Similarly with services: if other agencies are too active YOT's services are displaced; if too passive, then necessary specialist services are not provided or the YOT has to devote its own resources to encouraging their provision. The key challenge for the YOT, it seems, is to find ways of ensuring some balance between activity and passivity on the part of the other agencies involved in YISPs.

Chapter 8   Exploring and Understanding Outcomes

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Although we did not set out to conduct an impact study and had no control or comparative data to draw on, an important objective of our evaluation was to attempt to assess whether YISP interventions make some difference in children's lives and, in particular, whether they might have the propensity to reduce antisocial or criminal behaviour. We also wanted to assess the extent to which YISPs might meet the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes and those identified in *Youth Matters*. We approached this task of exploring what outcomes there might be in three main ways: first, by examining whether YISP interventions had a statistically significant impact on a measurable indicator of the risk of problematic behaviour; second, by exploring levels of satisfaction for parents and children; and third, by considering the perspectives of parents, children and keyworkers who were interviewed in the case-study areas. Our original intent was to conduct a rigorous analysis of changes in a range of measurable outcomes and in risk factor scores identified in final ONSET assessments. If we had initial and closure ONSET scores for each child in the 13 pilots, this would have provided us with quantitative data which would give us measurable changes during the period of YISP intervention. The more qualitative data would then enable us to understand the findings from the quantitative analysis. The first task, therefore, was to analyse ONSET scores over the period of YISP intervention. The second task involved analysis of satisfaction questionnaires administered to parents and children by the pilots, and the third involved analysis of in-depth interviews with families which were undertaken at two periods in time. Inevitably, interview data provide a more subjective understanding of outcomes rather than numerical evidence of changes in risk scores, but they also enable us to explore more subtle impacts on the day-to-day lives of families who agreed to participate in the YISP programme. In this chapter we explore the potential for YISPs to promote positive outcomes for children.

Changes in Risk

The potential indicators available in the YISPMIS data were derived from ONSET risk assessment scores, but could also include others such as levels of school attendance. In practice, low levels of completion in the YISPMIS database of the variables relevant to the non-ONSET measures prevented them from being used, because there were too few cases to analyse in an assessment of impact based on these alternative indicators. As a result, the quantitative modelling centred on an examination of the change in ONSET score for each case. The change was measured between the initial assessment and the final assessment. We looked at a number of options for modelling outcomes and these were discussed in detail in our final evaluation report. The approach we finally adopted involved each child's initial ONSET risk assessment score being subtracted from their final score. This meant that a positive value in this change measure represented a *reduction* in risk, which is intuitively 'positive' as an assessment of change in the child. Measures of the risk of, or the actual occurrence of, problematic behaviour were taken from YISPMIS data sets provided by the 13 pilots. Disappointingly, the total number of usable cases was quite low, however, especially for multivariate modelling, so it was necessary to be rather parsimonious over the inclusion of independent variables to avoid further reduction in the number of cases that could be included.

In our statistical analyses we used regression modelling, the aim being to account for patterns in the change in ONSET scores through *explanatory variables* such as the gender of the child involved and the type and number of the interventions the child received. It is unfortunate that some potentially

interesting variables in YISPMIS could not be used in these analyses because they had not been entered consistently enough for us to have confidence in them. We could examine only 229 cases in six of the thirteen pilots which had recorded both an initial and closing ONSET score.

The pilots are known to be working in very different ways, and there was considerable variation between them in terms of the levels of risk reduction they achieved. Along with the differences between pilots, caused perhaps by contrasts in policy or practice, we found considerable variation at the case level. We conducted a large number of analyses using the YISPMIS data to measure changes in risk. These are reported fully in our final evaluation report. We are not including the technical data here, but want to highlight the three key findings from our analyses. These are that:

1. The higher the child's starting risk the greater the likely level of risk reduction.

2. Older children are less likely to experience large risk reduction.

3. The gender of the child and the level of deprivation in the home neighbourhood are not statistically related to risk reduction levels.

These are important in that they endorse the importance of targeting high risk children as early as possible. We looked for evidence that certain interventions might be more effective than others, but when we examined the types of intervention children received, all those which were most commonly used (and whose effectiveness can, as a result, be more reliably measured) showed similar levels of effectiveness, with risk reduction levels of between 4 and 5 points. There was very little difference in the outcomes for children referred by different agencies, although children who were referred by social services showed a slightly larger average ONSET-measured risk reduction.

We undertook a number of tests of the sensitivity of the statistical analyses – or 'model' – that we used and these gave us confidence in the results reported here. The model we used accounts for about 20 per cent of the variation between children in the level of change in their ONSET scores. A model which accounts for around 20 per cent of the variation in an individual-level analysis can be described as fairly successful but we undertook further analysis to consider whether there were patterns in the residual variation which could be identified so that the model could account for these patters too. There were no residual patterns.

The model predicts a risk reduction of over one point for every four points in the initial ONSET score. This is not surprising since the higher the initial ONSET value the greater the available margin for improvement. The only significant influence which was related to a negative behaviour trait in the child concerned (discriminating against others) had a negative effect on risk reduction, which seems to be intuitively reasonable. Qualitative research would be needed to explain further how this mindset leads children to respond negatively to the YISP process and intervention. Very many potential influences were included in the analyses but the modelling indicates that most of them do not shape the level of change in ONSET scores for the children analysed. These factors which do not appear to influence the effectiveness of YISPs range from factors relating to the child themselves and their attitudes, through to various characteristics of the process which led to the referral and the area in which the child lives.

Conclusions we have drawn from the Quantitative Micro-level Analysis

The first major observation from the evaluation is that the YISPMIS database is a distinctly poor resource for these analyses. Better ways of collating data need to be found in future if there is to be any realistic attempt at a comprehensive, robust statistical analysis of the efficacy of interventions such as YISPs. The failure of YISPMIS to provide the data we expected and needed for the quantitative

analyses relating to outcomes was extremely disappointing and has meant that we have had to rely on rather more qualitative data to interpret and understand any outcomes associated with YISP interventions.

We have reached the following tentative conclusions:

- having a higher initial ONSET score was strongly linked to greater reduction

- children receiving mentoring saw a risk reduction averaging over two points

- children who were said to discriminate against other people at initial assessment tended to have increasing risk scores

From the quantitative analyses of ONSET scores we have concluded that the value of the initial ONSET score – 'the size of the initial problem for that case' – can be regarded as the key influence on the likely scale of the measurable effect of the YISP intervention on the risk of antisocial or criminal behaviour. In more simple terms, this might mean that YISPs reduce by approximately one quarter the level of risk, as measured by the ONSET scores before and after the intervention. It is probably a fair interpretation of this finding that if the YISP concept is rolled out more generally it will have the greatest effect if it is targeted at the highest risk children. However, there is relatively little statistical evidence that any particular interventions have much stronger impacts than others. Because of the extent of the missing data on YISPMIS, our conclusions should, of course, be treated with some degree of caution.

Measuring Parent and Child Satisfaction

We believe that the views of parents, children and keyworkers are extremely valuable. In a novel intervention such as YISPs, exploring the experiences of those who delivered and those who received YISP interventions has enabled us to examine the elements which appear to be making a difference in the lives of children deemed to be at risk of offending and antisocial behaviour.

In our second approach to measuring outcomes, we examined data relating to the satisfaction of parents and children. While satisfaction is a softer outcome measure than changes in ONSET scores, it nevertheless has some value. If those receiving YISP intervention feel that they have benefited from it and are satisfied with it this indicates that some positive outcome has been achieved. In the early months of the evaluation, we were asked by the DfES to design two satisfaction questionnaires: one for parents and one for children. These questionnaires were designed to be completed by parents and children at the same time as the keyworker filled in the ONSET closure form. We had expected that the data from these questionnaires would be entered into YISPMIS, and variables were located within YISPMIS for that purpose. We had intended to analyse the data from these questionnaires in respect of our four case study areas in order to ascertain the levels of satisfaction with YISPs and set them within the context of our interviews with children and parents. Unfortunately, on close examination of YISPMIS it appeared that no data relating to any satisfaction questionnaires were entered on to YISPMIS in the case study areas. Indeed, very little satisfaction data exist for any of the YISP pilot areas, rendering it impossible to undertake this part of the evaluation.

Fortunately, however, as part of the qualitative element of the evaluation, hard copies of satisfaction questionnaires were collected, where they were available, in respect of each parent and child in our interview sample. As a result, we received 29 satisfaction questionnaires completed by children interviewed in the four case study areas (22 boys and 7 girls), and 26 questionnaires completed by parents of those children, mostly mothers. Analysis of these questionnaires provides some insight into parent and child satisfaction, and we present the findings here. Owing to the relatively small numbers

of questionnaires, however, caution should be employed when interpreting these findings, as we cannot claim to have a representative sample.

Parental Satisfaction

Ten parents in Lancashire, six in Ealing, five in Wigan and five in Birmingham completed a satisfaction questionnaire at the time of their follow-up interview. These parents were asked how satisfied they were with the help their child received from the YISP, and to what extent YISP services helped them in their role as parents or carers. All parents stated that they were either very satisfied (50%) or fairly satisfied (50%) with the help their child received. Responses were more mixed in relation to whether they thought that YISP had helped them as parents. Less than half (46%) said it had helped them a lot, while a further 31 per cent said it had helped them a little. Approximately one in five parents said it had not helped them at all, although they had been satisfied with the help their child had received. These parents tended to explain this answer by saying that it was the children who had received the help, not them. Parents who felt that YISP had helped them indicated that it was helpful for them to have someone to talk to, have extra support and a break from the children, and be able to re-evaluate their own parenting:

> They [YISP keyworkers] have been an emotional support. They were easy to talk to and pointed the children in the right direction. They didn't judge us but just listened. They didn't write off [my daughter] as a naughty girl. (Lancashire parent)

> I have had a chance to reflect on my own behaviour towards the children, and realise not only my child's behaviour can change, but my own. (Wigan parent)

Parents were also asked to assess how far they thought their children's behaviour had improved as a result of their being involved with YISP. Nearly two in five parents thought that their child's behaviour had changed a lot (38.5%), while a further 46 per cent thought that it had improved a little. Just three parents (11.5%) said their child's behaviour had not improved at all as a result of their being involved in YISP. Most parents stated that they would recommend YISP to another parent in the same circumstances as themselves. Just one parent in Wigan, and two parents in Ealing, told us that they would not recommend YISP. Most parents tended to take the view that trying this service is unlikely to do any harm, given that they had such a positive experience of it. One mother, discussing the satisfaction questionnaire, stated:

> You know, it [YISP] might not work, but I mean it's definitely not going to do any harm, I wouldn't have thought. I would recommend it. If a mother asked me I'd say 'Yeah, go for it'. (Lancashire parent)

Other parents expressed admiration at the commitment of the keyworkers and the support they offered, which is why they would recommend YISP to others.

The satisfaction questionnaires included space for parents to make additional comments about, for example, how the YISP programme could be improved. Twenty-two parents offered additional comments. An oft-suggested improvement was for the service to be available for a longer period or with more intensity:

> You can't get to know a kid in three months. (Lancashire parent)

> I don't want it to end. (Wigan parent)

> There should be absolutely no time limit, because that's the trouble with children with problems – they've been given a time limit and once they get to know someone and feel secure, that's been taken away from them. (Ealing parent)

Indeed, one parent in Wigan suggested that YISPs should be available twenty-four hours a day! Parents in Ealing stressed the need to be given more feedback and information about what was happening with regard to their child, and commented that contact with the keyworker had been 'just now and again'. The perceived lack of consistency in keyworker provision was an issue raised by several parents. One parent in Birmingham had explained during her interview that it was not lack of consistency within YISP *per se* that troubled her, but the fact that her child had had to develop relationships with a Connexions worker and a social worker in addition to the YISP keyworker all at the same time.

We have noted issues relating to the duration and frequency of YISP intervention at several points in this report, and commented on the level of one-to-one work with YISP children. Parents raised the same issues, indicating that direct work with children is valuable and that YISP intervention needs to be both fairly intense and sustainable. Nevertheless, despite some concerns many parents felt that the YISPs were doing a good job and they had very few suggestions for improvement.

Child Satisfaction

Satisfaction questionnaires were completed by ten children in Lancashire, seven in Wigan, six in Ealing and six in Birmingham. The children were asked to rate how much they enjoyed taking part in the activities provided by YISP. The vast majority of children stated that they had enjoyed the activities 'a lot' (79%), while the remaining children stated that they had enjoyed them 'a little'. When children were asked what it was they had liked best, they referred to a wide variety of different activities, and none appeared to be especially popular. Activities which the children liked included: colouring in; filling in the *Over To You* questionnaire; talking about feelings; quizzes; cycling; orienteering; swimming; trips out; bowling; cinema; go-karting; football; DJ-ing; boxing; ice-skating; and snooker. One child indicated that going away from home was what he had liked best about taking part in the YISP activities.

Children were also asked what they had liked least about the activities that were provided. Some referred to particular activities which they had not enjoyed, as the following answers indicate:

> Canoeing – I don't like going underwater. (Ealing child)

> Cinema – We watched baby films. I went with [the Connexions worker] and some other children, but they were all younger than me. (Birmingham child)

Children were generally positive when asked if the YISP had helped them: sixty-two per cent said that YISP had helped 'a lot' while the remainder said it had helped a little. Children in Ealing were less positive than children elsewhere. Children said that YISP had stopped them getting into trouble and improved things at school. Children were also asked to rate the services they had received from YISP on a scale of one to ten, one being the worst score and ten the best. The responses to this scoring tended to place satisfaction with YISP very much at the top end of the scale. One child in Wigan even rated his experience as '10+20'!

Children were also asked whether they would recommend YISP to a friend. Some (n = 10) were not sure whether they would. Most of these children did not explain their answer, but one child stated that 'they'd all think I've gone nutcrackers!'. Nevertheless, the majority of children (n = 18) seemed confident that they would recommend YISP to others, because it was 'good' and 'fun', and because they had found it useful themselves:

> … it helped me realise where I'd gone wrong and helped me fix it. (Lancashire child)

> If they are in trouble it would help them. (Birmingham child)

It can be seen from the analyses of the satisfaction questionnaires that both parents and children appeared to be well satisfied with the service they received from their local YISP. Most parents felt that YISP intervention had helped their child, and some had clearly received considerable support for themselves. The fact that parents would recommend the service to other families is itself testimony to its perceived value. Children particularly enjoyed doing activities, although there were some they had not liked, and they also felt positive about YISP involvement. Because so few pilots recorded satisfaction questionnaires on YISPMIS we cannot know if the findings are generalisable but we explored the themes which had emerged in more depth in our follow-up interviews.

The Reflections of Parents and Children

During our in-depth interviews with parents and children we examined their perceptions of the changes that had occurred as a result of YISP intervention. We attempted to look systematically at these changes across the four risk domains of a child's life: family, education/school, community, and individual well-being. We also examined whether the young people had been in trouble with the police since they had been engaged with the YISP. We would caution, however, that it is very difficult to isolate the impact of YISP intervention from other interventions in the lives of children and families. Most of the families in our interview sample had received a range of services either prior to or during YISP involvement. These may have included family counselling, family therapy, parenting support, learning support, social work intervention and so on. It is also important to recognise that YISPs varied considerably in respect of the duration and intensity of YISP involvement, so the outcomes described by parents and children here have been drawn from a range of different YISP models. We are also very aware that parents and children do not conceptualise the problems they face in terms of 'risk'. Moreover, the risk of their child being involved in antisocial behaviour was rarely at the front of parents' minds. Nevertheless, the interviews told us a great deal about the stresses and strains in these families' lives and the kinds of risk children were facing.

Family and Living Arrangements

For a substantial majority of families interviewed at time 1, living arrangements, specifically overcrowding, were a significant concern. One family with eight children was living in a three-bedroomed house, while another family with six children lived in a two-bedroomed maisonette. One young person we interviewed told us that he slept in the hallway of a two-bedroomed high-rise flat, and this was obviously unsatisfactory:

> I hear everybody in the night, and when people want to go to the toilet, and when I'm – say like if I have an argument, my sister or Mum can go into their bedroom but I can't go into mine, because I ain't got one. (Stephen, aged 11)

Another family we interviewed was homeless when we first met them, and another lived in a hostel for the homeless (which the family ran) and saw this as having put their son, Neil, aged 12, at risk of offending. Because Neil lacked friends he was vulnerable and easily led. He had got into trouble with the police for shoplifting with a boy who was staying at the hostel. Neil's mother told us:

> It does depend on who we have in at the time. Neil got into trouble with a 12-year-old boy who was staying here at the time with his mother because they'd been evicted from their house.

Generally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, parents did not think that YISP involvement had improved their living conditions. Some keyworkers had written letters of support for applications to move house, or to have repairs done. One keyworker intervened to pre-empt the eviction of a family, although the family seemed largely unaware of this intervention. The keyworker explained:

> They were going to be evicted and social services in conjunction with myself and the Travellers Project said, 'Well, look. Basically, if you evict them you're only going to have to rehouse them. Why not rehouse them directly … take them somewhere and rehouse them at a different address, so that was what happened –rather than them being evicted because of their antisocial behaviour and because of the community being in uproar about their ASB, fortunately Housing agreed to rehouse them somewhere else in the borough.

By the time we spoke to the families at time 2 some had succeeded in moving house, which parents regarded as having improved family relations and lessened the risks for their children. Stephen, for example, no longer had to sleep in the hallway after his family moved to a three-bedroomed house with a garden, in a different area. His mother told us how this had removed her son from the bad influence of friends who had led him astray:

> It makes a difference to the whole family … we can breathe now … before, we were stuck in that little flat … now we can all have time out if we want. Stephen can go to his room, I can go to mine or I can sit here, take time out … I feel so much better, I would even say a hundred per cent. I can breathe.

The family who had been homeless, had moved into their own home and had felt less stressed as a result:

> Ever since I've moved in here, since I've got my own house, it's like I've got my own rules back. I can put him [Nick] in his room now … He's put weight on and he looks to have a better colour in his cheeks, does Nick. He doesn't look gaunty and stressed out – he's got his own belongings. He's got his key when he comes in. He's got his own security now, he's secure again. He was very insecure was our Nick. (mother of Nick, aged 11)

It seems that poor housing conditions increase the risk factors for children, and that improvements in living conditions can substantially improve day-to-day family well-being.

Family Life

The majority of parents in our interview sample were concerned about their children's attitudes and behaviour at home. The biggest worry often centred on how to manage disruptive children, particularly when they were abusive and aggressive, apt to damage furniture or set fire to things, taking drugs, staying out late, and generally disobedient. At our time 1 interviews, many parents recounted their desperation at their children's behaviour:

> She [Melanie] dictated everything at home, and started getting knives out. She started getting knives to me throat, which I was putting up with it but she got into a rage and you can't do nothing with her when she's like that at all. (mother of Melanie, aged 13)

> He [Martin] keeps disappearing. Any little thing … he just hits, like winds his brothers and sisters up. If they're doing something, he'll come in and he'll kick something around or kick somebody, just to wind them up, all of them. (mother of Martin, aged 9)

> … and then he [Jenson] started being really bad in the house. He was running off, he was climbing through windows … and then he started throwing things … destroying … I mean three times that bedroom's been done of his and he's totally wrecked the wardrobes … Three tellys he's gone through. I mean, at the end of the day he's a most lovable child … a lot of things he can't remember what he's done … I mean he can punch me, he can kick me … if he can't get his own way with me or he don't get my attention, he will beat the other children up and he attacks them, or he'll go upstairs and he'll destroy things that they care about, and then he can't understand why they go for him. (mother of Jenson, aged 9)

On the whole, the children knew that their behaviour was wrong and freely admitted that they had caused concern for their parents, but many were not inclined to improve the way they behaved at home.

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Some talked about their aggression and its consequences. The following exchange took place in an interview with Ryan, aged 11:

Ryan. I argue with my nan.

Interviewer. Oh do you? What kind of things do you argue about? Is there one particular thing?

Ryan. 'Stop antagonising the dog.'

Interviewer. Don't you like the dog?

Ryan. Well … it's just annoying sometimes if I tell him to go away, he don't … He's a prat … I feel like kicking him out my window.

Interviewer. Do you? Does he follow you around?

Ryan. Sometimes. But that doesn't annoy me … what does annoy me is when I tell him off … he cowers and barks and growls … One time I actually pinned the dog up against a wall. He was actually pinned up with one hand … There's been a couple of times that I bring him up to my bedroom and there's been one time where I actually punched him for punishment because he done a poo … and then he wiped his bottom across my carpet leaving a straight line all the way down … I don't punch him that often. It's like I'm the captain of the dog or sometimes it's the other way around … he runs after me, I run after him. I don't take him out any more because I can't trust him.

Interviewer. Would you miss him if he went?

Ryan. I'd miss him … I would go out hunting whoever took him with a gun and shoot the person in the head and piss over him.

While parents spoke of their concerns about their children's behaviour in the home, some of the children and young people expressed their own concerns about family life. These included anxieties about their parents' arguing; parents' illness or addiction; loss of contact with a parent or grandparent through separation, bereavement or imprisonment; domestic violence; and being taken into care. Many of the children had experienced complex and difficult family backgrounds, which had impacted on them emotionally. Parents were often worried that their own behaviour was impacting negatively on their children.

The YISPs had been able to address some of the problems at home. At the time 2 interviews, most parents reported an improvement in their child's behaviour as a result of YISP intervention. A few said that the improvement had been substantial, and that the children were less aggressive and abusive, getting on better with siblings, obeying house rules and taking note of them. The majority of parents, however, felt that some rather than a lot of improvement had taken place in their child's behaviour at home:

He's not been that bad. I haven't got to shout at him. A few times – I have to shout at him a few times, because he won't listen, but that's it. (mother of William, aged 8)

When he [Ken] loses his temper he'll kick the crap out of his brothers, throw things downstairs … But they've calmed down a lot, but he still loses his temper quite a bit. He's calmed down now but he could be a lot better. (mother of Ken, aged 11)

Some parents spoke of the respite YISP had afforded them when children were away on summer activities. Other parents felt that they were better able to control their children and, as a result, that family relationships had improved. Marisha's mother explained that her daughter was coming in on time and that she was dealing with Marisha's outbursts better, although she stressed that some problems persisted. Marisha was still inclined to lose her temper and hit people.

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A minority of parents told us at time 2 that their child's behaviour was still a matter of serious concern, despite YISP intervention. One child was living with relatives to give his family some respite. Another child had been in and out of care on several occasions during YISP intervention. Other children were demonstrating increased levels of aggression:

> He's got a hole in his bedroom wall where he's kicked it in temper. He seems a lot more aggressive this year than what he did last year. (mother of Neil, aged 12)

> As he's getting older he's getting a bit more daring, talking back and stuff like that … He sometimes tries laying into his sisters … he does frighten them. Like the other day, for instance, he told his sister to put a pillow over her friend's head and hold it there. (mother of Darren, aged 11)

When we asked the children themselves about changes in the family, most described the situation as having improved during YISP intervention. Adam (aged 8) explained that he got on better with his brother as a result of managing his anger:

> [It's] a lot better. If he makes me mad, instead of like battering him or something. I say 'tank'… It's just a word what I thought of.

Other children told us:

> Normally, when I came home from school, I just picked on everyone and hit them, but now when I come home from school I just sit and watch TV and that … I try my best not to hit them. (Martin, aged 9)

> [It's] better … because we don't argue as much … because I come in on time. (Kay, aged 13)

Melanie explained that things were better at home because her parents had stopped arguing. Other children, however, told us that their parents still argued and that they wished this would stop.

Education and School Issues

Education had been a major issue for parents at our time 1 interviews, because all but one child in our in-depth sample had problems at school. Most of the children were in full-time mainstream education, although a few had been put on a reduced timetable and some were kept apart from other children. Stephen's mother had described his situation as follows:

> All [the school] are doing is, he's coming in for fifty minutes and they send him home, and the responsibility is over. They've asked me to pick him and drop him. So he's not allowed through the main entrance – and it's not as if he's burnt down the school or killed somebody. It's quite bad, because he has to come up the side entrance – he's not allowed to mix with the other children. (mother of Stephen, aged 11)

Sam's parents told us that he was allowed to go to school in the mornings only and did not mix with other children at all while he was there. She went on to explain that Sam's older brother had been in trouble at school and so anything Sam did that was naughty was inflated because of his brother's reputation. It emerged that Sam had kicked a teacher who was trying to get him down from a tree and the school were treating this as an assault. Sam's parents were of the view that the school were looking for a reason to exclude him.

A minority of children had been permanently excluded from mainstream education: two attended a special school full-time, while others attended pupil referral units or study centres part-time. One of the young people we interviewed at time 1 had received no schooling at all for a term and a half. Her parents told us that she had been offered home tutoring, but that this offer had subsequently been withdrawn when it emerged that both parents smoked. According to parents, the problem behaviours

their children evidenced in relation to education included: refusing to go to school; attacking teachers and/or fellow pupils; disrupting classes; damaging property; stealing; swearing; spitting; bullying; being bullied; firesetting; running out of lessons; truanting; smashing windows in the school bus; low achievement; and poor concentration. The following extracts describe a range of these problem behaviours:

> He [Martin] went for two weeks and then he didn't go for five or six weeks. He refused to go … I mean, we try taking him in. He's refused to sit in the car or get ready and that, and there was a couple of times that we tried forcing him to get dressed and he was threatening us with the police. (mother of Martin, aged 9)

> One time, it took three teachers to bring him [Jenson] home. One to drive [and] two to hold him down in the back of the car … I said to the headmistress 'He's going to flip one of these days at this school', and he did, and there was four police officers called. He totally trashed a classroom and they had to put him in a … it was like a cupboard and locked him in there – and the school will tell you that because they've got everything on record. (mother of Jenson, aged 9)

> To me, she [Sophie] just tries to be the centre of attention all the time. It has to be her and nobody else. It's like when she smacked the teacher in the face, she was eating an apple in class, which she knows damn well they're not allowed to do, and then spat it all over the floor, and the teacher said 'Pick it up', and she said 'No, go and effing pick it up yourself'. And then she went over and smacked the teacher straight across the face … She did get excluded for that … And then on another occasion … the little shit smacked the dinner-lady straight across the face … The Deputy Head has told her she has only one more chance and she's straight out of school. (father of Sophie, aged 13)

> He's on school report now for his attitude. He's got an attitude problem big as the Ace of Spades … when he was at primary school he threw a brick at a window and nearly hit a teacher. (mother of Ken, aged 11)

> He's more often suspended from the coach for arguing with the other little nutters on the coach … He gets restrained a lot and spends a lot of time with the headmaster or one-to-one doing nice things [like the] computer. (carer of Ryan, aged 11)

Most children admitted their bad behaviour in school, but some stressed that they felt labelled and got at by the school and by others:

> [I've] been suspended for calling the teacher a bitch ... but I never. She was saying that I was calling her a bitch … I was mumbling things, but I didn't call her a bitch. And if I did I wouldn''t have said it loud enough for her to hear anyway. (Kay, aged 13)

> Sometimes there's some things [teachers] do, and they punish me for like little things … it's just like people have a bad image of me now, so I've got to try and build it back up. I like going [to school]. It's just that like sometimes, when you get up in the morning, it's like, well, you feel 'Oh God, they're going to have another go at me' … (Michael, aged 13)

> I was excluded for about seven to thirteen times, when I was in Year Five, for fighting. Sometimes I started it but most of the time other people started it … I started it because [once] when I was at school I just kept getting picked on by all these people … (Gavin, aged 10)

Predictably, however, those children who were in the most danger of exclusion were less worried by the prospect than their parents. An ever-present worry for many parents at our time 1 interviews was that their child would be permanently excluded from mainstream education. This was often coupled with a lack of faith in the alternative education provision offered by pupil referral units or study centres and concerns that their child's behaviour would simply get worse:

> Suspensions, suspensions, suspensions … I mean she [Kay] says to me the other day, 'Oh, I'll need to go and get my new uniform' … I said, I'm not prepared to buy a new uniform because I know that the next one she's expelled … This year, she's spent more time at home … suspension, suspension, suspension, suspension. The school have been very, very patient with her … she's been lucky …

> Because we can get fined as well now, can't we? So I've been up to school with her I don't know how many times … The school are brilliant. Honestly, you know, they've just bent over backwards. … (mother of Kay, aged 13)

> I didn't want him [Stephen] to go to the Study Centre …. I have been to a few and children are left to their own devices …. I have got a few friends who have also got children with problems and they said that the worst thing they've done is put their child in a study centre because the children are left to their own devices …. and I think if Stephen went to a study centre he'd totally go off the rails. (mother of Stephen, aged 11)

The worry about alternative educational provision was heightened still further for parents of children who ran the risk of being excluded even from special schools, pupil referral units or study centres. Parents spoke of the difficulty in accessing residential schooling, which they saw as the only remaining option:

> We've got no other choice [other than to push for a residential school] … he [Darren] just keeps getting excluded [from the study centre] … It's just not working for him, it's not working for him at all, and I just want the best for him and I want him to try and get some sort of education … He's so behind that I don't know if he can catch up, but he's so good with his hands and I'm hoping in the residential that they will help him develop with his hands as well as … (mother of Darren, aged 11)

All the parents were concerned about the impact their children's lack of educational achievement/engagement would have on their future job prospects and social development. Many parents with younger children particularly feared the transition from primary to secondary school:

> I'm worried because [the primary school] where he is now, they know Nick and they know his character and they know what his temper's like and stuff and I'm so worried when he goes to big school … 'cos I'm scared to death because I think they won't put up with that – what they do at primary school. I know all his paperwork will go to High School about his problems, but I'm so scared he's going to get excluded from there. (mother of Nick, aged 11)

When asked about the causes of a child's troublesome behaviour at school, parents gave varying answers. Some were of the view that it was entirely the child's fault, while others felt that friends were apt to lead their child astray. Some felt that their children were reacting to being bullied, and some that their child had been labelled as a troublemaker and that the school had made things worse. For the most part, however, parents experienced schools as being very supportive and had considerable praise for the way in which teachers had handled the problem. Some parents, however, felt harassed by teachers, and others felt that communication between home and school was poor:

> Every time they have a problem, they phone me at home. Like there was one teacher and he'd phone me from his mobile to see if I could control her [Kelly] in school, and I think that's not really my job … I can't be running down to the school every five minutes. (mother of Kelly, aged 13)

> They do not inform me when things happen at school. I have to find out from Logan. The school will not let me know … When I contact the school I want to speak to somebody … Nobody ever rings me back. Nobody. Logan was excluded from school … they never informed me he was excluded from school … the reason I found out is because Logan had got ready for school that morning … ''Bye, Mum, I'm going to school', and then I had a letter drop on the door mat at half past ten that day saying he was excluded from school that day and the next day … (mother of Logan, aged 12)

It is clear from these accounts that problems at school were a major problem for most of the YISP children when we first interviewed them. When we met the families again for the time 2 interviews, almost two-thirds of parents told us that there had been some improvement in their child(ren)'s behaviour during the period of YISP intervention. It is difficult, of course, to isolate the impact of YISP involvement from the other interventions children had received, such as mentoring, counselling, learning support, and help from BIP teams. Nevertheless, most parents said that their child was working better at school, had an improved attendance record, was behaving better, and had a better attitude. One child, for example, had returned to mainstream schooling after a period of exclusion

which had lasted over a year. The school was also giving very positive feedback – the child had a new group of friends and was getting to school on time. Parents who reported vast improvements in relation to education told us:

> Imogen's attendance is ninety-two per cent. She's doing well at school. A lot better … her schooling has improved a hell of a lot. (mother of Imogen, aged 13)

> His behaviour and that has improved, and quite a few days now he actually looks forward to going to school, which before he didn't. (mother of Adam, aged 8)

> When he [Gavin] went back to school – and before that he had a lot of trouble – and since he's gone back, he's just changed straightaway. I can't believe it … In a matter of weeks … he comes home dead chuffed with himself. He's got certificates and loads of stickers. It's brilliant, absolutely brilliant – he's really changed. (mother of Gavin, aged 10)

> I don't know what happened at all, she just suddenly did a ninety degree turn almost. (mother of Melanie, aged 13)

Improvements at school meant that parents were no longer feeling harassed by teachers. Parents stressed, however, that it was too soon to conclude that some problems would not persist. One mother told us that 'school got better and then it got worse', and she remained concerned about the transition to secondary school. Another child's behaviour had improved during YISP involvement but had begun to deteriorate at the start of a new school year.

Although almost two-thirds of parents reported improvements in schooling, just over a third told us at the time 2 interview that things were as bad as before or had got worse. Some children had been excluded from school during YISP involvement and a few were attending a study centre or pupil referral unit. Two children were causing serious concern at these facilities because of their involvement in violence and abuse. Parents were frustrated and depressed about what they saw as a never-ending cycle of exclusions:

> I wouldn't say I'd seen a vast improvement. And he [Neil] has been suspended twice since he''s been back in school. The last one was when he pushed past a teacher. And the other one was threatening to throw a chair, that was it. So both to do with anger – and not just verbal this time. (mother of Neil, aged 12)

> And she [Laura] did say she'd try at school, but once she'd got a bad name at school, it's hard. She's been class clown for too long. And you've got to keep up … They're going to try and get her back into a school – I can't see that working though. No, she doesn't want to go … You see, she does get bullied a lot, and people don't realise she is only twelve … I think she'd gone too far into getting into trouble, and getting a reputation off the other children … She's now starting at [pupil referral unit] this week coming, and they're going to push to get her assessed there. (mother of Laura, aged 12)

Darren's mother felt that YISP intervention had come too late and that he needed help long before he was 12 years old. She told us:

> Since he [Darren] started [at the study centre] in September … he was excluded nearly all the time and then after the Christmas they excluded him for fifteen days, because they didn't know whether they were going to let him go to school again, and that dragged on and we had meeting after meeting after meeting … Nothing was done … I was getting frustrated, and then two weeks before the summer holidays, the school said 'Well, we're totally excluding him'. So he's had no homework, no study centre … nothing … no one coming round to see him … he's had nothing. He's had to be with me twenty-four-seven. Because of Darren's behaviour, no school will take him because of his violent temper … I've tried for years and years to get things done, but no one's listened to me, and now all of a sudden they want to listen to me now he's nearly a teenager where he can do more damage. If they would have helped in the beginning, then I don't think it would have got to this stage. However, there's been no support, no help, nothing there. (mother of Darren, aged 12)

Keiron's YISP keyworker was also aware that his behaviour had got steadily worse and that the situation had reached crisis point:

> I got some feedback from the last review from a teacher at his school and his behaviour was threatening, intimidating of young people, threatening to kill their parents, sexualised language to the female staff. Some of the female staff refused to work with him on their own. Keiron has been touching staff inappropriately, that's male and female. He's invaded personal space, slapped a member of staff on the bottom, was really abusive, and there were times when he threatened in class and had his timetable changed, and the teacher believed that his behaviour is getting worse. … something's happened where they've made an allegation of sexual assault, so that's been made this week. (Keiron's YISP keyworker)

When we talked to the children at time 2, they told us stories which were similar to their parents' accounts. Some children told us that schooling had got better, while others admitted that things had got worse:

> I have some friends … I'm playing football with all the boys, which means they get to know me … And my behaviour's better as well. (Ian, aged 8)

> I think I've been to school for four weeks without missing any days … I didn't want to go, I just bunked … But now I go to school, I have a full day at school, but at lunchtime I go to the lunchtime club. I've been there for, I think, two weeks, and since then I've been playing outside 'cos I've been good. I get to play out at lunchtime. (Martin, aged 9)

> My behaviour's a bit worse – it went better and then it got worse … It was just near the end of Year Seven. I wasn't reacting, and I tried to slow down. But then after the six- or seven-week break I had, it just started to go up again … so it started going up again. But now it's started going down again. (Neil, aged 12)

> School's worse 'cos we get detention … get into trouble for not doing work, swearing at teachers … I keep getting excluded. I've been excluded from school twice. (Paul, aged 10)

Some children showed no concern about the possibility of permanent exclusion. In fact, for some, exclusion was their goal. One child told us that school was better because he no longer had to go.

While YISP intervention had clearly reduced some children's risk factors relating to school, some of the educational improvements at the end of YISP involvement were very fragile, and it was unlikely to take much for children to revert to their previous poor behaviour. Things could be particularly difficult for children when YISP involvement came to an end leaving little ongoing support in place. For example, Michael had done well during his YISP involvement, but he had just been excluded from school again at the time of our time 2 interview, which took place just after the YISP work had ended. His mother was highly upset, but felt that she could not phone the YISP keyworker because the case had been closed:

> But [the keyworker]'s supposed to have been in touch with somebody else who Michael can see … Is it Connexions? It is Connexions. And he was going to see Michael at school. But we've never heard anything from school, never heard owt from him … You see, you can't really phone [YISP] and get [the keyworker] involved every time something happens, because she's passed it over to this other bloke who we don't even know anything about yet … but we've had no feedback from him, no – well, sorry, the pun – no 'connection' from him, and nothing from school. So it's suddenly gone from Michael meeting [the keyworker] every week for like an hour or whatever, talking through everything, and now all of a sudden there's a stone wall there …

This case demonstrates just how important it is for mainstream services to work with children when YISP intervention has ended. If they are not responsive, then all the benefits and positive changes resulting from the YISP intervention can be quickly lost.

Community Issues

Most parents took the view that the area in which they lived put their child at risk. They had expressed concerns when we had first met them that their children were involved in vandalism, fighting, mugging, joyriding, begging, and other antisocial behaviour in the neighbourhood. Zac's mother told us:

> Imagine what I were going through with our Zac every single night. Coming in at half past one in the morning, driving round in stolen cars. People picking him up and they were in nicked cars. Could have been dead. I were worried sick. The police coming here all the time, the neighbours complaining … he's on two of them community cards. (mother of Zac, aged 11)

Some parents believed that their children were at risk through staying out late, or overnight, in areas which were rife with social problems such as drugs, car crime, abductions and murder:

> We had an incident … where she'd gone out to ask this fella for a cig. and this fella asked her for sex … she ran off but she'd ended up with 20 cigs so … We ended up getting the police over it … I said 'You've just had a near miss, Melanie', and she's not bothered … and I was really angry with her 'cos I couldn't get through to her what she'd done. (mother of Melanie, aged 13)

> She was putting herself in danger, as in going out and not coming home, and me having to keep ringing the police and reporting her missing, and all that ongoing … the main issue for me, for Kay, is the understanding of the danger that she's putting herself into. (mother of Kay, aged 13)

A number of parents were worried about their children being drawn into a drug culture; others that their children were getting a bad reputation locally, which would lead to them being targeted by the police and the community:

> I know they're smoking drugs at the moment, and I really don't want Nick round with them. I know they're into cannabis at the minute. It does go round the estate, dunnit? Nick's only 11. These are like 14. I don't want him doing that. That's my worst fear. (mother of Nick, aged 11)

> The house is fine, but I'm not happy with what's out there because there's been an awful lot of fellas fighting and carrying on out on the street … all hours of the morning outside and then this alleyway over here … I explained to the police a couple of times. I said 'There's nothing but drug dealing going on in that alleyway' … and I used to see them dealing in it … selling drugs and all that. (mother of Philip, aged 9)

When we asked parents why they thought their children were getting into trouble in the community, they mentioned: boredom; a lack of things to do; the cost of activities being prohibitive; the influence of peers; victimisation by neighbours or other children; and children being vulnerable because of behaviour disorders or ADHD. Parents also complained about other families who did not discipline their children properly:

> At the minute there's a lot of friction on the street with neighbours. I mean, there's a family round the corner, and there's constant battles all the time. Now I'll admit to anybody who comes to my house that mine aren't angels, but they're not to blame for everything. Where[as] her round the corner, she will not have none of it that her kids – I mean she'll stand there whilst her kids will say that I'm fat, I'm dying and all kinds of things, you know. And the woman will even spit at me kids – this is a grown woman, you know. (mother of Jack and Laura, aged 10 and 12)

When we first talked to the children at time 1, many freely admitted their involvement in antisocial or offending behaviour, and some obviously regarded it as 'fun'. They clearly got a kick from climbing on roofs, shoplifting, fighting, riding motorbikes illegally, stealing the dust caps from cars, damaging property, and knocking on doors then running away. Children were also keen to tell us that they felt they got into trouble whatever they did:

> You get in trouble whatever you do. If you kick a ball, the police are around. We're hitting the wall. When we're playing out … they just … [mimics policeman] 'You should not be playing football in this area'. (Stacey, aged 10)

> Every time we play, someone complains. About playing football, going in the field, throwing mud. When I had an electric scooter they complained about that when I didn't have a helmet on. (Sam, aged 8)

These children had witnessed a good deal of crime taking place in their neighbourhoods, including gang fights, drug-taking, shoplifting, joyriding and mugging. They had seen a good many police chases and raids, and crime had frequently become a normal part of their everyday lives.

What is clear from our follow-up time 2 interviews, however, is that many of the children and young people had substantially improved their behaviour since we first talked to them. Over a third of parents had noted large improvements that meant their children were no longer out on the streets and were not getting involved in crime and antisocial behaviour. One mother in Wigan told us that her son had not been in any trouble since attending a family group meeting. Logan's mother reported that he was not getting into trouble in the community any more,

> because there's no peer pressure there any more, because Logan's not going out … he's not hanging round with the children who got him into trouble before.

Stephen's mother felt that the move away from a tower block had not only improved home life but had also removed her son from the influences likely to lead him astray:

> He was getting into a bit of a bad crowd … I think he just needs a normal life … People [round here] are more civil … It's like being normal … I know I shouldn't say it but it's normal … it's like Stephen doesn't want to go and smash somebody's car. He realises you've got to have a bit more respect for people.

Another family were relieved when problem neighbours had moved away:

> They've moved, and all the trouble moved with it. And all the abuse outside, all the arguing stopped. So it's been pretty quiet … but brilliant. (mother of Jack and Laura, aged 10 and 12)

Nevertheless, many parents were well aware that the improvements might not last. One mother felt that the situation with her son had improved because a drug supplier had left the area. Some thought that it was only a matter of time before peer pressure reasserted itself:

> [The keyworker] said to Paul that 'if somebody was doing something, would you join in and do it?' and he said 'Yeah'. He would do the same thing if somebody was doing something bad … If Paul can get in that position with it again he'd still do it, I know. (mother of Paul, aged 10)

Some children, however, were convinced that they were not going to get into any further trouble, although it is hard to determine whether this change was solely due to YISP intervention or whether the children had simply grown up a little bit:

> I've given up that behaviour now. (Zac, aged 11)

> I've not been going out, I can't be bothered. It's boring. (Sophie, aged 12)

> I come back a little bit early now. Normally I'd come back at like nine o'clock, but now I come back at like seven or eight. (Martin, aged 9)

> I used to go out all the time, where I was hardly ever in the house at night, and I just don't go out any more. I just feel like if I go out then I'm going to meet some of my friends, they're going to do something, I'm going to join in because I don't want to be left on my own … So I've just taken to not

going out, and if I do go out I only go down the road to speak to my friends at their door or something. (Michael, aged 13)

Some parents were grateful that their child had given up being friends with children who had been a bad influence, but worried that this meant that their child had no friends. In other words, while there were positive outcomes, anxieties about children getting into trouble were transformed into worries that they might have no friends. Logan's mother summed up this shift as follows:

I did speak to Logan the other day about this … why he wasn't going out, and he said, 'Well, I'm not going out because my friends all drink and smoke and I don't want to involve myself in that.' I said, 'Well done, Logan … that's very good of you that you don't want to hang around with them sort of people, but you can't stay in the house twenty-four hours a day … you need to have a life.' He's not going out … He's told me he's not hanging round with them because of what they're doing … which is a good thing but … I still have concerns that he's got no friends … He doesn't go out.

Individual Well-Being

Almost all the parents had been concerned about their child's emotional and psychological well-being at the time the child had been referred to YISP. Parents frequently mentioned self-harm as a problem, as well as poor temper control:

Stephen can get quite angry … I mean, the other day he said to his sister, 'Oh shut up, or I'm going to slap you across your face' … You know, that's all that he's been seeing … quite a lot of domestic violence, and he's starting to come out with certain things, and I went upstairs to Stephen and said 'You can't say that to her' … [he replied] 'Yes I can, I'm the man of the house.' (mother of Stephen, aged 12)

She [Stacey] did try to kill herself … she tried to jump in front of a bus. (father of Stacey, aged 10)

Another mother described an incident in which her son had tried to cut himself with a pair of scissors. In many cases parents linked this behaviour to factors such as impulsiveness, describing their children as fearless, reckless, and seeking excitement. Others also expressed concerns about hyperactivity and attention-seeking:

He [John] doesn't seem to understand danger … We went to London a while ago and we went to change trains ... and he decided to climb over the wrong side of the bridge … across a busy station when everybody's trying to change trains, you know, and things like that. We went shopping yesterday. I heard a smash in Asda, it was him … He's very demanding, gets aggressive. I don't get a minute. He's like this all the time … he's up and down all night, it's just constant. (mother of John, aged 8)

She's very self-orientated, Melanie – she's me, me, me, me all the time. Always has been since she was little … She used to be a screamer. I had my hands round her throat once when she was two. I ended up locking her in the kitchen out of my road and getting on to social services and the health visitor saying 'Please come before I kill my daughter'. (mother of Melanie, aged 13)

Over half of the parents believed that their child had some kind of emotional, behavioural or mental problem, such as ADHD. Some had used the Web to try to get a better understanding of their children's behaviour:

I've had twelve years of dealing with Logan and not knowing what the problem is 'cos I *know* there is an underlying problem. I know he's got some chemical imbalance … there's some sort of behavioural problem because I've gone on the internet, I've read up, I've researched …I haven't just sat on my arse and done nothing. I've researched and I've come to the conclusion that I think Logan's got ODD … Oppositional Defiance Disorder … I highlighted the traits and it's Logan. The anger, he hates authority, doesn't like being told what to do, gets aggressive very fast, instantaneous … (mother of Logan, aged 12)

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Some children had already received help from CAMHS when they were referred to YISP. Nick, for example, had spent four months in a residential CAMHS unit, which he looked back on with affection. A few had been prescribed drugs such as Ritalin or Concerta. Despite medication, however, their problems persisted. Ken's mother told us that she still had ongoing concerns about Ken's mental health, even though he had been referred previously to CAMHS. She felt he needed to deal with the fear he had of his father.

Parents described emotional problems which they felt were linked to a number of factors. They told us that their child had been bullied (often because of being overweight), lacked social skills, had low self-esteem, or showed a lack of pride in their appearance. Some children had clearly suffered as a result of parental separation or the death of a significant adult. Many parents told us that their children smoked, and this caused some anxieties:

> She's always doing it [smoking] at home. She was thieving a friend's cigarettes as well 'cos she's into smoking, which has got worse these last few months, and it's got so bad it's like being on a drug. (mother of Melanie, aged 13)

> She [Kay] smokes a bit … she told me the other day that she's tried cannabis … I don't know if she drinks out in the street … but I'd say, yes she probably has had a bit of alcohol when she's been out, to be honest. (mother of Kay, aged 13)

Several parents were worried about drug taking and were convinced that their child had been experimenting. Nick's mother, who admitted that she had taken drugs when she was younger, knew what to look for:

> I thought one night – he'd come in, and his Dad weren't here, and he [Nick] just looked stoned. And I went 'What have you been on?' And he went 'Nothing'. I went 'You look stoned', I went 'You look really stoned out your head to me' … So I'm wondering if he did actually try it that one night. But he did, he looked stoned, his eyes were raw. I know what they look like, he was stoned. I'm ninety-nine per cent sure Nick was stoned that night. (mother of Nick, aged 11)

Children rarely expressed concerns about their own mental health, but they were generally aware of those aspects of their behaviour which worried their parents. Michael, who at the age of 13 was a little older than some of the other young people and was taking the drug Concerta when we first met him, offered a vivid insight into the problems his hyperactivity caused, particularly at school:

> Some days, which is even worse, I get hyperactive. I get up in the morning and I just – I just suddenly get a load of energy from somewhere, and I just get like – I just get hot and I just don't – I just don't want to sit down, because it's getting like stuffy and I just feel so hot, and I just don't want to sit down. I want to just play football or … I just lose concentration and I don't get on with my work, and then I distract other people, because I can't just sit there and get on with it. Because it's just, I get really, really hot, and I can't get comfy on the chair. And it's just little things, and I start fidgeting. Usually it starts when – when I start going naughty … I just usually sit on my desk and I'll start just twiddling a pen, making a little noise. And then when the teacher has told me to stop that, I'll just start shifting my chair and just little things like that … I just need to cool, I just try and make myself cool off … I've got a time-out card, which means that I can go to one of the teachers that knows what's going on with me, and I can just sit there for a while … It's just like the atmosphere that's in the room, it just – I don't know, it just feels so hot, and I just feel all stuffy and sticky and horrible.

Laura, aged 12, also had considerable awareness of her problem. In her case it was being overweight, and she had been subjected to teasing and bullying at school:

> I think I'm getting bigger and bigger. I look at other people – like me, you'd never see me in a skirt or a dress, never … I'm not really a girlie-girl sort of thing, I'm more of a tomboy – as you can see. But it still hurts, you see. You know, other girls, skinny girls, in a skirt and like a nice little top or something … My Mum says that I'm very emotional and I've got low self-esteem – I don't know what it means

but … I know what emotional means, but I don't know what low self-esteem is – you can tell that I haven't been to school for a while, can't you?

Ian, who was only eight, was surprisingly aware of his own difficulties. He felt isolated at school and said that he sometimes felt so frustrated that he lost control. 'I sometimes', he told us, 'call myself a "living hell".'Ryan, aged 11, told us how sad he felt because he did not know his father. Ryan had become a Manchester United football supporter because his mother had told him that his father had supported that team. He very much wanted to see his father but had no idea where his father lived.

When we interviewed the parents and children at time 2, around a third of the parents reported that their child's psychological health had improved. They described their children as happier and less aggressive. Melanie was said to be 'more content in herself' and 'a lot happier', and Michael's mother said that he 'felt better about himself'. Others were said to have 'calmed down' or to have 'settled down'. Children themselves reported that they had 'calmed down':

> I've calmed down a little bit at home. (Jenson, aged 9)

> I've calmed down a lot. (Dan, aged 9)

> I feel as though I've improved myself. And I feel like I've improved, and I think I deserve a bit of trust. Because I have proved that I can bring myself back up, and I don't – I'm not going to want to go down again. So I'm going to try my hardest to keep – to stay good. (Michael, aged 13)

Many parents were appreciative of the support they were given to access CAMHS during YISP intervention. Counselling had also helped some children. Most parents were hoping that the improvement would be sustained after YISP intervention had ceased, but some parents were aware that their child's mental health had already begun to deteriorate.

The majority of parents reported that the children had not offended or been involved in antisocial behaviour during YISP involvement, and most were optimistic that they were not likely to reoffend in the future. Parents felt that children had learned their lesson, had turned a corner, and that the outcomes were positive. Only a few young people reported that they had offended during YISP intervention. Darren admitted offending but his mother and his keyworker seemed unaware of this. One young person told us he had attacked a family member; two others had stolen mobile phones; and another had been involved in shoplifting. The names of some young people were on Prevent and Deter lists, which meant that the police visited regularly. Gavin's mother told us that the police had talked to her child about an alleged assault on another child, but the matter had not been taken further. She did not know whether Gavin had hit the other child or not. Clearly, some children had made great strides during YISP involvement and wanted to stay out of trouble. Others were still living on the fringes of antisocial and criminal behaviour and some parents were concerned that these children would always be labelled potential troublemakers.

Attributing Positive Change to YISPs

As we have seen, the parents and children were largely positive about their experience of YISP intervention. For most children the risk factors identified at the time of the YISP referral had reduced. Many children were clearly doing better when we interviewed them at time 2, and parents tended to be cautiously optimistic about the future. The children and young people were aware that there had been changes, but they found it difficult to engage in any reflection about the effects of the interventions they had received through YISP, and about their potential for future offending or antisocial behaviour. Some were able to give examples of ways in which YISP had helped them. Nevertheless, it was far from easy for them to think about what had worked to facilitate changes in their behaviour.

Most of the parents were generally positive about YISPs, and tended to attribute improvements in their children's behaviour to factors which included: their child being given medication (often the use of Ritalin); the family no longer being homeless; a change of area or community environment; moving school or having a new teacher; finding new friends; changes in family circumstances; and bullying having ceased. Not all these factors were YISP-related, however. William's father told us in no uncertain terms:

> He's improved a lot, but not by YISP.

Ian's parents explained how his behaviour had got so bad while they were waiting for a CAMHS residential placement that they had gone back to the paediatrician to ask for Ian to be given Ritalin. This, for them, was a last resort:

> We really wanted to try behaviour modification as opposed to medication, but [this] wasn't coming. So … we started Ritalin … he's just so much better, so much better. He's concentrating, working, building friendships at school, he's playing football with the other boys, which to me is fantastic because he did not join in at all … It's phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal. (mother of Ian, aged 8)

Paul's mother attributed the improvement in behaviour of another son of hers who had also received YISP intervention to him having changed schools. Sophie, aged 12, was quite clear that her behaviour had improved because she was no longer being bullied at school:

> I told my Nan and then my Nan told my Dad, and my Dad went into school next day, and [the Head of Year] told [the bullies] if they do it again they're in isolation, which means they're not allowed to go out at break or dinner, and if they carry on doing it they're not allowed back in school again … My behaviour went bad because of the bullying – I couldn't take it out on [the bullies], so I was taking it out on my family.

Imogen's great-grandmother felt Imogen's behaviour had improved, because she was afraid that if she misbehaved she would be put into care since her mother had been in prison for some of the time she was receiving help from the YISP:

> She's reformed … They've been thinking of putting her into care, you see … That's what's frightened her. She's never done anything wrong since then.

Although YISP activities may not themselves have had a direct impact on the children, some of the changes in circumstances may well have been facilitated by the fact that the child had been referred to YISP and members of the multi-agency panel had been able to commit resources to effecting change in the family's life. In addition, as we have seen in previous chapters, the one-to-one relationship with a keyworker does seem to have had a positive impact, alongside the availability of constructive leisure activities. Stacey, for example, who had been out of mainstream education for two terms at the beginning of YISP intervention had returned to school by the time of our follow-up interview. Her keyworker believed that her successful engagement in six weeks of constructive activities over the summer had been the main catalyst for change. One young person had developed a passion for boxing and was supported during his attendance at boxing sessions by a YISP worker. The combination of one-to-one support and sustained access to an activity he enjoyed had provided him with the motivation to do well, although he was still having some problems at school.

Being listened to was an important trigger for change for some young people. One young man (Zac) described the family group meeting as the best thing that had happened to him, because people listened to him. His mother was equally enthusiastic about the experience, and believed that being able to put his side of the story had changed Zac's life. Zac's case provides an important example of the positive impact a family group meeting can have, irrespective of the interventions that might follow through the ISP. Only in Wigan, however, did children and young people have the opportunity to be heard by significant adults, because families were largely excluded from attending YISP panels in other areas.

The Importance of Support

An important theme to emerge from our analyses was the value of one-to-one work with a keyworker. Having an adult who is not a family member to talk to was important for many children:

> One of the big things was, for the first time Ian saw somebody from outside the family who was willing to spend a bit of time on his behalf and to put some time in and make an effort, and his confidence and self-esteem flourished for a while … [He benefited from] an experienced adult who listened to him and tried to understand what he was saying and support him. (father of Ian, aged 8)

Parents were aware that the YISP keyworker was in a better position than they were to get through to their child, primarily because they did not get angry or frustrated in the same way parents do. Consequently, children were more willing to talk to the keyworker and to listen to the advice they gave. Imogen, aged 13, showed us a file of the work she had done with her keyworker, which included writing a letter of apology to the victims of her offence. Some keyworkers offered anger management techniques and victim awareness input during their one-to-one work, and many keyworkers worked with children on the causes and consequences of crime. William, aged 8, had learned that spitting and swearing was antisocial behaviour and that he would get a bad reputation if he went around with friends who behaved in that way. This had clearly had an impact on him:

> [The keyworker] said, 'You need to be a lot better now round here or you'll get a bad reputation round here' … And some of [the kids] are bad. But I'm in a good gang now … I don't play with [my friend] any more. He were bad – spitting and all that and swearing.

Although the children described some of the work with keyworkers as 'boring', most had enjoyed the regular one-to-one sessions and had learned valuable strategies for avoiding getting into trouble. Stephen's mother said that Stephen had 'wisened up' as a result of talks with the keyworker.

Taking part in activities also gave children the opportunity to learn new skills such as boxing, orienteering and swimming. Some made new friends as a result, and realised that they could have fun doing things other than offending. Parents could see the change in their child's behaviour and noted increased self-confidence and self-esteem. Improvements in children's behaviour were evident also when parents had received support. Although YISPs direct most of their resources towards children and young people, some support is usually offered to parents, particularly in Wigan, where there are dedicated parenting workers. Ian's parents felt that they had received no support, apart from through their doctor, before the YISP keyworker had entered their lives. Several parents felt that they had been able to contact the keyworker and ask for help whenever they needed to, and they spoke very highly of the support they had received:

> I mean, I've phoned [the keyworker] I don't know how many times … he's listened, he's talked … They've been very good, they have … YISP's been more of emotional support and like a rod for my back, you know, when I've thought me brain can't take any more in. (mother of Jack, aged 10, and Laura, aged 12)

> I think they [YISP] was my lifeline … because it was so bad because I had Paul and his brother, also, on YISP. With the behaviour, the way they were both showing and displaying their behaviour, I think it had come to the point where we were going to have to phone social services to put them into care … Yeah, if their behaviour hadn't got better and I had seen a good side to them. I think 'cos I saw [the parenting worker] on the parenting skills and I did do the things anyway, but they talked to me and it was like a reassurance thing that I was doing it the right way. (mother of Paul, aged 10)

Paul's mother and father had learned how to impose boundaries around their children's behaviour, and this had led to huge improvements at home.

It seems that YISP keyworkers were successful in establishing the kind of rapport and trust with parents and children which parents often felt was lacking in their dealings with other agencies. Keyworkers were described as accessible, relaxed, informal and friendly. Michael, aged 13, described his meetings with the keyworker as 'almost like speaking to a friend'. The keyworkers' non-judgmental approach was particularly welcomed:

> And it's just like she [the keyworker] tries to understand – she makes the best effort she can to try and understand where I'm coming from, and it just really helps. (Michael, aged 13)

> If you ask [the keyworker] to do something, he does his damndest to do it … [the keyworker] goes out of his way to do it. If I say to him I have a problem on this and that and I need somebody to talk to … he'd go out of his way … (mother of Jenson, aged 9)

Parents described how some professionals made them feel as if they had done something wrong, whereas YISP keyworkers seemed to understand the issues and the importance of keeping families informed about what was happening. We have noted elsewhere in the report that keyworkers in Ealing did not develop close one-to-one relationships with families or engage in parenting support work, and parents in Ealing were more likely to say that they were not kept informed and that they did not know what was happening to their child's case.

Keyworkers, then, emerge as a very important factor in the success of YISPs. Positive outcomes can be facilitated through a constructive, supportive keyworker relationship. When YISP intervention ends, however, the loss of this relationship can be problematic and parents were aware that sustaining positive outcomes would present a real challenge for them and for their child. Usually, YISP was not regarded as 'a miracle', as one parent put it, but as an intervention which could be helpful and which might make a real difference in the long run. It seems that much will depend on the extent to which other agencies continue the constructive work YISPs have started.

Keyworker Perspectives on Outcomes of YISP Intervention

During our discussions with keyworkers, we asked them to indicate what they perceived as being successful outcomes, and explored their reflections on the programme and on their own role as keyworkers. A recurrent theme in keyworker interviews was the difficulty they have in distinguishing the impact of YISP intervention on children's behaviour and attitudes from the contributions of other interventions the young people were receiving. Although keyworkers were able to identify the elements of ISPs which had contributed to a reduction in the children's risk of offending in the short term, they found it difficult to gauge any longer-term impact on the children's involvement in antisocial behaviour and/or offending. Keyworkers believed in the value and effectiveness of early intervention work. One YISP co-ordinator, with a YOT background, described the concept of YISP as 'brilliant, absolutely brilliant'. Another stressed the value of picking up young people who do not realise they are wandering on to an offending pathway but who are able to heed a warning about the consequences of their present behaviour:

> I think you've got more opportunities of affecting change with early intervention … [it's] more positive really. I definitely think early intervention works for, not everybody, but I think a high proportion, and it might not completely work but it does give kids an opportunity and a chance. (YISP keyworker)

> Some of its [YISP's] strengths are that services offered to families are voluntary, they don't have to take them up, and for parents who are, we call them 'hard to reach', they've had previous engagement with social services, education, statutory agencies, police even, and [we] give them an opportunity to work with someone who's not going to force them. (YISP keyworker)

All the keyworkers believed they delivered support in a way which was non-stigmatising and which did not label children. One keyworker mused that even if YISP intervention did label children to some extent, this should be viewed positively:

> If they wasn't labelled they wouldn't get the support, would they? … So it's probably more positive labelling. I think it does label … maybe when I go into school and do school visits with the Connexions workers … it's a good way to see kids in school and build a relationship with the school, but I suppose you do go into that school and it's dinner time and you're pulling that young person out and it's like, you're almost giving them special treatment and making them stand out, but then they are accessing services they wouldn't otherwise [have].

Nevertheless, whether YISP labels children or not keyworkers found it difficult to prove that the work had been preventative:

> Kids offend for a myriad of reasons. Even if we identify them [risk factors] we can't predict the combination of them … also we don't know why some offend and stop and others go on.

Some keyworkers were modest as regards what they thought YISP intervention could achieve:

> All I see that we are doing is planting seeds that will grow to fruition with the family, with the young person, to divert them.

Consequently, keyworkers felt they could only talk about short-term outcomes which were achievable, such as:

- the child no longer being involved in antisocial or offending behaviour

- the child staying in full-time education

- the child having accessed mainstream services, such as CAMHS

- the reduction of a major risk factor

- raising the profile of the family and ensuring multi-agency support from social services, housing, police and education

Keyworkers were also keen that parents should be able to see a difference in their child's behaviour and attitude, and that this would result in high levels of parental satisfaction with YISP. They agreed with parents, however, that factors outside YISP were often largely responsible for a change in children's behaviour and attitudes. Speaking about one young person, whose family had moved from a tower block to a semi-detached house on a different estate, the keyworker commented:

> [Maybe] that's all he needed, to move house … I mean I saw him … in the summer and the first time that he was here he was like a caged animal … he was in and out. He'd been jumping out of windows at his school. He was on a very limited timetable, but when I saw him this summer he was very calm, very happy, less tense, just a really lovely young person, and that's the feedback I got from YIP as well. Very generous with his money, with his time, with his support. … So it's just made a real difference, just that move.

This example indicates how important it is to judge success on a case-by-case basis. One child might improve in terms of his or her behaviour and attitude but still offend; another child might stop offending but deteriorate at school. Just being able to engage young people was seen as a positive outcome, particularly if they attended activities regularly and were willing to go to them on their own or with the help of parents. Some keyworkers were able to point to successful outcomes for children who had improved their social skills and were making more constructive use of leisure time and whose

self-esteem had increased. They also described how some parents had increased their parenting skills, and how others had become more aware of how to support their child.

Children who had high risk factors might be successful in small ways, and keyworkers were keen that, in the words of one, 'little bits of success' should be celebrated. One child, for example, had made an effort to reduce his smoking and had been supportive of another child on an outing. Talking about a difficult case, another keyworker said:

> [It] depends what you mean by success … as far as I'm aware [the young person] hasn't come to the attention of the police, so that's a success in itself. He has engaged with me. He's took part in activities. Mum's getting the support she's never had before. I would say Mum is more stable than she was before … so yeah, I would say it's a success so far, but hopefully then it will be a real success … I think the most important thing for [the young person] is if she gets involved with CAMHS … that's the most important area for me.

Most keyworkers believed that change, however minimal, is only possible if the child is motivated to change his or her behaviour:

> We can make a big difference if the young person is willing to engage. (YISP co-ordinator)

Michael, aged 13, was highly motivated to change. He had completed twelve weeks of one-to-one work with a keyworker, and he stressed how motivated he had been to move beyond the incident which had led to his referral to YISP:

> I know I've done wrong, and I know that it's pretty stupid, but – and it's like really, really serious – but I want people to think of me like that I did something wrong, and I'm trying to get back on myself.

Michael's keyworker regarded YISP intervention as having been very successful:

> I think the difference between Michael and some of the young people that I work with is that he had sort of 'get-up-and-go'. Whereas some of the young people I work with would be like 'Well, oh yeah, all right – don't wanna do that', Michael was always up for it and always 'Oh yeah, I'll do that' and 'Oh yeah, I'll go and try and tackle those' and things like that. So I think that will be useful – that will be what gets him through.

Others stressed that the more positives there were to work on in the child's life, the greater the likelihood of success:

> I think the best cases are when there's the most positives to work … I've just finished working with a lad who – there was a lot of negatives – but he was actually in a dance class, that danced twice a week. So for a lad of twelve to be involved in a dance class twice a week, I think that's a really big positive. Because he's going to get teased for that … and it takes a lot of effort … and it was an intense group as well. So, like, towards Christmas, giving shows – he's got about three or four practices a week. And he goes and he loves it. That's a really big positive for him. (YISP keyworker)

Conversely, keyworkers felt that a lack of motivation to change was one of the main factors linked to poor outcomes. Several keyworkers referred to cases where children had engaged in mainstream services, one-to-one interventions and/or activities, but had seemed unable or unwilling to change their behaviour and attitudes. These were described as serious cases where the child's problems were complex and deep-seated, and the children were unwilling to admit that they had done anything wrong or that they had any problems. Sometimes the young people were involved with other children who were engaging in crime and antisocial behaviour, making it difficult for them to break free:

> Because some of the twelve-to-thirteen-year-olds we're getting are already in that pattern [of offending], it's only a small pattern, but they're already getting there because of the group of friends that they have. And those ones – you can usually spot them when you start working with them, and

you think to yourself 'I'm not really sure how much of an effect I'm actually going to have here' … If we could get them at 8 or 9, I think that would be perfect. And the ones we've had at 8 or 9 have been some really good ones, I've really been able to work with them well. And also because they're still open, pretty much, to what you're saying. Whereas once they're 12 or 13 they can already be quite, you know, sarcastic I suppose, and quite shut off from what you're saying. And they hate the police, they hate social workers, they hate everybody who is talking to them, they hate the teachers – not all of them, but some …

Similarly, children deeply involved in drug-taking were more likely, it seems, to have developed entrenched attitudes and behaviour which meant that YISP intervention was unlikely to result in positive change.

Keyworkers agreed that successful risk reduction outcomes for children were dependent to a large extent on the support the young people received from their parents. Keyworkers believed that children need encouragement and support from their parents, and that many parents need support with their parenting skills. If the parents have no interest in their child's behaviour, the impact of YISP intervention is limited. Keyworkers felt that in order for any change in a child's behaviour or attitude to be sustained, ongoing support from parents after the YISP intervention is essential:

> We need to see the parents more as partners. (YISP keyworker)

> We can set up all we like and do all we like but if there's no parent there … as soon as we've gone it's all gone, and you set that child's expectations higher, so it's even further down than when we came in.

> According to the [sessional worker] who's doing direct work with the family, he says he's noticed, every week he's got to start afresh. He makes inroads and sees [the young person] has taken on some boundaries – you know he's listening and responding, but he's got to start all over again [every time he sees him] because, you know, there's no other positive re-enforcement [at home].

> It's parents 90 per cent of the time … that's the main issue … The home environment plays a big part in any child's life, doesn't it? … If your home environment's not right, it leads to all the other factors.

Some parents were open to the help offered by YISP keyworkers from the start, but others only felt able to ask for help after they had built up some rapport and trust with the YISP staff. Other parents consistently refused to accept that they needed to change, or lacked the capacity to do so. Parents' failure to understand their own need to change was linked with negative outcomes for children. One YISP co-ordinator explained how he had unsuccessfully discussed new behaviour management strategies with one mother who had proved unwilling or unable to implement them with her son:

> … each week when I went back, there had usually been an incident which [mum] was very unhappy about, and she hadn't been able to put those … strategies into place … I don't think she understands how to change … Unless she changes I can't see a way forward for either of them … I think [her son] was receptive and willing to try, but it's very difficult unless [mum] is also receptive and willing to try, and I would say the key of the two in that relationship is mum because she's the adult and she is the one who should absorb some of those skills and try them. [Her son] is the reactive one in that relationship … I think she wanted [her son] changed without actually accepting that she was part of the whole … but unless she shows him more love and affection and is more skilled in the way she talks to him, eventually he will revert to his old habits.

Some keyworkers felt so strongly about the need for parents to change that they wondered if parents should be required to attend parenting courses.

The One to One Relationship with Children and Young People

Most keyworkers believed that there were two keys to successful outcomes: first, the quality of the child's one-to-one relationship with a keyworker, sessional worker or mentor provided by YISP; and secondly, the quality of the relationship/rapport the keyworker established with the parent(s). One YISP co-ordinator explained:

> All plans and targets are lost at the moment of interaction if something isn't going on between the keyworker and the child. ... It's about spending time with youngsters in a comfortable way. Relationship is what counts – and then maybe issues can be addressed … one-to-one is what brings the returns.

Through one-to-one relationships, keyworkers sought to model pro-social behaviour – respectful, affirming interaction between an adult and a young person – and to establish a communicative relationship based on reciprocal trust. One of the biggest challenges facing keyworkers in their one-to-one work was how to engage the less motivated children. Some keyworkers had spent months winning the trust of young people who at first had completely refused to engage in YISP:

> You have to sort of keep going. [This case] would be an example of that. In September he wouldn't look at anybody, wouldn't speak to anybody, and then now if you meet him he's a totally different person. He's doing amazingly at school and you know he's started coming with me on his own. He's just singing in the car and it's just like a total turn-around.

This commitment, however, was more difficult for those YISPs that limited their intervention to twelve weeks. The capacity of YISPs to facilitate or fast-track onward referrals to other agencies was regarded by keyworkers as vital to their being able to achieve positive outcomes for the children. However, the ability of YISPs to achieve fast-tracking seemed to vary from area to area, and from service to service. This was exemplified by the variable access to CAMHS, which was one of the most sought-after services:

> I think [most of the children referred to YISP] need some CAMHS support of one form or another, whether it's anger management or some self-esteem work – or maybe something on bereavement, or even loss, as in parents divorcing or something like that. But we just can't access that much CAMHS support.

Thus, some YISP keyworkers felt that YISPs had served to highlight the gap in preventative services in statutory and other agencies. Many YISPs could not help the children access the support they needed because they were assessed as being below service thresholds (e.g. social services, drug programmes, CAMHS), or else the services they needed did not exist (e.g. satisfactory alternative educational provision for excluded children; constructive activities, especially for the under 11s):

> One of the aims of YISP is to forward the development of preventative services, but at the moment we are nowhere near that … Part of problem is that … these issues are not known to other agencies. The YISP is creating a new market with no [services] to pass on to at this stage. We are uncovering issues and passing them on and trying to influence, but we are not there yet. Other agencies say they work in a preventative mode, but they don't really. (YISP manager)

> If we want to do preventative work then the thresholds of other agencies have got to be lowered. For instance, with the police, in most areas we have good relationships with [them] and [they] will go out and do sessions on crime and consequences either jointly with us or by themselves or with parents – so they've moved into preventative mode and that works really well. Some of the other agencies aren't so flexible yet, or are so busy dealing with child protection issues that they haven't got the capacity … it's very difficult because it's below their threshold. There's no one else but [YISP] to do the work. (YISP manager)

Some keyworkers argued that one way forward might be to expand the work of YISPs so that young people need not be referred on to other agencies.

Identifying Promising Outcomes

In a relatively short-term evaluation such as this one it was important to consider the YISPs' achievement over a period sufficiently long enough for us to be confident that YISP intervention had made a difference. For our quantitative study of outcomes we relied primarily on assessing changes in risk factor scores recorded through repeat ONSET assessments. As we have shown, most pilots achieved some reduction in risk, but it is very disappointing that not all pilots conducted closure ONSETs as a matter of course, rendering the data somewhat patchy. It is interesting to note, however, that the higher the initial risk score the greater the impact of YISP intervention – suggesting that the highest risk children might benefit most. Moreover, the older the child the less likely they are to experience a large reduction in risk – suggesting that there is more to be achieved by targeting high risk children who are younger than by targeting older children. It has been challenging for YISPs to identify this target group. As referrals have increased and experience has grown, teams have felt more able to be selective, but most keyworkers reported ongoing problems in identifying the right target group:

> I would say, if you get the referrals that [YISP] is intended for … which is to do intervention, start really right at the beginning, then to spend this three-months period of time is fine. You don't get a lot of them … My understanding is it's supposed to be early intervention, so it's supposed to be at the start of when there's starting to be real struggles with relationships, or maybe a few difficulties within school. But starting with struggles with the relationships at home, or if there's been a significant event that's affected behaviour, starting to hang around on the street because they're not accessing agencies, where you can do a short piece of work around consequences or understanding, and access the services that they need, like activities, like extra support – they are the kids who tend to be successful with a short piece of work. But what tends to happen is, you get young people who have had five or six years of difficulties, five or six years of problems, parents who have been struggling for quite a number of years and are quite negative, or they've been involved with other services before and had bad experiences, so they're reluctant to engage in certain situations. (YISP keyworker)

Some keyworkers were aware that YISP would be more successful with younger children (aged 8 or 9) rather than older children (aged 12 or 13), and placed emphasis on working with children before they made the transition to secondary school.

Although the majority of parents and children were positive about their experience of YISP interventions, and in the short term at least risk factors tended to diminish, parents continued to be anxious about the sustainability of positive outcomes when YISP involvement was relatively short and there seemed to be little alternative support in place to help families once YISP keyworkers had withdrawn. The fragility of arrangements for the future was evident time and again.

We have analysed the quantitative and qualitative data available to us as sensitively as possible to ensure that we could explore the potential of YISPs to reduce the risks of offending and antisocial behaviour. We did not set out to conduct a randomised control trial, nor were we able to select a comparator group of children aged 8–13 precisely because they would not have been identified had they not been referred to one of the pilot YISPs. We clearly need to be tentative when considering the outcomes of YISP intervention, but we are confident that we have been able to identify the most promising factors in YISP intervention. It has become clear to us from both the quantitative and the qualitative data that the younger children are when YISPs intervene, the greater the chance that preventative work will have an impact. Parents and children need to be motivated to change, however, and able to benefit from the support they are offered through YISPs. Children and young people referred to YISPs frequently presented with a range of risk factors across several domains. Tackling risks at different levels was usually more effective than focusing solely on one risk. So, for example, rehousing a family in a different neighbourhood was just as important as providing mentoring support

to the child. In this sense YISPs have huge potential, because the multi-agency panels should ensure that help is forthcoming from a range of agencies simultaneously. The role of the keyworker in co-ordinating this support and in working intensively with the child and the family has emerged from our research as a key factor in YISPs being able to deliver positive outcomes. Regular and intensive keyworker support has been highly valued by parents and children, whereas inconsistent keyworker involvement has been regarded as unsatisfactory. Direct work with children clearly had a positive impact on many children in the study, and we have reached the conclusion that YISP intervention, to be effective, needs to be both intense and sustainable.

Chapter 9   The Costs of YISP Intervention: An Outline Analysis

Colin Wren

One of the most challenging aspects of our evaluation has been to attempt to determine the costs associated with the YISP programme. The purpose of the costing exercise was to determine the financial, time and other costs involved in delivering the YISP pilots for different offices and panels. We collected data via a form we devised for the purpose and data were required from each pilot on a monthly basis for the months of September and October 2005 only in order to minimise the burden on pilots. The aim was to provide a snapshot of YISP activity and costs. Our purpose was to examine the kinds of activity undertaken and the costs associated with these on a monthly basis, averaging across two months which were regarded as typical. Three main components of activity and cost involved in administering and delivering YISP at the area level were identified, as follows:

1.   The number of children dealt with by type of activity (referral process, ONSET assessment, panel attendance, etc.) and the time input of YISP and non-YISP staff.

2.   The expenditure involved in providing services/activities to children, in respect of YISP and non-YISP staff.

3.   The office costs in running YISPs, including allowances for variable and fixed costs (e.g. rent, furniture and fungibles, such as telephones, printing and telephones).

In relation to the first two, the data were collected for staff time inputs, to the nearest half-day. Time inputs are most readily and easily collected. No effort was made to obtain salary or wage data, owing to the confidentiality surrounding earnings data, which in any event were unlikely to be known for the non-YISP staff involved. Nevertheless, a distinction was made between different types of staff (e.g. manager, keyworker and other YISP staff), since it was possible to apply national or even regional wage rates to these different time inputs, and to carry out some sensitivity analysis for this.

Data were returned for nine of the thirteen areas. The data were not always returned in the manner required and some of the returns were of relatively poor quality. Only six areas returned the forms for both September and October, while two areas made a single return for the two months combined, and others for October and November. However, this was not a serious issue, given that we were averaging the data across months for each pilot area. Of more concern was the quality of some returns. One pilot did not complete the form and supplied its own data, but these were difficult to reconcile with the information we required. Unfortunately, we have had to exclude that pilot from the analysis. This is particularly disappointing as it provided a large proportion of the cases we studied during the evaluation. Another pilot supplied data of such poor quality that it was also necessary to exclude it. Unfortunately, we were not able to include two of our case study pilots in this element of the research.

The quality of the data varied considerably: staff time data were often missing; services to children were often very small; and some pilots did not include all their running costs particularly if they were sharing office accommodation with another agency. The costs study is based on just seven pilot areas, therefore. It is a small sample and findings must be treated with caution, but the number of areas would only be thirteen even if we had full returns from all. The averaging across months and pilot areas diminishes the effect of outlier observations, but we indicate below where the result or calculation may be sensitive to particular cases.

Table 9.1 shows the total number of children dealt with by the different YISP procedures and the time input of YISP staff per month for the seven pilot areas. Of interest to us were the *average* monthly data, and the discussion is organised around this. About 129 children were dealt with on a monthly basis, of which the 'activity arrangement' accounts for 53 (41%), the panel review for 21 (16%) and the referral process for 18 children (14%). In fact, the data supplied suggest that the 'activity arrangement' includes the children who were taking part in the activities themselves, which required a considerable time input from YISP staff. Table 9.1 shows the time input of YISP staff. They supplied on average 211 hours per month. Most of this time was devoted to the 'activity arrangement', which included the delivery of services, representing 134 days (63%). Other major time inputs were the referral process and the first ONSET assessment. The final column of Table 9.1 shows that the most time-intensive YISP staff activities were the 'activity arrangement' and the first ONSET assessment (in excess of two days per child), but also the repeat ONSET and the ISP (together about two days).

Table 9.1   Number of children and staff time input in YISP procedures

YISP Procedure	Number of children		Time input by YISP staff (days)		Time input per child (days)
	Total	*Average*	*Total*	*Average*	
Referral process	125	18	115	16	0.9
First ONSET	65	9	140	20	2.2
First panel	47	7	65	9	1.4
First ISP	52	7	79	11	1.5
Activity arrangement	373	53	936	134	2.5
Repeat ONSET	26	4	40	6	1.6
Panel review	149	21	73	10	0.5
ISP update	65	9	28	4	0.4
Total (may differ from sum of values due to rounding)	901	129	1,474	211	10.9

Table 9.2 gives the monthly average staff time input in days for the YISP procedure, for both YISP and non-YISP staff (the former can be reconciled with the data in Table 9.1, which aggregates the time-input data for YISP staff). Most YISP time input came from the keyworkers and other staff (131 days a month), with relatively little involvement by managers (18 days a month). For non-YISP staff there was a smaller overall time input, at 95.5 days a month (as against 211 days for YISP staff), but a much greater relative involvement of senior staff (39%), as well as voluntary staff (31%).

Table 9.2   Average YISP and non-YISP time inputs

YISP procedure	Input by YISP staff (days)			Input by non-YISP staff (days)			Total (days)
	Manager	*Keyworker*	*Other*	*Senior*	*Other*	*Voluntary*	
Referral process	4	5	7	5	4	1	26
First ONSET	2	16	2	–	–	–	20
First panel	2	5	3	9	10	3	31
First ISP	2	9	1	–	–	–	11
Activity arrangement	5	85	43	5	6	22	166
Repeat ONSET	1	4	1	–	–	–	6
Panel review	2	4	4	19	9	4	43
ISP update	1	3	0.2	–	–	–	4
Total (may differ from sum of values due to rounding)	18	131	62	38	28	30	306

Note. Monthly averages across seven pilot areas in days. Averages for YISP staff can be reconciled with those in Table 9.1. For some procedures non-YISP staff are generally not required.

Finally, Table 9.3 attempts to measure the total cost of YISP delivery (either in time or in financial terms). Again, this is on a monthly basis across the pilot areas. The table shows that the total average monthly time input of YISP and non-YISP staff was 306 days (Table 9.2), and it gives a breakdown by four different kinds of staff, potentially with different cost implications. The involvement of YISP and non-YISP staff includes arrangement activities (see Table 9.2), but in addition the YISP scheme makes payments to service providers, and expenses payments (e.g. hire charges). This is also shown in Table 9.3. The data supplied here have a large variation, ranging from 'Nil' to £7,150 in the case of the largest pilot area, but giving an average of £2,082, and it is this that is shown in Table 9.3.

Allowance should be made for the capital costs, of both a fixed and variable nature, of running the offices. In relation to the office rents there is a problem of non-reporting. Here, the estimate in Table 9.3 is based on just four pilots, for which the monthly rents (including utilities) were £5,597, £942, £833 and £692, giving an average of £2,016 per month. The greatest of these sums relates to the pilot area with six panels and a corresponding number of offices, but the average of the sums (£932) tallies well with the figures for the other offices elsewhere. The other capital costs in Table 9.3 were more straightforward to calculate.

Overall, Table 9.3 shows that the number of children dealt with on a monthly average basis was 129, which is disaggregated in Table 9.1. In addition, 93 children were provided with activities, giving a total of 222 children. In terms of the average costs of activity payments/expenses and office rents the average cost per child is quite small: £26.08 (i.e. £2,082 + £3,708 / 222). However, this average

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excludes the major item of expenditure of staff time. The way in which the time input is costed will largely determine the overall cost per child. Table 9.2 gives a breakdown by staff type, and in order to be able to indicate how the average cost per child varies with different estimates of the total staff cost, it is possible to consider some ball-park figures. For example, if total staff time is valued at £50,000 (an average day rate of £163 across staff, including voluntary workers) the average cost is only £251, but this increases to £364 when total staff time is £75,000 (day rate of £245) and £477 when it is £100,000 (£327). The calculations are as follows:

$$(£50,000 + £2,082 + £3,708) / 222 = £251.$$

$$(£75,000 + £2,082 + £3,708) / 222 = £364.$$

$$(£100,000 + £2,082 + £3,708) / 222 = £477.$$

Of course, it could be argued that using as a denominator the number of children who are actually provided with activities (i.e. 93 as opposed to 222 children) would indicate throughput more reliably. In this case, the above estimates would be approximately doubled. However, counter to this, we argue that the above estimates give a reliable indication of the overall cost per child under the YISP programme, since YISPs was up and running and a sizeable number of children were involved in the different aspects of them.

Table 9.3 *Average monthly fixed and variable costs of YISP delivery*

Time Input by staff (days)	*306*
Manager/senior	56
Keyworker	131
Other	90
Voluntary	230
YISP activity payments and expenses (£)	*2,082*
Office costs (£)	*3,708*
Office rent, utilities, etc.	2,016
Furniture, equipment, etc.	75
Printing, copying, etc.	228
Telecoms, consumables, etc.	383
Other	1,006
Number of children	*222*
Dealt with overall	129
Provided with activity	93

Note. Figures are for the monthly average across the seven pilot areas for which reliable data are available. The final two rows show the monthly average number of children dealt with, and the number provided with activities, to which the YISP activity payments and expenses relate.

Summary

The analysis of the data available from seven of the thirteen pilot areas indicates that the average cost of dealing with a child under the YISP procedure was relatively small. Depending on the exact view of the average daily rate of staff involved, the estimates give an average cost of less than £500 and,

perhaps, only half this figure. It must be remembered that this was a snapshot, as individuals were not followed through the YISP procedure, but rather the activities and costs were calculated on a monthly basis across pilot areas. On average, a pilot area dealt with 129 children each month, and another 93 undertook activities, with the financial costs (excluding staff) amounting to less than £6,000. However, by far the greatest element of cost was the staff time input, which amounted to 306 days a month, of which 56 related to the input of senior staff.

Several caveats apply to the analysis. First, the analysis is inevitably based on a small number of pilot areas but we have no reason to believe that these are unrepresentative. Secondly, while the analysis is a monthly snapshot of YISP procedures and activities, it could be argued that it reliably captures the average cost per child under the YISP programme, as the pilots were up and running and a sizeable number of children were involved at each stage of YISP involvement. Finally, some of the pilot areas had many offices, but since the offices seemed to duplicate the work and costs involved (i.e. there were no economies of scale) the estimates of average cost per child apply to both small and large pilot areas. Nevertheless, the wage rates that are applicable are likely to vary across labour market areas (e.g. between urban and rural and between north and south), and may condition the way in which different pilot areas operate. Unfortunately, we were unable to investigate this given the limited sample at our disposal. The results presented here must be read with considerable caution as our work on the costs associated with YISP intervention were severely hampered by the lack of useable data, but we believe that they may be indicative of what YISPs might cost if they were rolled out nationally in ways which replicate the pilot process. We could not and would not estimate whether they represent value for money, however. This must be a judgement made by policymakers and those administering early intervention and preventative initiatives. It is important to remember that we were not in a position to estimate the costs associated with panel meetings themselves.

Chapter 10   Preventing Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

Janet Walker

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales has responsibility for identifying and promoting effective practice which will prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people under the age of 18. Central to its vision for an effective youth justice system is that children and young people should receive the support they need to lead crime-free lives. The YJB believes that

> intervening early to address the factors in the lives of children and young people that put them at risk of offending presents the best opportunity to divert them from crime.[66]

To support this belief, the YJB cites evidence from a Mori youth survey that

> young people who commit their first offence at an earlier age go on to have longer criminal careers and commit more serious offences.[67]

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that young people who have not committed a crime by the age of 14 are unlikely to do so. The policy focus, therefore, has been on intervening early in the lives of children deemed to be at risk of offending, in order to prevent them following a pathway into crime. The public perception that crime and antisocial behaviour are escalating among 'the youth of today' has reinforced this focus and strengthened beliefs that potential offenders should be targeted early in order to tackle the problems associated with crime and disorder. It is important, however, to place the preventative agenda in context. In this final chapter we summarise the key findings from the evaluation, relate these to findings from other local YISP evaluations, delineate what appear to be elements of promising practice, consider YISPs within the preventative agenda, and discuss the implications for policy and practice relating to children and young people at risk of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Key Findings from the National Evaluation of YISPs

In order to inform both policy and practice in this relatively new area of work, we have focused deliberately on understanding YISP processes – the various elements which might contribute to an effective service – as well as considering outcomes. Considerable variations in practice were evident across the pilots, enabling us to consider which elements might constitute best practice and should be promoted in the development of new YISPs. The YISPs were designed to identify those young people aged 8–13 who are most at risk of offending and antisocial behaviour and enable them to access a personally tailored package of support and receive appropriate mainstream public services. The model for YISPs involved a systematic process from referral to delivery in which the children and their parents/carers would participate at every stage. The key elements in this process which are significant in striving to achieve positive outcomes, in our view, are:

- being able to target high risk children

- systematically and rigorously assessing risk

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[66] Youth Justice Board (2005) *Annual Report and Accounts 2004/05* (The Stationery Office).
[67] ibid., p. 11.

- the contributions made through multi-agency (panel) working

- the ability to develop a tailored, integrated support plan and to empower children and their families

- delivering preventative services which address the identified risk factors

During our evaluation we focused on understanding each of these elements in order to link processes with potential outcomes. As we have seen in previous chapters, each stage in the YISP process has presented its own challenges to the YISP pilots, whose staff developed a number of strategies to address them. The findings have enabled us to reflect on the operation of YISPs and to draw out the approaches which appear to be the most promising. We reflect on each of the stages in turn.

Targeting High Risk Children

It is clear that the numbers of children and young people referred to the pilot YISPs during the national evaluation were significantly lower than had been expected. The pilots were not faced with a deluge of referrals and many struggled to achieve an acceptable throughput. Given that the concepts of early intervention and prevention are widely acknowledged as sensible strategies in the quest to reduce juvenile offending, it is surprising that agencies were not able to refer more children to YISPs. Whether this is a result of ignorance about a new initiative or an inability to identify high risk children is a matter for conjecture. We were aware that some professionals were concerned about pulling children who have not offended into the criminal justice system – net-widening, as it is commonly called. The development of YISPs within the YJB remit (albeit spearheaded through the DfES) may have badged them as a programme for children and young people who are known already to be offending or getting involved in antisocial behaviour. Certainly, these children are rather easier to identify than those who are not yet in trouble, but the chances of achieving positive outcomes may be compromised.

A wide range of agencies made referrals during the evaluation, and most cited the incidence of antisocial behaviour or offending as the major cause for concern. We have noted, however, that problems relating to school were commonplace, as well as problems in the home. It would seem that these three problem domains frequently occur in combination, indicating that offending/antisocial behaviours are associated with difficulties at home and school. Looking for problem clusters may well be a helpful way for professionals to target the highest risk children. We suspect that the different professions tend to look primarily for difficulties in their own domain (e.g. teachers are aware of problems at school) without necessarily enquiring about problems in other domains. This could explain why children and young people were often not identified as being at risk until they actually engaged in criminal or antisocial behaviour, and why the majority of YISP referrals were for boys aged 11 and above. It is notable that many parents we interviewed had been aware of problem behaviours for several years, suggesting that the YISP children could have been identified earlier, particularly by parents and teachers. Overall, in our four case study pilots, nearly 30 per cent of referrals were in respect of children who regularly truanted from school; over 25 per cent were described as living in a deprived household; over 30 per cent were living in a crime hotspot area; 18 per cent of children had an identifiable emotional or mental health problem; 10 per cent were taking drugs; 20 per cent were known to drink alcohol; and 25 per cent smoked. Whether or not these risk factors were directly linked to the propensity to commit crime is a critical question, but it seems likely that some if not all of these children might have benefited from YISP referral at an earlier stage. For the most part, they were only identified when behaviour or troublesome situations began to worsen.

Parents in our sample had often been asking for help with a variety of complex and interrelated problems relating to their child's education, behaviour at home, mental health and so on for a long period of time, and many had been feeling desperate by the time a YISP referral was made. Some of

these parents had become depressed and were suffering from the stress caused by their child's behaviour, particularly when mainstream services had failed to offer the support they were looking for. Implicit in the accounts these parents gave was their belief that antisocial and offending behaviour could only be prevented if professional interventions were to address the underlying issues and get to the heart of their child's difficulties. These parents wanted the YISP to do more than simply address the symptoms. This chimes well with the expectation that preventative programmes like YISPs can assess the risks of children and young people getting into trouble and then find ways of minimising the risks and enhancing protective factors. One of the challenges is to ensure that referral agencies are better able to identify the high risk children and understand what YISPs can realistically achieve with them in a short space of time. Concerns about labelling children need to be dealt with if such concerns are inhibiting referrals earlier on. We were struck by the comments we received that not all agencies had really incorporated the prevention agenda operationally even though they acknowledged the value of preventative services conceptually. This may have led to some inappropriate referrals during the evaluation and a tendency for some agencies to use YISPs as a dumping ground for children with chronic and complex mental health, educational and welfare needs. The evidence suggests that attracting referrals relating to children who can benefit most remains a key challenge.

Assessing Risk

Simply adding up risk factors is not likely to help in enabling us to predict which children might get into trouble. Nevertheless, the greater the number of risk factors in a child's life the greater the risk of offending behaviour, although risks are rarely static. The notion of developmental pathways is particularly helpful in enabling understanding of how risks change over time. Moreover, assessing risk and protective factors across all four domains of a child's life can indicate where interventions might be most effective. The choice of interventions needs to be guided by an understanding of how risk and protective factors interrelate and how they can be influenced. Moreover, assessing risk needs to be a continuous process, and this was clearly the thinking behind the development of the ONSET suite of assessment tools. It is unfortunate that the pilot YISPs did not all recognise this and that the ONSET assessment was often used as a one-off exercise at the time of referral. Contrary to expectations, ONSET did not inform all aspects of YISP intervention in most pilots, nor were the scores routinely entered on to YISPMIS. The majority of YISP children had experienced at least one ONSET assessment, however. This is a positive step forward.

Although assessment is not an exact science, there were considerable regional variations in scoring, with some pilots recording very high ONSET scores and others recording lower-than-average scores. We believe that there was some confusion about scoring risks *per se*, and scoring the risks of offending and antisocial behaviour. We detected some scepticism among YISP staff as to whether the scoring system is helpful, and it seems essential that with the introduction of the common assessment framework there should be more consistency in the approach of professionals towards assessing children and young people. It may be helpful to note that while overall scores may not have changed significantly as a result of YISP intervention, the individual components of the score may have shifted, indicating that any scoring system must be very sensitive to change and considered in the broader context of a child's life at any given moment in time. We would venture to suggest that the scoring may have been the most arbitrary part of the ONSET process.

Despite the fears of some panel members, parents and children do not appear to have been uncomfortable with the assessment process. Rather, most regarded it as a sign that someone was interested in the child's problems and willing to listen. It is important that busy professionals accord importance to undertaking thorough assessments of children and young people and do not regard them as merely a chore to be completed (for management and/or evaluators) and the results ignored.

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YISP Panels and Multi-Agency Working

The kind and amount of individual-level information provided to YISP panels varied considerably, and the results of ONSET assessments were not routinely available to or discussed by panel members. We observed some very dedicated panels during the evaluation, and many developed a strong identity. Few panels actually involved young people and their parents/carers directly, however, so that most families who participated in the pilots had little understanding of the panel process. Pilots adopting a family group conference approach were the exception to this although the family group meeting took the place of the YISP panel, thus rendering it a completely different kind of experience for families. In terms of the work undertaken by panels, we noted that not all the panels engaged in the development and review of ISPs, either. Some panels received detailed information relating to each referral; others received relatively little information and tended to rely more on what the panel members might already know about a child. We were aware of a strong caring ethos within each panel we observed, although this sometimes resulted in panel members becoming overly involved in the cases and being reluctant to agree closure.

It would be reasonable to suppose that YISP panels would be highly costly if the time of panel members were to be taken into account. Our costs study did not do this. While it is important that agencies are represented at a senior level on the panel in order to commit resources, the cost of this might be questioned, particularly when some of the agencies represented did not actually contribute to ISPs. There is a clear tension when YISP children fall below the threshold for statutory service provision even though needs have been identified for interventions such as CAMHS services. Many keyworkers were of the view that too much of the support was left to them and that they did not always get the resources they needed from other agencies.

Multi-agency working was identified as a major benefit of the YISP programme, but not all agencies appeared to be willing to offer services to YISP families. Keyworkers pointed to a gap between commitment at a strategic level and the allocation of resources to individual YISP families. This was a serious frustration for YISP staff. For YISPs to work effectively, more than goodwill is required. The pilots have certainly highlighted gaps in the availability of existing mainstream services which can offer early preventative interventions. This resulted in some YISP keyworkers feeling that they had to attempt to plug these gaps and so continue working with a child for a longer period than they would prefer to within the YISP remit. Not only do gaps in service provision serve to delay the support for families but they also increase the workload for YISP staff. They can also result in any positive impact of YISP intervention being seriously undermined.

By the end of the evaluation, some pilots were still struggling to get all the key agencies to contribute to YISP interventions. Nevertheless, the introduction of YISPs appears to have had a positive impact on information sharing, although some panel members expressed concerns that the boundary between information-sharing and gossiping was sometimes blurred. Not all the agencies regarded information sharing as unequivocally a good thing. Multi-agency working does not mean that all agencies have the same approach and derive the same benefits from participation. Although the police and education personnel were generally very committed to the concept of YISPs, Social Services and CAMHS were generally more detached. This has important implications for the success of all the early intervention and preventative agendas which are at the heart of youth justice and of *Every Child Matters*.

Delivering Preventative Services

The YISPs were designed to occupy the middle ground between welfare, youth offending and community safety. They were not intended to have a role as commissioning bodies or, directly, as long-term service providers, but they were expected to ensure that a holistic, tailored, individualised package

of support could be delivered. The ISP was seen as the tool which would enable families to receive appropriate services. Keyworkers in the pilot areas, however, had usually done more than facilitating, driving and monitoring service delivery by others. Some had undertaken a good deal of direct one-to-one work with children and this was greatly appreciated by children and their families. It was also considered to be highly effective.

The most frequently recorded YISP interventions involved constructive leisure activities, cognitive behaviour, mentoring and parenting work. It is generally agreed that multiple interventions across the range of domains relevant to a child's life are more likely to effect change than single interventions which address single risk factors. The majority of children and young people did receive multiple interventions, although it was difficult to be certain that these were always specifically chosen to address a range of risk factors. These interventions normally included a mix of direct and indirect work with children and there was a considerable focus on constructive leisure activities. Frequently, however, the interventions were not structured in terms of dosage, duration and order of delivery, and not all intervention plans could be described as being SMART. The evaluation would suggest that there needs to be closer links between assessment, the drawing up of the ISP and service delivery. It is easy to fall into the trap of offering services simply because they exist without ensuring that they will address identified risk and/or protective factors. The CAF assessment could provide a useful link between the risk assessment and the development of the ISP, but was not always used in this way.

The role of the keyworker varied considerably between the pilots but emerged as a critical factor in the apparent effectiveness of YISP intervention. Keyworkers were in a unique position to encourage the children and their parents to engage with YISP. Being available to the families was a major facilitating factor in terms of enhancing engagement. If children and/or their parents were not motivated to engage this was likely to result in non-compliance with YISP expectations and the ISPs. Nevertheless, YISP keyworkers recognised that there is a danger of over-intervening in the lives of YISP families and becoming a long-term caseworker. In this respect, keyworkers found it challenging to have to focus on issues which might lead to offending rather than on those which are more welfare-focused. Being drawn into other aspects of a child's situation was something keyworkers were keen to avoid, although some were very reluctant to let go of high risk cases, particularly in pilots which were relaxed and flexible about how long YISP intervention should continue in each case.

Our evaluation has provided strong evidence that the support and encouragement of parents is absolutely essential to children being able to engage with and benefit from YISP interventions. If children and parents are to be motivated to change a positive relationship with a keyworker is a critical facilitating factor. Providing support to children and families and developing clear exit strategies are important ingredients in ensuring that YISP intervention is meaningful. Again, strong multi-agency collaboration is a requirement. New programmes such as the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders and the Family Intervention Programme might offer a way forward for combining early interventions for children with programmes designed to improve parenting skills and capacities.

Understanding Outcomes

Our evaluation has enabled us to learn a good deal about YISP processes which might be particularly effective, but the critical questions relate to whether YISPs work: do YISPs reduce the risk of children becoming involved in criminal and antisocial behaviours? We were never going to be able to consider anything other than short-term outcomes and we had always acknowledged that identifying and attributing even short-term outcomes to YISP intervention would be problematic. We were heavily reliant on YISPs providing case-level data on the management information system designed for them by the YJB. As we have shown, the YISPMIS was highly problematic as a management information tool and as an evaluation device. We had acknowledged and reported this early in the evaluation but, by then, the YJB was committed to using YISPMIS. Some pilots managed to use it, others did not and

the evaluation has suffered as a result. Nevertheless, although they need to be interpreted with caution, the quantitative findings are important: they suggest that the higher the child's risk factors at referral the greater the likelihood that YISP intervention will reduce the risks, and that younger children are more likely to experience a significant reduction in risks. It would be reasonable to conclude that if YISPs are able to target the higher risk children they will demonstrate the most impact because small changes can contribute to important shifts in behaviour and attitude. The more positives there are to work on in a child's life, the greater the likelihood of success. Our qualitative findings suggest that positive shifts might be very subtle, that changing patterns in risk factors are related to a variety of factors and the links between changes in ONSET assessment and YISP interventions are complex. The interview data demonstrate vividly just how the risks of offending and antisocial behaviour were impinging on children's everyday lives and how families often struggled to change things without success. Nevertheless, we were able to observe some positive outcomes which families and keyworkers were able to attribute to YISP interventions.

Once these positive outcomes have been recognised, however, it is important to remember that it is notoriously difficult to isolate the impact of YISP intervention from other interventions in the lives of children and families, particularly when cases are kept open for long periods. Parents and children were largely positive about YISPs, and for significant numbers of children the risk factors identified at the time of YISP referral had reduced. Many parents were cautiously optimistic about the future, although factors outside YISP were often responsible for this optimism. However, many parents continued to be anxious about the sustainability of positive outcomes after the end of YISP engagement. The fragility of support for the future was evident, and longer-term evaluation would be required to test just how far improvements were sustainable. Given that the average cost of direct YISP intervention appears to be relatively small the outcomes we could observe in the short term would appear to give promising indications of cost-effectiveness, although the cost of running large panels may be an element which should be considered and taken into account in future.

Local YISP Evaluations

Most YISP programmes included some form of local evaluation. We reviewed several which have addressed the same kinds of issues that we have covered in our national evaluation, and found that the findings are remarkably similar. For example, it would seem that the evaluation of Merton YISP identified: the lack of a clear model; low numbers of referrals; the lack of involvement of parents and children in panels; and the difficulty of securing the commitment of mainstream services.[68] Moreover, the use of ONSET was not integral to the process of identifying and assessing children and young people. Although the Merton panel appears to have secured a high level of commitment to partnership working, the commitment of resources to YISP children was cited as a weakness.

In common with our findings, children referred to Merton YISP tended to be mainly male and white. Quite a high percentage (40%) were already known to the criminal justice system and 40 per cent were on the Child Protection Register. Over half of the children referred had special educational needs and school attendance was also a common problem. Many of the interventions with the YISP children and young people focused on diversionary activities supplemented by some one-to-one work. The evaluation report noted that there needed to be an increased focus on securing mainstream services and on interventions that improve learning and skills and promote reductions in truanting and school absences. The focus on improving educational outcomes is an important goal since educational under-achievement and absence from school are significantly related to offending behaviour.[69]

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[68] The Evaluation of Turnaround – Merton's YISP (2005).
[69] Prior, D. and Paris, A. (2004) *Preventing Children's Involvement in Crime and Antisocial Behaviour: A literature review*. Paper produced for the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund, Institute of Applied Social Studies, Birmingham University.

The evaluators of Merton YISP concluded that measuring the success of YISP interventions is fraught with difficulties – a conclusion with which we would concur. They raised the issue of timescales and asked whether it is realistic to expect brief interventions to reduce the risk or increase the protective factors for children who are assessed as having multiple risk factors. Unfortunately, Merton YISP was not using ONSET closure assessments so it was impossible to measure changes in risk scores. Without some concrete, quantifiable measure of change it is virtually impossible to know whether YISP intervention has made a significant difference. It will be essential in future that YISPs comply with the requirements to use the full suite of ONSET measures. In the absence of hard quantitative measures of change, the Merton evaluation highlights the positive feedback from the children and families who had been supported by the service. The qualitative evidence suggests that children improved in terms of school performance and developed more positive attitudes, although the improvements were largely observable among younger children. This finding reinforces our own, and highlights the importance of intervening as early as possible.

Similar positive responses were obtained from the evaluation of the YISP project in York.[70] Of the 25 young people who had participated in York YISP since 2004, none had gone on to offend or receive a final warning. This outcome was regarded as a significant achievement, particularly since the YISP was working with young people who were regarded as being at imminent risk of offending or antisocial behaviour at the time of YISP referral. Unusually, and importantly, children and parents in York were involved in the panels to discuss the integrated support plan (ISP). Moreover, YISP intervention was highly focused and relatively brief over a two-to four- month period. The ONSET closure assessments are routinely undertaken in York, and the child and family are invited to a final panel to review progress and discuss the impact of YISP intervention.

The York evaluation concluded that some of the most important factors in the success of the YISP were: the continued commitment of the panel members and their agencies; the delivery of direct interventions by skilled keyworkers; the regular opportunities for reviewing processes and implementing improvements; and a robust management information system which had enabled regular monitoring of performance. The barriers to effective working were described as being: the reliance on YISP keyworkers to deliver interventions; the lack of involvement of other agencies in offering support to children and their families; and the lack of YISP resources. The evaluation of York YISP paints a picture of what was described as being a highly successful YISP which was attempting to speed up referral processes, improve monitoring and feedback procedures, enhance partnership working and build on best practice. The York YISP conformed closely to the YJB Management Guidance and regarded itself as a model of good practice.

The evaluation of the YISP in the London Borough of Brent provides a useful commentary on a programme (known locally as the Children's Support Panel) which has attracted a wide ethnic mix in the referrals.[71] This is particularly helpful since the national evaluation was not able to secure data to consider the role of YISPs within such a multi-ethnic community. While the majority of children and young people referred in Brent were male, as was the case in all the YISPs, only one referral during the evaluation period related to a White British child. The majority of children and young people were Black Caribbean/African or Black British (67%). The evaluation noted that boys from a black background were six times more likely to be excluded from school than boys from any other ethnic group. Some 27 per cent of the YISP children in Brent had been permanently excluded, and just 43 per cent were attending mainstream schools. Moreover, the Mori Youth Survey in 2002 suggested that excluded pupils are twice as likely to commit an offence as their in-school peers.[72] It is clear that many of the children referred to Brent YISP were at high risk of offending and antisocial behaviour. Mothers

[70] Hodgson, A. (2005) *Youth Inclusion and Support Panels*. Evaluation Report to York Children's Fund.
[71] Jakhu, A. (2004) *Children's Support Panel Evaluation Report* (Route Consultancy).
[72] Mori (2002) *Youth Survey*. (Youth Justice Board).

who contributed to the research commented that the children and young people had little to do during the day except hang around the streets with others who were not going to school and get into trouble. Quite a few of the children were known to statutory agencies and some were known to have mental health problems. These were children with a wide range of risk factors, living in families facing multiple difficulties and requiring substantial amounts of support.

The qualitative evidence from Brent reflects that obtained in the national evaluation. Parents and children were mainly positive about YISP intervention. The children and young people who were less positive simply wanted more input from their keyworkers, although they were already receiving a good deal of child-centred one-to-one work. There has clearly been debate in Brent about the appropriate length of YISP intervention and it would seem that parents and children favour sustained long-term support. This of course, raises issues about the importance of mainstreaming YISP intervention rather than it becoming a long-term social welfare service. Nevertheless, it needs to be recognised that supporting children and families with highly complex needs may require more sustained effort. Parents in Brent often said that they had been at the end of their tether when they had been referred to the YISP – a theme we noted in all our case study areas. These parents were very relieved that someone was doing something at last about their child's difficulties/behaviour, and then frequently disappointed that the intervention was only short-term and that they were back on waiting lists for services such as CAMHS. Certainly, some parents in the Brent sample had been off work with stress and depression as a result of their child's problems and so were in need of considerable support. The evaluators concluded that the current level of dosage and support offered by YISP intervention may need to be increased. They recognised, however, that this could be heavily resource-intensive and could result in families having unrealistic expectations about what YISPs can achieve. This is a difficult tension which we have also noted. A longer, more sustained support package may need to be in place when YISP keyworkers have concluded their work. It reinforces the importance of multi-agency planning and mainstreaming.

The Children's Society Research Group concluded from their evaluation of Solihull YISP that it had demonstrated considerable success in achieving positive change for children and young people: risk factors were reduced and protective factors increased; children participated in full time education and there were high levels of satisfaction with YISP interventions.[73] A child-centred keyworking system had been complemented by the use of a family support service. Continually adopting the input had enabled keyworkers to engage with young people in order to work towards positive change. The evaluation of Solihull YISP highlighted the critical role played by keyworkers, the value of taking a holistic approach and offering support to parents, the importance of multi-agency working, and the need for good exit strategies. Only one case was closed within a six-month period. Ongoing debate in Solihull centred around whether to include children and their parents in YISP panels and the intensity of work undertaken by keyworkers. The evaluators concluded that using offending as a benchmark measure for preventative work is problematic and predicting propensity to offend is far from being an exact science. They felt that evaluations need to take account of small, incremental positive changes which are indicative of a child moving on to a new life trajectory, particularly as the children referred to YISPs can have complex needs and wide-ranging problems. Although we have not considered all the local YISP evaluations, our findings from the national evaluation of YISPs are fully consistent by those we have reviewed, all of which have identified similar concerns. In the early stages of YISP development, most areas found it challenging to identify the highest risk children and to put the most appropriate interventions in place within a relatively short period of time. Much has been learned from the national and the local evaluations and the evidence should enable policymakers and practitioners to consider how YISPs and other preventative programmes might function more effectively in future.

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[73] The Children's Society Research Unit (2006) *Solihull YISP: an evaluation*. (The Children's Society).

Elements of Promising Practice

One of our objectives has been to identify elements which appear to be significant in developing best practice. In our view, these can usefully be summarised as follows:

1. Developing multi-agency partnerships which are effective at both the strategic and the service delivery levels.

2. Developing a model of intervention which is clearly articulated and which distinguishes YISP intervention from other types of welfare and youth justice programmes.

3. Working with referring agencies to agree clear referral criteria so as to avoid over-emphasis either on children with very complex, mental health problems or those children who are better suited to interventions from welfare agencies.

4. Deciding how high risk children and young people can be identified prior to their becoming involved in offending or antisocial behaviour.

5. Adopting rigorous assessment procedures which become a routine and essential part of engagement with children, young people and their families and which are regarded as continuous processes.

6. Linking rigorous assessment to the development of integrated support plans so that interventions are targeted at specific risk and/or protective factors.

7. Deciding on the dosage, duration and order of multiple interventions, and ensuring that they are delivered via a coherent, holistic programme of work which does not allow cases to drift.

8. Promoting effective engagement through the development of supportive relationships between the keyworker and the child and the keyworker and the child's parents/carers.

9. Delivering one-to-one direct work with children and young people in conjunction with other kinds of activities and interventions.

10. Developing and agreeing coherent exit strategies to ensure families receive continuing support as necessary.

11. Securing the participation and commitment of children, young people and their families at all stages in the YISP process.

12. Employing effective, user-friendly management information systems to record individual level case data routinely, accurately and effectively so as to enable ongoing analyses of inputs, outcomes and change.

All these factors emerged from the evaluation and have been discussed in previous chapters. Each pilot had some of these elements in place, but not others. Those taking a family group conference approach were the most successful at involving children and families, but in Wigan, for example, this was at the expense of a well-functioning YISP panel. How to involve children and families in a voluntary, preventative programme sitting at the edge of youth justice services is a major challenge, and one which has to be met if YISPs are to fulfil their potential. The commitment of resources from a wide range of agencies is another. Everyone we spoke to was convinced about the value of early intervention and about the focus on prevention, but putting these into operation had not been easy.

Furthermore, the MIS developed for the pilots by the YJB proved to be deeply unpopular with the pilots and with the national evaluation team. A highly cumbersome and overly complex system resulted in most pilots failing to use it effectively, and this has severely limited the kinds of analyses we have been able to conduct. If programmes such as YISPs are to demonstrate their effectiveness, an appropriate MIS needs to be in place. We have been acutely aware of the very hard work and high level of dedication of YISP staff and panel members, but the evidence we have been able to garner has been primarily qualitative despite our best efforts to conduct a robust, quantitative study. Qualitative data have enhanced the learning about what appears to be working well in YISPs, but we cannot be as robust about the impacts or outcomes as we had expected. We are of the view that, if some strategic best practice principles were applied, YISPs could play critical and crucial role in the early intervention/preventative agendas.

Pathways Into and Out of Crime

Knowledge about young people's pathways into crime is being extended all the time. As media stories focus on seemingly endless examples of antisocial behaviour and increasing fear of crime, it is vital to view early intervention and prevention strategies realistically. In general, young people are not committing more crime than in the past and they are not more antisocial. Even when young people do get into trouble with the police, they have generally committed low-level crimes which are dealt with informally whenever possible. A small minority of young people are more persistent offenders and some of them commit extremely serious crimes, but the vast majority of children and young people do not fall into this category.[74] Nevertheless, it is hoped that early preventative work might serve to deter all young people from getting involved in criminal activities as well as reduce the number of those who become more persistent and serious offenders. Accordingly, the YJB's prevention programmes have sought to target children and young people aged between 8 and 16 who are at high risk of offending, and to tackle wide-ranging problems relating to truancy/school exclusion, antisocial behaviour at home and in the neighbourhood, social exclusion and lack of opportunities, and problematic family relationships. The overall objective is to improve the quality of life for every child so that they are healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being.[75] There is evidence from the national evaluation that many children who experienced YISP intervention did demonstrate improvements in their mental health and well-being; they were less likely to roam the streets and get into trouble; they were doing better with their schooling and making a more positive contribution at school and at home. Just how far these improvements were sustained we simply do not know, but the trends appeared to be in the right direction for many of the children. During the financial year 2005–06 the YJB raised the profile of targeted, early intervention programmes, identifying YISPs as good examples of these. As a result, the Treasury increased the funding for initiatives such as YISPs. It is important, therefore, that learning from the evaluation of the pilot YISPs informs the future development of early intervention and prevention programmes.

Recognition that a good start in life is of fundamental significance has come to the fore in recent years. Deciding when and how to intervene early in a child's life and when and how to intervene early in the pathway of a problem present two critical challenges. Haynes has argued that the current focus on early childhood repeats an error which has existed for over three decades.[76] In his view, the error is in giving primacy to early life and assuming that all pathways start in the early years (up to the ages of 3, 5 or 8 depending on which evidence in used[77]). The early-years thesis suggests that all domains of a child's

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[74] Budd, T., Sharp, C., Weir, G., Wilson, D and Owen, N. (2005) *Young People and Crime: findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey*. (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 20/05).

[75] Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Every Child Matters* (DfES), Crown Copyright.

[76] Haynes, A. (2005) *Why Early in Life is Not Enough: Timing and sustainability in early intervention and prevention*. Paper presented at the Pathways and Prevention International Symposium, Brisbane, Australia, September.

[77] Clarke, A.M. and Clarke, A.D.B. (1976) *Early Experience: Myth and evidence*. (Open Books).

development are crafted early in life, so it follows that problems relating to poor achievement and criminal and antisocial behaviour can be avoided if the right interventions are made in early childhood. As a result of this approach, early intervention and prevention have become synonymous. There are key differences between them, however: prevention involves reducing the likelihood of problems emerging;[78] intervention, on the other hand, starts with evidence of risk.[79] This distinction between preventing difficulties emerging by ensuring that children and families have the support they need for children to attain the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes; and intervening to address identified risk factors which are impacting negatively on a child would suggest that universal and targeted services need to be developed hand in hand. Within a pathways framework which seeks to understand developmental processes, early intervention seeks to alter an emergent pathway by targeting the risks. This is what characterises YISPs. The focus is on determining which children and young people are evidencing high risk of crime or antisocial behaviour, assessing each child's risk and protective factors, and drawing up and delivering an integrated package of support services. There is evidence that this strategy works. The Highscope Perry Pre-school Program in the USA is a prime example of highly cost-effective early intervention with disadvantaged children.[80] Most of the benefits identified by a longitudinal study were related to reductions in the cost of crime.

Two key questions emerge from the evidence in respect of early intervention, and they are both relevant here:

1.   Which problems require action when, and over what time period?
2.   How are gains/positive outcomes to be sustained?[81]

The first question is relevant to YISPs, particularly since we found that the majority of referrals were for children at the upper end of the 8–13 age range. Indeed, most YISPs accept referrals relating to young people up to the ages of 14 or 15 and these make up the highest proportion of cases. Far fewer children in the younger age range are referred for YISP intervention, yet many parents told us that problematic behaviour patterns had been manifest for a long time. This suggests that different agencies referring children to YISPs tend to notice certain kinds of behaviour. Loeber has highlighted the developmental ordering of problems from early childhood to adolescence.[82] Problems such as hyperactivity and aggressiveness tend to appear in early childhood, whereas poor peer relationships and schooling problems emerge only in the primary school years. Conduct problems associated with crime, antisocial behaviour and delinquency generally emerge in adolescence. It is these conduct problems which normally led to YISP referral. It seems likely, however, that there are multiple pathways into crime, and early childhood problems can be catalysts for later criminal behaviour. The Australian Temperament Project (ATP) provides helpful insights to the question of when to intervene.[83] A pathway to multiple substance use at 15 and 16 years of age, for example, was discernible in infancy. By contrast, the pathway to persistent antisocial behaviour in adolescence became noticeable in the primary school years. These findings add weight to the view that the timing of interventions should differ across the problems being tackled. This could be an important consideration for YISPs which tend to focus on older children: it may well be more helpful, in the light of other research and our findings, to target younger children who may well be manifesting the kinds of problems associated with crime and antisocial behaviour by the age of eight.

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[78] Little, M. (1999) 'Prevention and early intervention with children in need: definitions, principles and examples of good practice'. *Children and Society*, 13, pp. 304–16.
[79] Haynes, *op. cit.*
[80] Schweinhart, L.J. (2004) *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40: Summary, conclusions, and frequently asked questions* (High/Scope Education Research Foundation).
[81] Haynes, *op. cit.*
[82] Loeber, R. and Stouthamer-Loeber, M. (1988) 'Development of juvenile aggression and violence: some common misconceptions and controversies'. *American Psychologist*, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 242–49
[83] Hayes, L., Smart, D., Toumbourou, J. and Sanson, AV. (2004) *Parenting Influences on Adolescent-Alcohol Use.* (Australian Institute of Family Studies).

The second question, which concerns sustainability, relates to longer-term impacts and is also highly relevant here. Unfortunately, the national evaluation of YISPs was unable to capture these. The data from other studies, however, suggest that early interventions may show short- and medium-term positive outcomes, but questionable long-term outcomes.[84] Nevertheless, reductions in crime and delinquency appear to have the most enduring effects. Further research may be needed, however, to determine the factors which sustain preventative outcomes. It would be folly to ignore other influences on a child's life in the progression from childhood through adolescence, but there is some evidence that regular education, employment opportunities, informal social control, and close personal relationships are important factors in maintaining positive outcomes, over and above structural factors such as poverty and disadvantage.[85] In the case of the YISP children, therefore, keeping them in education and helping them to achieve in readiness for the world of work may be very significant factors in keeping them out of trouble. High-quality schooling emerges as one of the most significant mediating factors in sustaining the effects of early interventions.[86] Parent participation is another important ingredient,[87] and we have noted that many YISP keyworkers were concerned that there were not sufficient incentives (or requirements) for parents to engage with parenting programmes. Keyworkers believed that, when parents did engage with the YISP programme, YISP intervention had a more powerful impact on the children involved. Haynes has argued that determining the mechanisms which sustain the effects of early interventions should be given at least equal attention as refining the interventions themselves.[88] Schools and families are likely to play a considerable role in sustaining positive outcomes. Sampson and Laub have demonstrated that

> there is stability and change in behaviour over the life course and these changes are systematically linked to the institutions of work and family relationships in adulthood.[89]

They have suggested that the presence or absence of connections to important social systems such as school, family and employment can explain the patterns of desistance or persistence they observed in the life course of juvenile offenders. Homel has reached a similar conclusion, indicating that it is social institutions which are crucial in ensuring that the investments of early intervention are sustained.[90] Universal services have an important role to play in prevention, while targeted support services, such as YISPs, play a complementary early intervention role which addresses specific risk factors. It is noteworthy, therefore, that the Government is placing increased emphasis on providing universal services for pre-school children and on ensuring that targeted initiatives are available when children and families manifest evidence of risk. The durability of compulsory pre-school education has been demonstrated through the National Child Development Study in the UK.[91] Again, however, sustainability depends on the child's positive connections with key social systems. It is evident that the Government takes the view that preventing problems or intervening as soon as they are identified is

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[84] Wise, S., da Silva, L., Webster, E. and Sanson, A. (2006) *The Efficacy of Early Interventions*. Research Report 14 (Australian Institute of Family Studies).

[85] Sampson, R.J. and Laub, J. (2005) 'When prediction fails: from crime-prone boys to heterogeneity in adulthood', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 602, pp. 73–9.

[86] Reynolds, A.J., Ou, S.R. and Topitzes, J.W. (2004) 'Paths of effects of early childhood interventions on educational attainment and delinquency: on confirmatory analysis of the Chicago Child–Parent Centers', *Child Development*, vol. 75, no.5, pp. 1,299–1,328; Smokowski, P.R., Mann, E.A., Reynolds, A.R. and Fraser, M.W. (2003) 'Childhood Risk and protective factors and late adolescent adjustment in inner city minority youth', *Children and Youth Services Review*, 26, 63–91.

[87] Reynolds et al., *op. cit.*

[88] Haynes, *op. cit.*

[89] Sampson, R.J. and Laub, J. (2005) 'A life-course view of the development of crime', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 602, p. 12.

[90] Homel, R. (2005) 'Developmental crime prevention', in N. Tilley (ed.) *Handbook of Crime Prevention and Community Safety* (Willan Publishing).

[91] Goodman, A. and Sianesi, B. (2005) *Early Education and Children's Outcomes: How long do the impacts last?* (Institute for Fiscal Studies).

essential to sustain children's life chances.[92] This suggests that universal and targeted services need to be available at all stages in a child's development, and that a continuity of support is fostered. Initiatives such as YISPs need to fit into the continuum and to be joined-up with other services.

The body of available evidence highlights the need to think systematically about prevention and early intervention and the factors that sustain the benefits of both.[93] It seems that policies need to be integrated vertically if sustainability is to be secured. Interventions need to be holistic and comprehensive in order to enhance many aspects of the child's life, across all four domains of family, school, community and self. This not only provides a challenge for YISPs but also for all the other agencies involved in providing support to children and families across the life spectrum. Holistic interventions undoubtedly require strong multi-agency partnerships and sustained commitment to service provision:

> A life course, comprehensive, sustaining systems approach, supported by vertically integrated policy and practice, both for early intervention and prevention, would be a good start to addressing the issues both of timing and sustainability.[94]

It is important, however, not to be lulled into a false sense of security by a life-course, developmental approach. In addition, weight has to be given to the impact of human agency. Even though many young people may show signs of risk, the future is far less predictable than some commentators have claimed. Indeed, risk factor analysis has been unable to explain the complexity of pathways for children and young people who experience difficult lives.[95] In the context of deep, collective disadvantage, MacDonald's studies of young people on Teesside in the North-East of England have shown that most of them shared many of the risk factors associated with the risk of offending, yet the majority did not pursue criminal careers.[96] MacDonald concluded that

> transitions of whatever sort – whether they be 'conventional', 'delinquent' or somewhere in-between – do not roll on deterministically to foregone conclusions.[97]

In areas in which parental separation, school disengagement, low educational attainment, early offending and antisocial behaviour are widespread, young people face tough lives and unequal opportunities. Only a minority will be persistent offenders. This raises challenges for those targeting high risk children and poses the following questions: which children should be targeted and on the basis of which criteria? In areas of deprivation and high social exclusion it is unrealistic to target all the children who exhibit a range of risk factors. We note that YISP keyworkers were of the view that children (and their parents) have to be motivated to benefit from early intervention services and to acknowledge that there are difficulties which might put children on a pathway into crime. Children and young people are active contributors to their own childhood, and they make choices and negotiate their ways through the various challenges they come up against. What the YISP evaluation has demonstrated is that these children and young people value having someone who listens to them and is willing to spend time with them on a one-to-one basis. Building constructive relationships with adults who respect young people can be rewarding and affirming, particularly when exclusion from school serves to marginalise young people from one of the key social institutions in their young lives. Other recent research has supported this finding, suggesting that what young people appreciate

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[92] H. M. Treasury and Department for Education and Skills (2007) *Policy review of children and young people: a discussion paper*. (Stationery Office), Crown Copyright.
[93] Haynes, *op. cit.*
[94] Haynes, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
[95] MacDonald, R. (2006) 'Social exclusion, youth transitions and criminal careers: five critical reflections on "risk"', *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 371–83.
[96] ibid.
[97] ibid., p. 380.

is not so much programs and content but a good supportive relationship with an adult who is non judgmental and is able to offer guidance and advocacy when needed.[98]

As we saw in some YISP pilots, trust and respect between keyworkers and YISP families are important qualities that can assist children and young people at risk negotiate their way through difficult circumstances. Understanding what makes high risk children vulnerable and what provides them with opportunities for constructive change can help busy professionals to target the children who can benefit most from the kind of interventions and support offered through YISPs. Linking prevention strategies to developmental processes and assessing readiness to change are important elements in planning early intervention programmes. We have sensed that this kind of linking was not always evident in the pilot YISPs. Few rejected any referrals, primarily because they were finding it difficult to reach YJB targets, and the door was open to all-comers, particularly in the early stages of implementation. Some YISPs had realised that they needed to be more selective and to target YISP resources where they had the maximum chance to make a real difference in a child's life. This will be an important learning point for those embarking on targeted youth support programmes, particularly those who are building them onto YISPs and family group conferencing interventions.

All the YISPs included leisure activities in their ISPs but with seemingly little regard to whether what was on offer could make a difference beyond keeping a child off the streets. Recent work by Caldwell and Smith has indicated the need to build a stronger theoretical picture for how leisure activities affect involvement in other actions, such as criminal or antisocial behaviour.[99] The nature of the activities being proposed and the nature of the child's participation in them are important considerations which should be addressed when linking support plans to the assessment. We noted that some children thrived as a result of leisure activities while others failed to complete a course or to attend regularly. This may say something about the children, but it is more likely that it indicates the need to link children to specific activities once a thorough understanding of the purpose, the expectations and the outcomes have been achieved. Goodnow has suggested that

> [t]he success of intervention actions may … depend on anticipating the specific kinds of encounter that are likely to be met and on working on specific ways of coping with them or taking advantage of them.[100]

We are aware that some YISP keyworkers worked closely with children and young people to ensure that they could take advantage of the constructive leisure activities they were offered. Some keyworkers organised escorts to help children get to and from activities, particularly when parents were unable to deliver children themselves. Most keyworkers did not see it as their responsibility to act as an escort, however, although some did accompany children and young people, particularly when they were going to new activities. It could be argued that when keyworkers do accompany a child then there is a greater chance of ensuring that the encounter is constructive and meaningful for the child, and this could both enhance social competence and reduce social exclusion. McNeal concluded that participation in leisure activities led to reduced levels of delinquency because young people increased their social, cultural and human capital.[101] Structured activities offer the chance to do something rather than nothing, thus reducing the time available for engaging in crime or antisocial behaviour. Caldwell and Smith[102] have argued that leisure creates great potential for enjoyment, achievement, making a

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[98] France, A. and Homel, R. (2006) 'Societal access routes and developmental pathways: putting social structure and young people's voice into the analysis of pathways into and out of crime', *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 295–309.

[99] Caldwell, L.L. and Smith, E.A. (2005) 'Leisure as a context for Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 398–418.

[100] Goodnow, J. (2006) 'Adding social contexts to developmental analyses of crime prevention', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 327–38.

[101] McNeal, R.B. (1999) 'Participation in high school extra-curricular activities: investigating school effects', *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 80, pp. 291–309.

[102] *op. cit.*

positive contribution to a collective venture, confidence-building, promoting a healthy lifestyle, and relationship building. Seen in this light, leisure activities are central components within prevention and early intervention programmes, and they would appear to be well situated to meet all five key outcomes within the *Every Child Matters* agenda.[103]

There is a growing body of research evidence relating to the links between constructive leisure activities and pathways into crime. The findings seem to suggest that: engaging in activities which are interesting and goal-oriented may protect young people against deviant behaviour; significant adults can enhance the impacts through the provision of support and guidance; activities have to be meaningful and provide personal benefits beyond filling time; and impacts may be higher when engagement is sustained. The YISPs provide an important opportunity to extend this evidence base, particularly if the choice of leisure activities is informed by the assessment of risk and the activities are integrated into a coherent ISP. Furthermore, children and young people need to contribute to these choices and to the structuring of their own integrated package of support.

Looking to the Future

The current youth justice agenda, which encompasses the vision set out in *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters*, has a clear focus on early intervention and prevention. The YISP programme would appear to have the potential to identify the children and young people most at risk of offending and antisocial behaviour, assess the risks, and construct individually tailored packages of support. The national evaluation has shown that implementing the programme presented many challenges and that further developmental work is necessary if YISPs are to reach their potential. There are important opportunities here for collaborative multi-agency working, providing support services in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors buy in to the early intervention agenda at an operational level. The YISPs should be able to empower young people, encourage them to make a positive contribution and help them achieve, thus reducing risk factors and enhancing the protective factors in their lives. To do this, however, YISPs will need to be extremely focused in their remit and clear about their specific role within the ever-widening preventative and early intervention agendas. Many YISPs are still considering how best to involve children, young people and their families and how to incorporate restorative justice approaches within the YISP process.

There is a danger that without a pause for reflection YISP intervention could become just another kind of long-term welfare service, and the evidence from our evaluation would suggest that more needs to be done to determine and uphold appropriate intervention and time boundaries. The YISPs were designed to support children who have failed to access mainstream services in the past or have fallen through the gaps between services. A critical opportunity will have been missed if YISP children are unable to access mainstream services or continue to fall through the gaps. The YISP personnel who have participated in the evaluation have demonstrated their commitment to the YISP agenda. Given time and better evidence they may be in a stronger position to convince other partners that YISPs have a strategically important role to play in preventing and reducing juvenile crime and antisocial behaviour. It may be that new developments which enable lead professionals/keyworkers to become budget holders and take decisions about how to target resources in consultation with families could enhance the YISPs capacity to offer short-term, targeted and child-focused interventions which are aimed at reducing the risk of offending.

It is unfortunate that the YISPMIS management information system failed to capture the quantitative case data we required, thus rendering our evaluation primarily qualitative and less able to provide robust measures of outcome. Nevertheless, the evidence has enabled us to delineate elements of

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[103] Mahoney, J.L. and Stattin, H. (2000) 'Leisure activities and adolescent antisocial behaviour: the role of structure and social context', *Journal of Adolescence*, vol. 23, pp. 113–27.

promising practice and highlight the concerns and issues which could and should be addressed. More longitudinal evidence is needed to explore the effectiveness of preventative and early intervention initiatives and we welcome the YJB's commitment to promoting new research in this area. It will be important, also, to read across the accumulating evidence from a wide range of evaluations, not just those specifically focused on youth justice. A number of new initiatives, pilots and pathfinders are in place or being developed, and their respective evaluations are likely to be able to contribute to the evidence base on early intervention and prevention.

Antisocial behaviour has had a good deal of (negative) media attention in recent years. The impact of antisocial behaviour can be immense, but it is essential to understand the problems within their multiple contexts and to bring together the research evidence about what works, with whom and in what circumstances in order that intervention programmes are evidence-based and not simply policy-driven. Most new initiatives take longer to implement, become fully operational and meet their targets than is commonly acknowledged. This is an important message for Government. Evaluations frequently fail to capture the evidence required simply because timescales are too short and implementation takes far more effort than is provided for when targets and timetables are set. Those bidding to implement new pilots rarely admit to the time it might take for fear of not being selected and so everyone is forced to run long before they can walk. Moreover, we noted in 2003, in our initial scoping report about YISPs, that the sheer volume and speed of turnover of initiatives can serve to work against effective mainstreaming and that the key problem faced by any evaluation of a particular programme is the tendency for outcomes to result from a myriad of influences. We have reconfirmed these views during the evaluation of YISPs, and shown also that the history that precedes the introduction of new initiatives is a crucial determinant of how they will function and how local people will respond to them. All new initiatives need to be carefully crafted and implemented if they are to meet their objectives and reach their potential. Whenever a new initiative is launched, local agencies tend to opt in, confident that it will be relatively straightforward to implement and will reach targets. Evaluators, however, find repeatedly that resources are not available locally, there are no clear implementation plans, operational staff are unsure about what they should be doing, timetables slip, and the programme is not implemented as intended. Frequently, new initiatives are grafted on to previous pilots or programmes and may not take the form originally indicated. More preparatory work could ensure that implementation is less *ad hoc* and that evaluations can truly test whether a programme works.

At the end of our initial scoping study we outlined a theory-of-change model to guide our evaluation. This provided a kind of road map which highlighted how the programme was expected to work, the processes which should be followed, and how desired outcomes were to be achieved. At its simplest, we expected the model to help us understand how and why an initiative such as YISPs can work. All the inputs and activities we identified were more or less in place, and we were able to investigate the YISP processes in the pilot YISPs. The short-term outcomes we expected to observe included improved behaviour, the child's increased commitment to school, better family relationships, reduced risk factors, increased protective factors, and increased resilience. There is evidence in our evaluation that the behaviour of YISP children did improve, some children were reintegrated into school, and some families experienced improved relationships and reductions in stress. What qualitative evidence we have suggests that risk factors were reduced, but we are unable to say whether resilience increased. We are not able to say whether longer-term outcomes, including less offending, fewer arrests, improved educational behaviour and enhanced employability, were achieved. Nevertheless there is evidence that, if the elements of good practice identified earlier in this chapter were put into place in the YISPs, YISPs could play a significant role in the Government's agenda for an effective youth justice system in which every child matters.

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children, schools and families