Home Office

BUILDING A SAFE, JUST AND TOLERANT SOCIETY

A further study of the effects of alternative education initiatives

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Home Office Online Report 07/05

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Final report

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Executive summary

Background

In April 2000, the Home Office and the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) commissioned NFER to undertake a study evaluating alternative educational provision for young people permanently excluded from school, or who were out of school for other reasons, such as non-attendance. The study formed part of the Home Office's Crime Reduction Programme. Six alternative education initiatives (AEIs) were selected for involvement in the study. They were chosen to be broadly representative of other interventions providing alternative education: all were offering similar kinds of opportunities for learning and constructive leisure. An overall aim of the evaluation was to examine the effectiveness of the intervention programmes, in terms of the AEIs' success in returning pupils to mainstream education, educational attainment, post-16 outcomes and reducing anti-social behaviour, including offending.

In order to examine the longer-term effects of the AEIs, the Home Office commissioned a small-scale 12-month follow-up study in September 2001. This study aimed to explore whether the positive outcomes associated with attending the AEIs were maintained after students left the projects. The age of the young people attending the AEIs ranged from Year 7 to Year 11, but for the purposes of the study most were in Years 10 and 11 (14- to16-year-olds). The evaluation focused on gathering data on the 162 young people involved in the original evaluation, including their destination data and levels of recorded offending via the Police National Computer (PNC). In order to document the life course of AEI students and to explore the successes and challenges of the follow-up year in greater detail, researchers also interviewed a small cohort of (16) AEI students, and the professionals working with them, at three points in time during the course of the follow-up year.

Key findings

Outcomes and destinations of AEI students

- In Autumn 2001, just over three-quarters (76 %) of AEI students with 'known' destinations were in 'desirable' destinations (i.e. employment, training, college, AEI or reintegrated into school). By Autumn 2002, this figure had dropped to just over three-fifths (61%). A rise in 'undesirable' destinations (i.e. unemployment, no provision (pre-16), referred back to LEA, custody or supervision order) also emerged. Unemployment was particularly evident.

- There was a significant increase in the numbers of students who could not be traced: during the follow-up year this figure rose from 12 per cent to 27 per cent.

- Employment was the most common 'desirable' destination for students leaving AEIs during the follow-up year. Issues regarding the types of unskilled employment accessed by AEI students (and their vulnerability within these employment contexts) were highlighted.

- The number of students with 'known' destinations progressing on to training and college in Autumn 2001 was 23 per cent.

- High rates of drop-out of AEI students from desirable destinations shows the importance of tracking and close monitoring of students once they leave AEIs.

- The lack of appropriate support for AEI students once they left the projects and in managing their transition to employment, training and/or college was apparent. The variability of support available, dependent on students' destinations, was also an area for

concern. This perhaps suggests a need for intensive support and monitoring for AEI students once they leave projects, in order to sustain and capitalise on gains made whilst attending the AEIs.

- A number of AEI students became parents over the course of the follow-up year, emphasising the need for support to enable them to continue accessing college, training and/or employment.

Offending behaviour and patterns

- Half (82 of 162) of AEI students were recorded as offending between 1997 and 2002.

- The original evaluation found that the previous increase in students' levels of recorded offending slowed down whilst they were attending the AEIs. However, during the follow-up year students' levels of recorded offending rose sharply again.

- The total number of recorded offences committed by AEI students increased by more than half (from 286 to 431) between the original evaluation year (2000–2001) and the follow-up year (2001–2002), but the number of students committing these offences dropped from 47 to 42.

- Persistent offenders (convicted of more than ten offences in a 12-month period) were increasingly responsible for a greater proportion of recorded crimes. By the follow-up year they accounted for 71 per cent of the sample's recorded crimes.

- Theft, criminal damage, assault and 'other' offences (type of crime not specified on the PNC but including 'going equipped for stealing', 'absconding from custody', and 'failing to surrender to bail') remained the most common offences committed by AEI students between 1999 and 2002. The biggest increase in recorded offences during the follow-up year was for assault and 'other' offences.

- Once again, the need for continued input, especially for persistent offenders, is apparent from these findings.

Offending and destinations

- Students in undesirable destinations were more likely to have an offending record than those in desirable destinations. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of students in undesirable destinations had a record of offending, compared with just over a third (38%) of students in desirable destinations.

- Students who were unable to be traced had, on average, the highest number (18) of recorded crimes per student.

- Persistent offenders were most likely not to be traced, and there was a proliferation of offences amongst these offenders in undesirable destinations.

- Excluding 'other' destinations, desirable destinations had the lowest average number of crimes (eight) per student.

- The links between destination and propensity to offend, first outlined in the original evaluation, were confirmed and strengthened.

Concluding comments

- The positive influence of the AEIs, in terms of a slow down in the rate of increase in recorded offending whilst students were attending the projects, initial desirable destinations, and positive educational and behavioural outcomes, was again highlighted in this retrospective study.

- However, the destination and offending data presented in the follow-up study suggests that continued post-16 monitoring and support should be an integral component of such programmes, in order to properly capitalise on students' achievements.

- It is apparent that AEIs generally did not impact on those students who were prolific offenders, as their needs would seem beyond the scope of the projects. This perhaps suggests the requirement for more specialist support focusing specifically on, and addressing, their offending behaviour.

- The follow-up evaluation highlighted the vulnerability of AEI students, for example, in relation to employment, moving into low paid, often sporadic work, frequently with poor health and safety provision and little security of tenure.

1. Background

In April 2000, the Home Office and the then DfEE commissioned NFER to undertake a study evaluating alternative educational provision for young people permanently excluded from school, or who were out of school for other reasons, such as non-attendance (for further details of the original study please see Kendall *et al*., 2003). The study formed part of the Home Office's Crime Reduction Programme. Six alternative education initiatives (AEIs) were selected for involvement in the study, which were chosen to be broadly representative of other interventions providing a full year programme of alternative education (see Table 1.1 for an overview of the programmes provided). Three of the six were LEA run and three were run by voluntary agencies, all were offering similar kinds of opportunities for learning and constructive leisure. An overall aim of the evaluation was to examine the effectiveness of the intervention programmes, measured in terms of the AEIs' success in returning pupils to mainstream education, educational attainment, post-16 outcomes and reducing anti-social behaviour, including offending. Data were collected on 162 young people who attended the AEIs – this covered their attendance, bullying and offending behaviour, incidences of exclusion and details of attainment. Offending data were collected from the Police National Computer (PNC) and via a self-report questionnaire with AEI students. The age of the young people attending the AEIs ranged from Year 7 to Year 11, but for the purposes of the study most were in Years 10 and 11 (14- to16-year-olds).

Table 1.1: AEI programme summary

AEI 1	Two and a half days a week AEI based programme focusing on basic skills, ICT and performing arts (music, drama and media education), plus (if appropriate) two-day work experience component. High levels of pastoral care.
AEI 2	Students offered up to 25 hours a week provision. Staffed by youth workers. Programme focused on basic skills, alternative education accreditation, ICT and substantial PSE content.
AEI 3	Three to four days of provision at environmentally-focused vocational AEI. Programme included basic skills and alternative education accreditation.
AEI 4	Full-time programme, school-like curriculum with opportunities for college placements two days a week for older students.
AEI 5	Full and part-time programmes available. A brokerage service commissioning provision from outside providers. Social worker support for each student.
AEI 6	Part-time individualised programmes focusing on school-like curriculum with additional ICT, arts and craft and leisure-based activities. Full-time placements for older students at college.

Source: Kendall *et al*. (2003).

The present study

In September 2001, in order to examine the longer-term effects of the AEIs, the Home Office commissioned a small-scale 12-month follow-up study. The study aimed to explore whether the positive outcomes associated with attending the AEIs were maintained after students left the projects. Most of the young people in the follow-up study were either in their final year of compulsory education (Year 11) or had just reached statutory school leaving age (16). This evaluation, henceforth known as the 'follow-up year', was divided into two distinct modules.

Module One focused on gathering data on the 162 young people involved in the original evaluation and focused on the:

- destinations of AEI students, including the number of young people progressing on to college, training and employment, along with the reasons for drop-out from post-programme destinations. It should be noted that a number of students continued to attend the AEIs throughout the follow-up year;

- annual levels of recorded offending amongst AEI students via the PNC. (Offending records of AEI students prior to the original evaluation were classified as the 'baseline year' (1999–2000); offending whilst attending the AEIs was classified as the 'intervention year' (2000–2001); and offending during the present study in 2001–2002 was classified as the 'follow-up year').

In order to document the life course of AEI students and to explore the successes and challenges of the follow-up year in greater detail, *Module Two* provided a more in-depth, qualitative approach to the analysis. Researchers interviewed a small cohort of (16) AEI students, and the professionals working with them, at three points in time during the course of the follow-up year. This number reflected the small-scale nature of the commissioned study.

2. Outcomes and destinations of AEI students

Key findings

- In Autumn 2001, just over three-quarters (76 per cent) of AEI students with 'known' destinations were in 'desirable' destinations; by Autumn 2002 this figure had dropped to just over three-fifths (61%).
- There was a significant increase in the numbers of students who could not be traced: during the follow-up year this figure rose from 12 per cent to 27 per cent.
- Employment was the most common 'desirable' destination for students leaving AEIs during the follow-up year. Issues regarding the type of employment accessed by AEI students (and their vulnerability within these employment contexts) were highlighted.
- The number of students progressing on to training and college in Autumn 2001 was 20 per cent.
- High rates of drop-out from employment were evident – less than half of the 28 students employed at the beginning of the follow-up year were still in employment by the end of it. The turnover of students on training programmes was higher than for employment, although this may reflect the relatively short-term nature of many of the training courses accessed by AEI students.
- The highest drop-out of AEI students was from college. Of the 17 young people who were attending college in Autumn 2001 only four were still at college in the Autumn of 2002, although again this may reflect the duration of courses accessed by AEI students. Of those 13 students who were no longer attending college in Autumn 2002, two were employed, three were caring for children, six were unemployed/had no provision and two were untraceable.
- A number of AEI students became parents over the course of the follow-up year, emphasising the need for support to enable them to continue accessing college, training and/or employment. As highlighted above, becoming a parent meant that some young people dropped out of desirable destinations.

Methodology for monitoring AEI students' destinations

As part of Module One, staff at the six AEIs were asked to provide information on all the known destinations of the young people who left the AEIs in June/July 2001. AEIs were given 'destination forms' to record students' destinations (if known), contact details and details of any professionals who might be working with them. Telephone tracking to confirm AEI students' destinations took place at three points during the follow-up year (Autumn 2001, Spring 2002 and Autumn 2002) to ensure that students' destination details were obtained a full year after they had left the AEIs.

Destinations of AEI students

All 162 AEI students were assigned to one of four different destination types. Table 2.1 provides an overview of AEI students' destinations during the follow-up year, in terms of 'desirable', 'undesirable', 'other' i.e. neither desirable nor undesirable, and 'unable to trace' destinations. The destination types were based on the categorisations used in the original evaluation and are summarised below:

- *Desirable destinations*: employment, training, college, continuing at AEI or new AEI, or reintegration back into school (mainstream or special).

- *2. Undesirable destinations*: unemployment, no provision (pre-16), referral back to the LEA usually the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance at the AEI, or custody or supervision order.
- *3. Other destinations*: attendance at a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) (another form of alternative educational provision run by LEAs), residential placement, looking after a child, other - hospitalised and deceased.
- *4. Unable to trace*: students who could not be traced, moved away, or their destination was unknown.

Table 2.1: Summary destination for AEI students data 2001–2002

	Autumn 2001 N=162	Spring 2002 N=162	Autumn 2002 N=162
Desirable destinations			
Employment	28	23	23
Training	16	10	12
College	17	11	17
At AEI	40	33	16
Reintegrated	8	7	5
Total	109	84	73
Undesirable destinations			
Unemployment	15	26	31
No provision	12	11	4
Referred to LEA	2	3	0
Custody	0	1	1
Supervision	1	0	0
Total	30	41	36
'Other' destinations			
Looking after child	2	5	8
PRU	1	1	0
Residential placement	1	0	0
Other	0	1	2
Total	4	7	10
Unable to trace			
Total	19	30	43
TOTAL	**162**	**162**	**162**

Source: NFER tracking data

AEI students progressing on to desirable destinations

During the follow-up year, there was a drop in the number of AEI students in desirable destinations, although this decrease could partly be accounted for by the fact that by Autumn 2002 most young people in the study were aged 16 or over and therefore were no longer of compulsory school age and had left the AEIs. In Autumn 2001, a total of 109 (76% of those with known destinations and 67% of the sample overall) of AEI students had progressed on to desirable destinations (including those who had remained at the AEIs), but by Autumn 2002 this figure had dropped to 73 (61% of known destinations and 45% of the sample overall). *Employment* was the most common desirable destination for students leaving the AEIs during the follow-up year. Twenty-three per cent of students with 'known' destinations (20% of the sample overall) progressed on to training and college in Autumn 2001. It should be remembered that many of these students had been out of education for some time prior to attending the AEIs (and some were still under 16), so the fact that at least a fifth progressed on to further education or training may be viewed as a significant positive outcome. However, overall the number of students in desirable destinations in Autumn 2002 was not as high as they were in Autumn 2001. In other words the positive destinations seen in Autumn 2001 were not maintained a year later in Autumn 2002.

Table 2.2 provides an overview of the *types of employment, training and college courses* that AEI students undertook during the course of the follow-up year. Students' employment included low paid, unskilled, often sporadic work, with a high turnover of staff e.g. retail/shop work and warehouse/factory work. A number of students were also working informally, for example as unskilled labourers in building and allied trades.

Table 2.2: Types of employment, training and college courses accessed by AEI students

Employment	Training	College courses
• Retail (11) e.g. shop assistant • Building and allied trades (10) e.g. roofer, plasterer • Manufacturing (9) e.g. factory and warehouse work • Service (6) e.g. security, cleaning, porter • Clerical (4) e.g. receptionist • Motor industry (4) e.g. garage work • Leisure (1)	• General training programmes (14) e.g. work-related skills and personal development • Vocationally specific courses (9) e.g. building and allied trades, service industry • Personal development (8) i.e. life skills	• Vocationally specific courses (17) e.g. office skills, health and beauty, building, mechanics • General/other (9) e.g. art • Basic skills/personal development (4) • Academic (3) e.g. GCSEs

Source: NFER tracking data. Numbers in brackets denote number of students.

When interviewed, students highlighted the difficulties of securing employment because they were under the age of 18, in addition to a lack of qualifications and experience. A number of male students were self-employed, casual labourers, working as plasterers, builders and window cleaners, often working with other family members. At least two students were involved in under-age work and others were working as roofers, builders, tarmacing, as security guards and as pallet makers. The employment conditions described by some of the young people raised health and safety issues, and these concerns were confirmed by staff interviews: '*We do have a number of agencies that work in the area and we strongly discourage 16, 17-year-olds for working through the agencies …* [Name of young person] *and his friend worked for this* [name of company]*, and I think were quite scared by it, scared about what they were being asked to do*' (careers adviser AEI 5). Other AEI students were working in jobs with little security of tenure, with poor conditions and low wages: '*I think she wasn't getting lunch breaks, and they were keeping her there really late at night and not paying her for overtime*' (project staff AEI 2).

Those students who accessed training programmes during the year were mainly involved in 'general training programmes' – these were not vocationally specific, but focused on general work-related skills and personal development. Other AEI students were either involved in vocationally-specific programmes or personal development training. Most of the AEI students who accessed college courses at some time during the year were on vocational courses, primarily focusing on employment in the service sector e.g. hairdressing. Where the type of college course was not specified this was classified as a general course. The remaining AEI students were accessing courses reflecting their range of ability, from those needing support in basic skills and life skills, to those who had gone on to access academic GCSE courses.

Table 2.1 shows that a total of eight young people were successfully reintegrated back into school (mainstream or special) from the AEIs. By Autumn 2002 this had reduced to five (four of the existing pupils reintegrated in Autumn 2001 and another pupil who was reintegrated back in Autumn 2002). Two of the remaining four pupils had reached statutory school leaving age, one had secured employment and the other was unemployed but had contact with the Connexions service who were finding it difficult to engage her in anything. The remaining two pupils' reintegration into school had proved unsuccessful and they were attending new AEIs.

All but one of the pupils who were reintegrated into school during the follow-up year were from one AEI which had a number of younger students on roll and the age of the pupils, in part, may have assisted in their reintegration back into school.

Desirable destinations: drop-out and retention

Analysis of the tracking data confirms relatively high rates of drop-out from desirable destinations (employment, training and college) during the course of the follow-up year. In relation to drop-out from *employment*, most AEI students employed during the year had an average of two jobs: only two students had remained in the same job for the whole year. When interviewed both young people expressed clear aspirational goals – they were in a position to link their employment and career progression with future benefits. Significantly, both had been offered full-time employment after completing a work experience placement whilst they were attending the AEIs. Thus, access to sustained employment can be linked to work experience and work placements. Work placements also gave students opportunities to participate in environments where adults provided positive influences and could show them the benefits associated with employment, which may have contributed to successful outcomes in the longer term.

Work placements leading to employment

They [young people] *need to be around adults who have been there, done that, and are not involved in anything corrupt. Or adults that can be a positive influence and that's what happened to* [name of young person] *when she went on her work placement she saw a different side to how her life could be* (project staff AEI 2).

Table 2.3 shows that of the 28 young people employed in the Autumn of 2001, less than half (13) were still employed by the Autumn of 2002. Only three of the 15 young people who had left employment during the course of the year went on to positive destinations i.e. training or college. However, it should also be noted that a further 12 students secured employment during the course of the year.

The turnover of students on *training programmes* was higher than for employment, although this probably reflected the relatively short-term nature of many of the training programmes being accessed by AEI students (e.g. 15-week life skills courses). Nevertheless, the drop-out from training providers is a concern: evidence showed students were not completing training programmes, although this might well have been because training providers were working with some of the most disengaged young people.

The highest drop-out from desirable destinations was the number of students *progressing on to college* (see Table 2.3). Only a quarter of the AEI students who were attending college in the Autumn of 2001 were still attending college in Autumn 2002. Although this again may be a reflection that most students were enrolled on 12-month courses, there had still been considerable drop-out from college by Spring 2002. Thus, although overall numbers of students at college remained stable, it should be noted that there was a high turnover of individual AEI students actually attending college throughout the follow-up year. Thus, there is a need to be aware that initial positive destinations may be subject to change. The main challenges for young people attending training and college appeared to be financial: for example, they were unable or unwilling to maintain their place at college because they had to live independently or because they needed to support their own families. The most they could earn with training/college would be £40 per week, whereas, as a careers adviser noted, they could earn: *'£170 from an agency, so it's very very tempting for young people*'.

Table 2.3: AEI student drop-out from desirable destinations

Employment	Number of students
Number employed Autumn 2001	28
Number of the above still employed Autumn 2002	13
Number gaining employment during the year	12
Training	
Number training Autumn 2001	16
Number of the above still training Autumn 2002	5
Number accessing training course during the year	11
College	
Number at college Autumn 2001	17
Number at college Autumn 2002	4
Number accessing college during the year	16

Source: NFER tracking data.

AEI staff also informally provided students with support and advice in accessing employment, training and college placements after the young people had left the projects.

AEI students progressing on to undesirable destinations

Table 2.1 shows that in Autumn 2001, nearly a fifth of all AEI students (30) were recorded as having undesirable destinations (this accounted for over a fifth of students with known destinations). By Spring 2002 this had increased to 25 per cent (41) (reflecting 31% of students with known destinations), but by Autumn 2002 it had decreased slightly to 22% (36) (30 per cent of students with known destinations), reflecting an overall upward trend. The most common undesirable destination for AEI students throughout the period was *unemployment*. Overall, unemployment rates for AEI students more than doubled over the period, from 15 (9%) in Autumn 2001, to 31 (19%) in Autumn 2002. Rates of unemployment amongst AEI students could have been expected to rise as the majority of young people in the study had reached the age where they could be classified as unemployed (in Autumn 2001, 96 AEI students were of school leaving age, and in Autumn 2002 a further 57 reached this age).

The second most frequent undesirable destination recorded, '*no provision*', remained relatively constant in Autumn 2001 and Spring 2002 (12 and 11 young people respectively), but dropped in Autumn 2002 to only four students. Both the increase in unemployment and the reduction in no provision in Autumn 2002 reflected the age of AEI students at this time. As statutory school leaving age is reached, there is no obligation to provide any other provision and these young people can also be officially registered as unemployed.

Offending-related destinations were very low during the follow-up year: two students were recorded as being in custody and one was on a supervision order.

AEI students progressing on to 'other' destinations

'Other' destinations were categorised as those that could be neither classified as desirable or undesirable and included instances where students were looking after a child, attending a Pupil Referral Unit and in a residential placement. Table 2.1 shows that the most common 'other' destination was 'looking after a child' and the number of such students increased substantially over the period from two in Autumn 2001, to eight in Autumn 2002 (all of these were female students). Over half (five) of those students were from AEI 4, which was the AEI with the largest number of female students. The number of students who became parents during the year (including male parents) inevitably impacted on their destination data, particularly in relation to drop-out from college – female parents left to look after their child and male parents to secure employment to support their families. It should also be noted, however, whilst this was the dominant trend, it remained possible to sustain a desirable destination whilst caring for a child. Out of the eight caring for a child, one young mother had

returned to college to complete a course after her baby was born and another student was planning to return to college when her baby was older.

AEI students classified as 'unable to trace'

The number of young people who were recorded as untraceable, or had moved away, or whose destination was unknown, increased from 19 (12%) in Autumn 2001, to 43 (27%) of the sample by Autumn 2002 i.e. over a quarter. From an agency perspective, concerns must be raised about the numbers who were classified as such, precisely because it is not known what happened to them. Despite considerable dialogue about 'multi-agency working' and 'joined-up thinking', young people appear to be still becoming 'lost' to the system, particularly post-compulsory school age. Whilst the Connexions Service has a remit to monitor and provide support, in this sample there did not appear to be sufficient monitoring of destination data and/or support available to ensure that significant numbers of young people were not 'lost'. This trend may also be a reflection of the nature of the lives of many of these young people; they wanted to be lost to agencies that may be perceived to be monitoring them, reflecting the degree of their disengagement.

To conclude, the decrease in desirable destinations for AEI students over the course of the year and the rise in undesirable destinations, particularly unemployment, must be a cause for concern. The number of AEI students who became parents over the year is also noteworthy. The drop-out rates from desirable destinations shows the importance of tracking and close monitoring of students once they leave interventions. Monitoring to ensure that young people transfer on to, and continue to, attend desirable destinations may be a particular need. The number of young people unable to be traced after they left the AEIs is also a concern.

Other outcomes identified by AEI students and professionals

AEI students and the professionals working with them who were interviewed during the course of the follow-up year also identified a range of positive outcomes linked to attendance at the AEIs. These related to 'changes in students' attitude/behaviour', 'educational outcomes' and 'lifestyle outcomes' and were linked to increasing maturity, responsibility and engagement. These outcomes mirror those identified during the original evaluation of the AEIs and may reflect a growing maturation amongst AEI students. Interviewees felt that changes in students' *attitude and/or behaviour*, resulting from attending the AEIs, meant that a number of students were able to move on to desirable destinations, for example college or employment, and maintain these destinations, something which they would have been unable to do prior to attending the AEI. Improvements in behaviour also meant that students were in a better position to secure employment because they were able to act more appropriately within the work environment. AEIs and other training providers provided students with opportunities to operate within adult environments which many thrived on, notably the more adult relationships, the respect and the associated responsibility they were given. Such opportunities for more 'adult relationships' with staff developed within the contexts of the AEIs were seen as a key to students' success in moving on to positive post-AEI destinations. The decline in the number of students in desirable destinations in Autumn 2002 may, as already highlighted, in part reflect the age of the young people (i.e. most had reached the age of 16 and therefore were no longer attending the AEIs and could be classified as unemployed). However, it may also reflect the fact that attitudinal and behavioural changes were not sustained (e.g. because of lifestyle changes), which again pinpoints the need for continued support for many of these young people.

The *educational outcomes* experienced by students mainly focused on gaining NVQs at college in a range of vocational areas, as has already been highlighted. One young person progressed from successfully completing a foundation course in horticulture during the year to starting a diploma in conservation. His college tutor observed: '*He's made probably the best progress out of all of them* [the students] *and he's looking to move on to bigger and better things*'. AEI staff felt that he had succeeded because '*he is more motivated, more self-motivated, he has got a pathway to go along now, he has got a vision, he has got a dream and that is what he is following*'. A gardening placement whilst attending the AEI had assisted

in developing his interest in horticulture, again highlighting the benefits of placements in relation to positive long-term outcomes. In addition, younger students who had been reintegrated into mainstream and special schools followed the national curriculum and were taking GCSEs and other accredited courses, so they had the potential to leave school with educational qualifications.

Other students felt that attending the AEI/college placements had enabled them to gain educational qualifications, which they would not have achieved at school. *Lifestyle outcomes* focused on positive developments in accommodation for AEI students, for example, a 'looked after' young person who had successfully moved on to independent living and another AEI student who had, with the assistance of other agencies, been able to secure accommodation with his partner and child. These outcomes can be linked in with the processes of growth and development; students were developing stability within their lives and were more likely to keep out of trouble and lead 'normal' lives. Of the small cohort (16) of young people who were interviewed during the follow-up year, six (about a third) appeared to have greater stability in their lives. Examples included the two young people highlighted above, as well as one young person who successfully accessed college and chose to live on campus away from the 'lure' of his estate and the potential to offend. These were significant outcomes, given the often chaotic circumstances in which many AEI students lived.

Issues and challenges for AEI students

Interviewees also highlighted a number of issues and challenges faced by AEI students once they left the AEIs. The main issues related to the *support* available to students once they had left, including the continuity and maintenance of support. It was suggested that the positive developments and progression in attendance, behaviour, attitude and attainment that students had made whilst attending the AEIs was in danger of being lost once they left because of the inadequate support available. Transition from school to employment, training or college can be seen as a challenging step for most students, but particularly challenging for AEI students with their histories of disengagement from learning and behavioural issues. AEI students were moving from an extremely supported environment to one where they may have no, or very little, support. In many instances, even where support was ostensibly available, it was debatable whether AEI students would or could access it because of the difficulties many of them had in establishing relationships. Students' lack of self-confidence, often related to learning needs, meant that they found it difficult to access external support and services such as Connexions independently and would be more likely to turn to AEI staff for support.

Lack of support

She should have been picked up by careers. She did go down to the careers office, but again there's this problem of the lack of continuity, of not knowing anybody and not knowing who you go to talk to and sometimes not knowing what to ask. And particularly, as in [name of young person]*'s case, if you're not very good at reading, if you have a reading age of seven and a half or eight, it's not like you can look around and follow the signs … So when your literacy and self-confidence is at that level, walking into a careers centre or a job centre and going to the right desk and asking the right questions to get support with a situation where you probably stuffed up … it's just not there. So if they don't come back to us there doesn't seem to be anything else* (project staff AEI 3).

The study found that throughout the follow-up year AEI staff continued to provide informal support for students who had left the projects, particularly at times of crisis. As already highlighted, AEI staff helped former students access a range of resources, including assistance with job applications, completing forms, updating their CVs, accessing college and training placements, and with other needs, such as accommodation and benefits. *Continuity of support* for 'vulnerable' AEI leavers was also seen as crucial in ensuring, for example, that students were not 'lost' over the summer once they had finished at the AEIs in the July: '*If we didn't maintain contact then everything these kids had worked for would be put at risk by outside influences*' (project staff AEI 2). Maintaining support allowed both staff and students to plan for and access positive destinations such as college. The importance of *maintaining*

support post-AEI, even when students had progressed on to positive destinations, can be seen as crucial for these young people. At any stage they were in danger of becoming 'lost' from the system. In some areas the support available to AEI students was dependent on their destination and the variability of support was particularly striking. Even where students were successfully accessing courses which were beginning to address their needs, issues were raised concerning the time limited nature of the interventions, which did not have suitable 'exit strategies' for AEI students: '*They said I had to leave the course, they said you're only allowed to do 16 weeks. I said I don't want to leave it 'cos it's good*' (young person AEI 5). The issue of short-term provision when students may require longer-term intervention is noteworthy.

Key messages

- Evidence from the study suggests that students' access to sustained employment can be linked to work experience and work placements, thus highlighting the value of such opportunities within AEI programmes.
- High drop-out rates of AEI students from desirable destinations shows the importance of tracking and close monitoring of students once they leave AEIs.
- The lack of appropriate support for AEI students once they left the projects and in managing their transition to employment, training and/or college was an issue. The variability of support available to AEI students dependent on their destination was also an area for concern. This perhaps suggests a need for intensive key worker support for AEI students once they leave projects.
- Drop-out and vulnerability following training programmes/college courses suggests the value of clear and supportive exit strategies in order to ensure that AEI students' 'experience positive progression'.

3. Offending behaviour and patterns

Key findings

- Half (82 of 162) of AEI students were recorded as offending between 1997 and 2002.
- The increase in the levels of recorded offending slowed down whilst students were attending the AEIs, but rose again during the follow-up year, suggesting the need for continued support.
- The total number of recorded offences committed by AEI students increased by more than half (from 286 to 431) between the intervention and follow-up years, but the number of students committing the offences dropped from 47 to 42, suggesting that there were a number of persistent offenders in the sample.
- Persistent offenders (convicted of more than ten offences in a 12-month period) were increasingly responsible for a greater proportion of recorded crimes: offending behaviour consolidated with them, so that by the follow-up year they accounted for 71 per cent of the sample's recorded crimes. Three students were responsible for more than three-fifths of the offences committed by persistent offenders.
- The same four types of offence: theft, criminal damage, other offences and assault were the most common offences committed by AEI students between 1999 and 2002. The biggest increase in recorded offences during the follow-up year was for assault and 'other offences'.

Methodology for analysis of offending data

The original evaluation (see Kendall *et al*., 2003) examined the offending behaviour of the 162 young people prior to, and during, their period of AEI attendance (1997-2001). This analysis was based on data gathered from the Police National Computer (PNC)[1] and also information provided by the young people themselves in a self-report questionnaire. The present study continued to examine the offending behaviour of AEI students during the course of the follow-up year. In November 2002, and in Autumn 2003, all 162 young people's names were again submitted to the PNC to obtain records of offending during the follow-up year from 1 September 2001 to 31 August 2002. Thus, PNC data for five years were available for analysis.

Type and patterns of offending 1999–2002

Table 3.1 provides a summary of AEI students' offending behaviour as recorded on the PNC between 1997 and 2002; and it is evident that half (82 of 162) of AEI students had a recorded offence over that time period. The proportion of offenders at each AEI varied considerably, from 30 per cent at AEI 4, to 73 per cent at AEI 3.

[1] PNC data include all known recorded offences with a substantive outcome, therefore they are likely to under-represent the total number of crimes committed. There are recognised problems with the data quality on the PNC.

Table 3.1: Offending history of AEI students between 1997 and 2002

AEI	No. enrolled at AEIs during the intervention year	No. with record of offending	No. of offences	Total % of offences across AEIs
1	22	13 *(59%)*	118	10%
2	23	10 *(43%)*	212	19%
3	15	11 *(73%)*	177	16%
4	33	10 *(30%)*	31	3%
5	39	23 *(59%)*	467	42%
6	30	15 *(50%)*	119	11%
TOTAL	**162**	**82**	**1,124**	**100%**

Source: PNC. Note: Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, and therefore may not sum to 100.

Number of offences

Overall, the total number of recorded offences committed by AEI students roughly doubled each year between 1997 and 2000 (Matrix MHA, 2002, unpublished). However, Table 3.2 shows that during the intervention year (2000-2001) the rate of increase in offending was much slower, with recorded offences only increasing by 28 per cent (from 224 to 286, 62 more offences), whilst in the follow-up year, the rate of recorded offending increased more rapidly again (from 286 to 431, 145 more offences). This perhaps suggests that the rate of increase in students' recorded offending stabilised whilst they were attending the AEIs, but rose again after they left the projects. The large rise in the total number of offences during the follow-up year was not evenly distributed across the AEIs but was accounted for by increases in recorded offences by attendees from three AEIs, whilst the remaining three saw a decrease. This increase was accounted for by a small number of young people who became prolific offenders in each of the three AEIs.

Types of offences

Table 3.2 also provides details of the types of offences committed by AEI students between 1999 and 2002. It shows that over the course of the three years, the same four types of offences: theft, criminal damage, other offences and assault, remained the most common. However, there were shifts in the composition, for example in the follow-up year, *theft* accounted for a smaller proportion of the total offences than it had in the baseline year, when it was the most frequently recorded crime. After an increase during the intervention year (where it accounted for nearly a quarter of all recorded crime), in the follow-up year the number of recorded offences for *criminal damage* remained stable at 67, and accounted for only a sixth of the total offences in that year. Both *'other'* offences (type of crime not specified on the PNC[2]) and *assaults* remained fairly stable over the baseline and intervention years, but rose sharply during the follow-up year, signifying a broadening spectrum of offences being recorded for AEI students. *Weapons* offences also rose sharply during the follow-up year. Furthermore, offences such as *vehicle crime* and *road traffic/motoring* offences had shown a steady increase over the three years, perhaps reflecting the age of the students. When combined with relative decreases in criminal damage and disorderly conduct, the types of recorded offence showing an increase during the follow-up year might suggest that students' offending behaviour was taking on more 'adult' characteristics. (The only offences to show a decrease in frequency over the three years were *disorderly behaviour* and *burglary*.) Recorded incidences of *deception* decreased during the intervention year but then increased again during the follow-up year, but incidences of *arson*, which had peaked during the intervention year, dropped off to zero in the follow-up year.

[2] 'Other' offences included 'going equipped for stealing', 'absconding from custody', 'failing to surrender to bail', offences under the Firearms Act, offences against public order including affray, and offences against the Prevention of Crime Act for possession of an offensive weapon.

Table 3.2: Types of offences committed by AEI students: yearly breakdown 1999-2002

Type of offence	Yearly breakdown		
	1999/00*	**2000/01**	**2001/02**
	Total	Total	Total
Theft	45 (20%)	47 (16%)	49 (11%)
Criminal damage	44 (20%)	67 (23%)	65 (15%)
Other	30 (13%)	38 (13%)	85 (20%)
Assault	29 (13%)	35 (12%)	61 (14%)
Disorderly behaviour	27 (12%)	24 (8%)	18 (4%)
Vehicle crime	14 (6%)	18 (6%)	32 (7%)
Burglary	11 (5%)	5 (2%)	4 (1%)
Road traffic/motoring offences	7 (3%)	28 (10%)	37 (9%)
Deception (incl. fraud)	6 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (1%)
Weapons	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	18 (4%)
Robbery	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	5 (1%)
Breach of court orders/bail	2 (1%)	6 (2%)	28 (6%)
Drugs – possession	2 (1%)	4 (1%)	17 (4%)
Drugs – supply	1 (0%)	4 (1%)	6 (1%)
Arson	1 (0%)	6 (2%)	0 (0%)
Sexual offence	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)
TOTAL	**224 (100%)**	**286 (100%)**	**431 (100%)**

Source: PNC. * Ranked by category according to frequency in 1999/2000. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, and therefore may not sum to 100.

Numbers of young people offending

It is important to examine individual offending rates in order to explore the nuances behind overall trends as overall rates may disguise individual patterns of offending. Table 3.3 shows the number of offences committed by individual AEI students over the three years 1999-2002. Although the total number of offences almost doubled over the period, the table shows that the actual number of young people committing the offences dropped, suggesting that there were some prolific offenders amongst the sample. Fewer AEI students were convicted for criminal behaviour in the follow-up year (43) than had been convicted in the baseline year (53). Thus, in the follow-up year, there were fewer young people with recorded offences, although they were committing more crimes. Table 3.3 also shows that throughout the three-year period the majority of AEI students with recorded offences were, on average, committing between two and five offences. However, the proportion of young people in this category decreased over the period, as the number of students committing more than ten offences increased.

Table 3.3: Number of offences committed by AEI students 1999-2002

No. of offences	Yearly breakdown			Total
	1999/2000	**2000/2001**	**2001/2002**	
	Total	Total	Total	
1	10	8	8	26
2-5	29	21	15	65
6-10	10	10	10	30
11-15	3	3	4	10
16-20	1	3	0	4
21-25	0	1	2	3
26-30	0	0	1	1
31-40	0	1	0	1
41-50	0	0	1	1
51-60	0	0	0	0
61-90	0	0	2	2
Total no. students	**53**	**47**	**43**	**143**

Source: PNC

Students who were recorded as offending during the baseline year committed fewer offences in the intervention year, but their offending rose again during the follow-up year: a rise of 53 per cent was noted, from the intervention year to the follow-up year, among this group. Young people who had not offended in the baseline year were responsible for 92 offences (32%) recorded in the intervention year 2000-2001 (Kendall *et al*., 2003). A total of ten young people who had no recorded offences during the intervention year were responsible for 47 offences (11%) in the follow-up year. AEI students who had no record of offending during the baseline and intervention years were only responsible for three (1%) recorded offences during the follow-up year (one offence each by three AEI students). Thus, it can be shown that students with no recorded criminal activity in the baseline and intervention years were unlikely to offend in the follow-up year.

Persistent offenders

The follow-up year appears to show a consolidation of offending for certain students, with the number of young people convicted for multiple offences rising. The number convicted for more than 20 offences increased from two to six young people, so the scale of some students' offending had thus increased considerably. During the baseline year, the maximum number of recorded offences against an individual student was 18, during the intervention year this rose to 33, but during the follow-up year it rose markedly to 81. There were peaks and troughs in students' recorded offending, and most were not prolific offenders throughout the period. For example, the two most prolific offenders during the intervention period (2000-2001) did not maintain, and in fact reduced, their levels of offending significantly during the follow-up year (although their destinations remained undesirable).

In the previous report, the term 'persistent offender' was used for any young person who was convicted of more than ten offences in a 12-month period. If this categorisation is used again, it can be seen that there were two and a half times (10) as many persistent offenders in the follow-up year than there were in the baseline year (4). Over a quarter (4/15) of AEI 3's students could be classified as persistent offenders over the period 1999-2002. During the follow-up year, persistent offenders accounted for nearly a quarter of all offenders and were responsible for 71 per cent of the 431 recorded crimes. Indeed, three young people carried out more than three-fifths (188) of the 305 offences committed by persistent offenders during the follow-up year. These students' records of offending increased at a startling rate, jumping from 13 to 81, 15 to 65 and 16 to 42 during the follow-up year. All three had undesirable destinations, two were unemployed, and the most prolific offender was untraceable (the increase in offending coincided with him moving out of the area).

The young person whose recorded offending rose from 15 to 65 offences during the follow-up year had been on a supervision order when he started at the AEI. During his time at the AEI his supervision order was cleared and although project staff were aware that he continued to be involved in offending, he was progressing relatively well at the project and was identified as a talented artist. He was due to stay on at the AEI during the follow-up year, but had to be removed from the programme towards the end of the year when his behaviour deteriorated dramatically. After threatening project staff and breaking windows in the building he was removed from the programme. It was also at this time that his offending increased dramatically. The young person whose recorded offending increased from 16 to 42 offences during the follow-up year did not access a college placement provided at the beginning of the year and then became homeless. The most prolific offender whose recorded offending rose from 13 to 81 offences was a looked-after young person who was moved out of the area and was untraceable.

Of the ten young people recorded as persistent offenders in the follow-up year, half (five) were also persistent offenders in the intervention year, although all the remaining students had some record of offending in the preceding years (baseline and/or intervention years). Recorded offending for half of the persistent offenders in the intervention year actually declined in the follow-up year. As already highlighted, the increase in offending was largely

accounted for by a small number of students whose offending showed a startling increase between the intervention and follow-up year.

Overall, 16 young people were recorded as persistent offenders over the period 1999-2002, with slightly more (9) being in the older age group (aged 16 to 17) during the follow-up year, than in the younger age group (7 young people aged 15 to 16). Three of the 16 persistent offenders were female, six were looked after, and all but two had been permanently excluded from school. Most were identified as having some form of special educational need and five were at Stage 5 of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice.[3] These young people's experiences of the AEIs were mixed, some were relatively successful, but the influences outside the projects, in terms of offending and family dysfunctionality, meant that a number were unable to maintain their attendance at the AEIs. Despite their levels of offending, a small number of persistent offenders, with support, did move on to positive destinations (see below). For example, one young person whose recorded offending peaked whilst he was attending the AEI, successfully (with the help of AEI staff) accessed employment and a training placement during the follow-up year. Employment meant that he was able to leave home (a source of stress and conflict which had a negative impact on his behaviour at the AEI) and get a flat of his own

The majority (11/16) of persistent offenders had undesirable destinations and over half (6) of those with undesirable destinations were untraceable, four were unemployed and one was in custody. Those who were untraceable included young people whose families had moved away, and a looked-after young person who had absconded from the children's home where he was living. Nevertheless, as already highlighted, some (5) had desirable destinations: two were employed, two were in training and one was attending an AEI. For three of the five, the bulk of their recorded offending was prior to the follow-up year, but two (one in training and one in employment) were still recorded as offending during the follow-up year).

Key messages

- Positive developments, in terms of a reduction in the rate of increase in offending evident during the intervention year, were not sustained in the follow-up year, suggesting a need for continued support for AEI students to address and challenge their offending behaviour.
- AEIs may not be the most appropriate locations in which to address the needs of persistent offenders who may require more intensive, focused support. However, it should be remembered that crime reduction was not part of the AEIs' remit. The availability of additional support mechanisms for young people attending AEIs with high rates of offending may be an area for development.

[3] The Code of Practice has been revised since these data were collected and no longer refers to stages. However, at the time it was a five stage code, highlighting the level of support required for young people with SEN. Stage 5 was the highest level of support provided, where the LEA was obliged to consider the need for a statement of SEN, and if a statement was made, was responsible for arranging, monitoring and reviewing the support provided.

4. Offending and destinations

Key findings

- Students with undesirable destinations were more likely to have an offending record than those with desirable destinations. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of students with undesirable destinations had a record of offending, compared with just over a third (38%) of students with desirable destinations.
- Students who were unable to be traced had, on average, the highest number (18) of recorded crimes per 'offending' student.
- Persistent offenders were most likely not to be traced.
- There was a proliferation of offences amongst persistent offenders in undesirable destinations. As a proportion of total offences, persistent offenders in undesirable destinations were also more likely to be convicted of assault.
- Excluding 'other' destinations, desirable destinations had the lowest average number (8) of crimes per 'offending' student.

Methodology: linking offending and destination data

This section seeks to examine whether there are possible links or associations between desirable and undesirable destinations and levels of recorded offending. It compares AEI students' final destination data at the end of the follow-up year in autumn 2002 with their records of offending over the three-year period 1999/2000 to 2001/2002.

Offending and destination data

Students' destination data in Autumn 2002 and their records of offending 1999 to 2002 are shown in Table 4.1, and clearly students with undesirable destinations were more likely to have an offending record than those with desirable destinations. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of students with undesirable destinations had a record of offending, compared with just over a third (38%) of students with desirable destinations. Nevertheless, the fact that almost two-fifths of students with desirable destinations had some recorded offending behaviour over the period should be noted. Examination of the different types of *desirable destination* reveals that approximately half the students in employment or training had records of offending behaviour, while just over one-third (6) of the students who remained at their AEI during the follow-up year, or were attending a new AEI, had records of offending. Less than a third (5) of students at college had any record of offending. (This might also reflect the fact that most of the students at college were from AEI 4 and these students' records of offending were very low.) Only one student who had been reintegrated to school had a record of offending.

The relationship between offending and destination data is highly complex. While Table 4.1 shows that there were an equal number of persistent offenders (i.e. convicted of more than ten offences in a 12-month period) in desirable locations as in undesirable locations, a greater proportion of students in undesirable locations could be classified as persistent offenders (14%), than those in desirable locations (7%). In addition, the five persistent offenders in undesirable locations were responsible for nearly two and a half times as many offences (260) than the five persistent offenders in desirable locations (108). The proliferation of offences amongst persistent offenders in undesirable locations is significant, suggesting that desirable destinations may at least curb students' levels of offending. Indeed, no persistent offenders were recorded at college or as reintegrated to school.

Table 4.1: Destination and offending data for AEI students 1999-2002

Desirable destinations Autumn 02	Number of students	Number of students		
		Involved in offending 99–02* *Not persistent offenders*	**Involved in offending 99–02* *Persistent offenders***	**Not involved in offending 99–02***
Employment	23	8	2	13
Training	12	4	2	6
College	17	5	0	12
At AEI	16	5	1	10
Reintegrated	5	1	0	4
Total	73	23	5	45
Undesirable destinations Autumn 02				
Unemployment	31	17	4	10
No provision	4	1	0	3
Custody	1	0	1	0
Total	36	18	5	13
'Other' destinations				
Looking after child	8	4	0	4
Other	2	2	0	0
Total	10	6	0	4
Unable to trace				
Total	43	13	6	24
TOTAL	**162**	**60**	**16**	**86**

Source: *NFER tracking data and PNC*
* 1999/2000 to 2001/2002

As a proportion of total offences in the follow-up year, persistent offenders in undesirable destinations were more likely to be convicted of assault. Assaults accounted for 19 per cent (30) of the recorded offences for persistent offenders in undesirable locations, compared with none of the offences committed by those in desirable locations.

Table 4.1 also shows that just under half (19) of students who were classified as *'unable to trace'* were involved in recorded criminal activity over the period, which was only a slightly higher proportion than those students with desirable destinations. However, 14 per cent (6) of those students who were unable to be traced were classified as persistent offenders, which meant that this was (fractionally) the destination with the highest proportion of persistent offenders. This is a concern, given that they were beyond the assistance/influence of agencies, but were responsible for a significant amount of crime. Students who were untraceable were responsible for 343 crimes over the period. Table 4.2 shows that these students were, on average, responsible for the largest number of crimes per 'offending' student. The table also highlights the impact of persistent offenders on the average number of crimes per destination. When these students are included, rates of offending increased two- or even three-fold for each type of destination, again highlighting the impact of persistent offenders' recorded crimes on all destination data. Table 4.2 shows that, excluding 'other' destinations, desirable destinations had the lowest average number of crimes per student, roughly half the offending recorded for students with undesirable destinations or those who were unable to be traced. It should also be noted that among students in destinations classed as 'other', two students, whose destinations in Autumn 2002 were 'hospitalised' and 'deceased' accounted for three-quarters of offences amongst this group overall, and all of the offences during the follow-up year. The remainder of this cohort was made up of eight young mothers caring for children during the follow-up year, whose offending dropped to zero.

Table 4.2: Number of crimes per AEI student

Average number of crimes:	Excluding persistent offenders	Including persistent offenders
Per desirable destination	5	8
Per undesirable destination	5	15
Per 'other' destination	6	N/A
Per unable to trace	8	18

Source: PNC and NFER tracking data

Table 4.3 provides a summary of students' offending linked to their destination data for the period 1999-2002. The exponential growth in the number of offences for students in 'undesirable' locations can be seen. Conversely, for 'desirable' and 'unable to trace' destinations, the rate of increase in recorded offences is much slower and in fact dips, for those in desirable destinations, during the intervention year when most students were attending the AEIs. This suggests a positive link between desirable destinations and the stabilising of overall patterns of offending behaviour.

Table 4.3: AEI students' offending year on year 1999-2002

	Number of offences committed		
Destination Autumn 02	**1999–2000**	**2000–2001**	**2001–2002**
Desirable	86	60	66
Undesirable	46	113	191
Other	13	12	11
Unable to trace	79	101	163

Source: PNC and NFER tracking data

Again, it should be noted that among those in 'other' destinations, the vast majority of offences were carried out by two students whose destinations in Autumn 2002 were 'deceased' and 'hospitalised'. As a proportion of offences by students in 'other' destinations, those caring for children during the follow-up year dropped steadily, accounting for 62 per cent of offences in the baseline year, to eight per cent in the intervention year, and zero in the follow-up year.

Key message

- The links between undesirable and untraceable destinations and levels of recorded offending does suggest that some of the more vulnerable AEI students were not sufficiently supported.

5. Concluding comments

Overall, this longitudinal study has allowed a unique insight into the career paths and offending patterns of a cohort of disengaged young people who had been accessing alternative education provision. The positive influence of the AEIs has again surfaced in this study, in terms of a slowdown in the increase in students' recorded offending whilst they were attending the AEIs, initial desirable destinations and positive educational and behavioural outcomes. This reaffirms that a coherent package of permanent and stable pastoral support, alongside sustained training/educational opportunities, seems a viable and highly effective approach for a certain type of young person. However, the destination and offending data presented here do seem to suggest that continued post-16 monitoring and support should be an integral component of such programmes, in order to properly capitalise on students' achievements.

This evaluation showed that the AEIs could have a positive impact on young people with relatively low levels of offending, although it is important to stress once more that there was no formal remit to address criminality within these programmes. Although the number of recorded offences increased during the intervention and follow-up years, the number of students committing offences dropped. The rise in the number of students convicted of multiple offences during the follow-up year highlights a consolidation of offending amongst a relatively small number of young people. These persistent offenders were responsible for nearly three-quarters (71%) of the recorded crimes during the follow-up year. It is apparent that projects were generally unable to impact on these students as their needs were beyond their scope, suggesting the requirement for more specialist support focusing specifically on, and addressing, their offending behaviour.

The evaluation also highlighted the vulnerability of AEI students, for example, in relation to employment, moving into low paid work often with poor terms and conditions. The nature of such work often acted as a disincentive for young people to remain in employment, contributing to them moving towards undesirable destinations.

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