The role of education in enhancing life chances and preventing offending

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Home Office Crime Reduction Programme funded a series of studies focusing on the role that education can play in promoting individual life chances and preventing offending by young people. This document brings together the findings of these studies, which were:

- Crime Reduction in Secondary Schools (CRISS) Programme: an evaluation of a large-scale programme supporting a series of school-focused development projects, to identify measures to reduce actual and potential pupil offending

- Alternative Education Initiatives (AEIs): a combined quantitative and qualitative assessment of six case study AEIs, based on their success in re-engaging young people in education

- Children Missing from Education: a study investigating the problem of young people who are persistently absent from school or other forms of education, and the relationship between this absence and criminal behaviour

- Behaviour Management for Looked After Children in Residential Care: a small study examining practical approaches to behaviour management in three local authority areas.

Home Office Development and Practice Reports draw out from research the messages for practice development, implementation and operation. They are intended as guidance for practitioners in specific fields. The recommendations explain how and why changes could be made, based on the findings from research, which would lead to better practice.

Key findings

The CRISS programme

Three broad approaches were identified as 'promising' for the future:

- Attendance monitoring and management systems – new/enhanced school attendance management systems combined with responses such as first day calling, in-school attendance officers and truancy sweeps, were linked to improved attendance and fewer exclusions.

- Working with parents and families – efforts to improve home-school links were found to influence attendance rates, with Home-School Liaison Officers (HSLOs) often being used to respond to attendance and behaviour issues and establish relationships between school and home.

- Internal referral units – smaller increases in fixed term exclusion rates were identified where internal referral units were trialled. A number of models were identified, including sessional inputs from teachers and other agency staff and an emphasis on supporting pupils with both learning and with managing relationships with others.[1]

Alternative Education Initiatives (AEIs)

Three-quarters of students self reported improvements in *behaviour* and half of attendees had achieved some form of *qualification* following their time at the AEI, although some were concerned that their qualifications were not equivalent to those available in the mainstream. Incidents of *offending* by AEI pupils increased during the evaluation year but fewer pupils were responsible for the offences than in the previous year. Key success factors included:

- the ability to design programmes to meet individual needs and the variety of provision available.

- the quality of staff-student relationships

- input from other agencies.

Missing the benefits – Children missing from education

A series of *routes to becoming missing* were identified, including being formally excluded from school, self-exclusion by pupils and the withdrawal of children by their families.

Four areas of potential response were recognised for *promoting re-integration* into mainstream or suitable alternative provision: procedural issues (including multi-agency work); professional development/awareness raising; providing alternatives to the curriculum in a mainstream setting; and involving young people and their families in designing approaches based on their needs.

Behaviour management for looked after children in residential care

A common feature in each of the studies was the importance of partnership and multi-agency working. The Looked After Children study provided an example of formalised multi-agency work that led to a series of wider developments.

In one area a formal protocol had been developed to report offending in local authority care homes, involving police, social service and YOT inputs. As well as establishing an effective protocol, its development led to the establishment of shared understandings between the parties, the extension of the protocol to include restorative next steps, and the strengthening of links between each agency and with individual care homes.

Conclusions and common factors

Two common factors emerged as key elements for delivery and working with young people more widely:

- The importance of relationships between schools and young people – effective schools are inclusive schools, with a positive ethos, clear leadership and strong management and positive staff-pupil relations. Such positive relationships both reduce the 'push' factors that influence pupils' decisions to exclude themselves, and enhance effective retention and reintegration strategies.

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1.   Individual grants which were previously available to enable schools to keep pupils at risk of exclusion have now been subsumed into the revised funding regime for schools.

- The role of parents and carers – the involvement of parents and carers in preventative and restorative approaches is recognised as an important element in their success. However, relationships between home and school can be complex, with parent/carer roles potentially having both strong negative as well as strong positive influences on young people's development.

In addition to the factors above, a series of common *practical success factors* for delivering preventative and behaviour management approaches were identified, including:

- Whole school commitment to positively influence behaviour and preventative measures, shared between senior management and other school staff.

- Staff capabilities and strengths – in particular staff abilities in working with pupils, and the importance of following consistent approaches and a consistency of staffing.

- Multi-agency working – many of the more challenging young people will require multi-faceted solutions to their often complex problems, where inputs from different specialist agencies may be required.

Introduction

Introduction and the research base

This publication brings together the findings from four research studies, funded under the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme between 2000 and 2002 and introduced in Box 1 below. The studies involved the examination of the role education can play in promoting individual life chances and reducing the likelihood of the onset of offending behaviour. The document seeks to identify practical lessons from each study that may be of interest across the practitioner community, and should be viewed as an accompaniment to the range of existing research, examples of which are listed in Appendix I.

Box 1:   The research base

The document is based on four research studies, as described below.

- Crime Reduction in Secondary Schools (CRISS) programme – CRISS was a large-scale programme which sought, through a series of development projects, to identify school-based measures which serve to reduce actual and potential offending amongst secondary school pupils. A total of 38 projects were funded to operate for two years, involving over 100 schools in England and Wales with an average level of funding of £100,000 per school.

- Children Missing from Education – this study investigated the problem of young people who are persistently absent from school or other forms of education, and the relationship between this absence and criminal behaviour. Based on extensive interviews with over 80 professionals (including operational staff such as youth workers, education welfare officers and the police, as well as more strategic representatives across the local authority, voluntary, community and statutory bodies) and 50 young people.

- Alternative Education Initiatives (AEIs) – this study focused on six AEIs, selected by the Home Office and (then) Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) based on their success in re-engaging young people in education. The study included a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, including interviews with project staff, young people and their parents/carers – including case study visits and the use of a self-reporting questionnaire.

- Behaviour Management for Looked After Children in Residential Care – this small study examined practical approaches to the management of young people in local authority residential care, and was based on case studies in three local authority areas and the review of two projects specifically targeted towards reducing the levels of offending by young people in residential care. The local authority case studies included interviews with social service, the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and police representatives, as well as visits to local authority children's homes and interviews with managers and staff.

The Home Office commissioned a number of organisations to conduct the four studies and this document draws on research by the following organisations:

Research Study	Organisation
Crime Reduction in Secondary Schools	● GHK
	● Matrix MHA
	● National Foundation for Educational Research
	● School of Education, Sheffield Hallam University
Children Missing from Education	● National Foundation for Educational Research
Alternative Education Initiatives	● Matrix MHA
	● National Foundation for Educational Research
Behaviour Management for Looked After Children in Residential Care	● GHK in association with Holden McAllister Partnership

The role of education and school

Before examining the lessons resulting from the research, this section provides an overview of the role of secondary schools in the wider developmental and policy context, and examines the relationship between school and delinquency and school-based preventative approaches.

The role of schools

As primary providers of education to young people, schools play a central role in measures to prevent actual or potential offending amongst their pupils as well as improving their 'life chances' more widely. This role can be multifaceted, in terms of:

● The learning process – either through the achievement of qualifications leading to progression to continuing education and/or fulfilling participation in the labour market, or the acquisition of 'soft' skills (such as communication and team working skills) which increase individual employability

● The establishment of behavioural norms – for example the imposition of behavioural standards such as attendance, acceptable behaviour in class, respect for others, etc. In some cases school has the potential to be a key influence on behaviour, where home and family influences may be absent or negative

● The provision of wider experience – such as teachers as positive role models (where none exist at home), and providing the opportunity to widen experience and extend individual world views

These roles may be enhanced through a range of developments, including establishing positive links with parents and carers that allow attitudes to education and its importance to be emphasised, and for any restorative action to be set in the wider context.

The fact that most young people spend a large amount of their time at school makes it a potentially key influence on their lives. However, for some pupils, school becomes a focus for misbehaviour, rebellion and anti-social behaviour – and other behaviours that characterise potential offending in the future. It is this group, and the preventative approaches trialled with them, that are the focus of this document.

Trends and current policy context

Recent years have seen the development of a range of different approaches to enhancing the life chances and development of young people of secondary school age. In addition to their role in promoting educational attainment and the achievement of individual potential, schools have also needed to respond to an enhanced role in the field of behaviour management, *with a shift in emphasis from primarily punitive responses towards a more inclusive and preventative approach.* This provides a series of unique challenges for the education system, with new and potentially conflicting measures (or "troublesome trade-offs") being developed and implemented to address often complex and inter-dependent problems.

The examination of incidents of anti-social or offending behaviour often uncover a wide range of causal factors and influences – including chaotic or dysfunctional home lives, weak or negative influence of parents/carers, and mental or physical health issues – which schools are not equipped to deal with alone. Here schools and other local agencies (such as social service departments, primary care trusts, youth justice representatives and the police) increasingly work on a collaborative basis to provide *multi-agency approaches* to addressing issues of youth behaviour.

At the Central Government departmental level, a range of interests exist in the promotion of *policies and practices* to enhance the links between education, the life chance agenda and the prevention of offending and anti-social behaviour. Each department is taking forward a range of initiatives which collectively provide a cohesive programme to address a range of risk factors and encourage individual, community and family involvement. These initiatives are set out below:

The *Department for Education and Skills (DfES)* approach is to work on reducing avoidable exclusions, through early intervention, multi-agency working and partnership with parents, intervening with disruptive pupils outside the classroom and making use of Learning Support Units with a view to achieving reintegration into mainstream classes. Initiatives include the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP), which provides a wide range of support for schools, teachers, pupils and their families. In particular, further support comes from multi-agency Behaviour and Educational Support Teams (BEST). BIP provides a named link officer to work with pupils and their families, training for teachers and school behaviour audits, initiatives to improve attendance, and full time education from day one of all exclusions. In addition, the DfES has introduced the Connexions Service to support all young people at risk of disaffection and exclusion.

The *Home Office* objective is to ensure that there is a coherent programme across Government to address those factors that increase the likelihood of young people being drawn into offending. The department aims to ensure that relevant government programmes recognise and address the potential to reduce youth crime; that targeted programmes focus on those most at risk of offending, to maximise impact; and that youth justice interventions deliver significant reductions in reoffending rates. It is a partner in the Safer Schools Partnership programme with DfES, Youth Justice Board (YJB), the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Association of Chief Education Officers, the Secondary Heads' Association and the National Association of Head Teachers, which helps reduce truancy and exclusions, and address victimisation, criminality and anti-social behaviour within school communities. The programme operates in conjunction with measures to encourage the police and LEAs to conduct regular truancy sweeps and additional procedures included in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. The Home Office Anti-social Behaviour Unit has been established to address the issue of anti-social behaviour and take forward the measures contained in the Anti-social Behaviour Act.

The *Youth Justice Board's (YJB)* commitment to education and training is supported by evidence suggesting that it is probably the single most important identifiable protective factor at play in reducing offending and reoffending. It is recognised that young people not engaged in education and training are more likely to offend. As such one of the targets the YJB has set YOTs is to ensure that 80 per cent by December 2003 and 90 per cent by December 2004 of young offenders are supervised by YOTs in full time education, training and employment. Success in literacy and numeracy is particularly important. The YJB recognises the need for properly tailored programmes and assessment tools delivered by skilled practitioners, publishing an effective practice guidance note for practitioners on education, training and employment.

The *Department of Health* is taking forward a range of policy initiatives on the life chances of looked after children agenda, and a range of projects are in place to deliver improvements to the life chances of looked after children, in relation to health, education, reducing offending and leaving care. The department has commissioned a good practice guide, directed at local authorities and YOTs, on reducing offending by looked after children.

The *Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU)* are responsible for Children's Fund (CF) partnerships, which focus on children and young people aged 5 to 13 years. Projects funded by the CF include those relating to crime prevention, alternative education and missing children. With regard to crime prevention, the Children's Fund incorporated On Track, originally a Home Office programme providing intensive services in 24 high crime neighbourhoods. From April 2003, Children's Fund partnerships are required to allocate 25 per cent of their funding for programmes which are jointly agreed with YOTs. The CYPU also produced the guidance for Local Preventative Strategies which address risk factors that make children and young people vulnerable to negative outcomes, such as being excluded from school.

School influences and delinquency

It is widely recognised that schools differ in the rates of delinquency and disruptive behaviour among their pupils, as well as in the rates of crime and vandalism to their school buildings. Schools with high delinquency rates have been found to be characterised by high levels of distrust between pupils and teachers, low commitment to school by pupils, and unclear and inconsistently enforced rules. However, few studies have sought to identify how schools can have an effect on delinquency and disruptive behaviour, and in what circumstances.

A series of research studies have examined the extent to which differences in pupil delinquency rates reflect school influences. However, care must be taken to ensure that differences in pupil intake are accounted for before any variations in pupil outcomes can be systematically related to the qualities of the schools. The variations should show a closer association with the school qualities than the intake variations. Where these criteria have been met, previous studies have shown that schools can have substantial effects on children's attendance attainment and behaviour, for example:

- several studies have shown that the relationship between truancy and crime is complex but that if schools can influence truancy, indirect effects on crime may occur (see, for example, Farrington, 1995 and Graham & Bowling, 1995).

- studies have also shown links between aggression, school failure, delinquency and drug use – with shared risk factors for anti-social behaviour and drug use (Hawkins et al, 1987).

- while a link between low IQ and the increased risk of delinquency has been identified, this relationship is complex and has yet to be conclusively explained. Some studies suggest low IQ is associated with delinquency (even after controlling for scholastic achievement), and others that the association is based on the consequences of educational

failure rather than low IQ per se. Rutter and Giller (1998) described how *"both low IQ and poor scholastic achievement are associated with anti-social behaviour; the low IQ association is probably stronger …. Longitudinal data show that anti-social children are much less likely to achieve examination success and are more likely to drop out of school"*.

Disruptive behaviour and consistent non-attendance are strongly related to the organisation and ethos of individual schools, irrespective of the kinds of pupils who attend them. Schools can have a considerable influence on the behaviour and attainment of their pupils through the presence of a positive school ethos, clear and strong leadership and effective management. Effective schools offer their pupils a sense of achievement irrespective of ability, encourage commitment and full participation in all activities, integrate all pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, provide clear and enforced rules and promote good relations between the pupils and their teachers. Ineffective schools, in contrast, tend to categorise pupils who behave poorly or persistently truant as deviants, and shift responsibility for their behaviour and welfare to other agencies or institutions.

Schools and preventative approaches

A range of school-based programmes aimed at reducing juvenile delinquency have been evaluated, and fall into three broad groups:

- social development models
- programmes to reduce aggressive behaviour
- programmes to reduce bullying.

Examples of approaches which have been evaluated are provided in Box 2 below.

Box 2: Examples of preventative programmes

Examples of different approaches by typology are provided below:

Social development model

Five Seattle middle schools followed an approach based on the idea that providing opportunities and rewards for school success will prevent juvenile delinquency (Hawkins et al, 1988). The programme targeted low achievers in mainstream classrooms, and provided teachers with specialist training in:

- proactive classroom management – to manage behaviour and create a supportive learning environment
- interactive teaching – requiring pupils to master learning objectives before doing more advanced work
- co-operative learning – bringing together small groups of pupils with different abilities as 'learning partners'.

Significant differences in favour of the experimental students were observed in terms of school suspensions and exclusions, but not for self-reported delinquency and drug use.

Programmes to reduce aggressive behaviour

The John Hopkins Research Centre Good Behaviour Game (GBG) aims to reduce aggression and enhance achievement with primary school pupils. The GBG is a classroom-based behaviour management strategy, where children are grouped and good behaviour rewarded at the team level. Pupils are encouraged to manage their own and their team-mates' behaviour, through a combination of group activities and mutual self-interest. Evaluation of the programme in America showed reduced aggression four years later with more aggressive first grade (Year 1) children, although it did not prevent those who were not aggressive at the start from becoming so later (Kellam and Rebok, 1992).

Programmes to reduce bullying

Olweus (1993) devised a programme in Norway to reduce bullying in schools by establishing firm limits for unacceptable behaviour, consistently applying non-hostile and non-physical sanctions for rule breaking, and working together with parents and teachers to demonstrate warmth and positive interest. Incidents of bullying dropped by 50 per cent or more in the study period, accompanied by reductions in general anti-social behaviour such as truancy and vandalism.

Between 1991 and 1993 the Anti-Bullying Project operated across 23 primary and secondary schools in Sheffield, seeking to develop effective whole school policies on bullying. The schools were supported with a range of interventions, covering:

- curriculum work on bullying in the classroom
- playground interventions – training lunch supervisors in recognising/dealing with bullying.
- working with individuals and small groups .

The Sheffield programme was successful in reducing bullying in primary schools, but had relatively small effects in secondary schools. Further linked studies carefully matched children with special needs to the mainstream, and confirmed that those with special needs were two to three times more likely to be bullied, as well as being more likely to take part in bullying themselves.

The role of schools – lessons from the CRISS programme, Alternative Education Initiatives and Children Missing from Education

Introduction

This chapter begins by examining the findings from two of the main research studies covered in this document – the CRISS programme and the evaluation of six Alternative Education Initiatives or AEIs. The chapter closes by examining the lessons from the research into children missing from education and the lessons for developing approaches to reintegration.

The Crime Reduction in Secondary Schools (CRISS) programme

This section draws on research conducted by GHK, the National Foundation for Educational Research, Matrix MHA and the School of Education, Sheffield Hallam University.

Funded under the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme, CRISS was an attempt to identify school-based measures which can lead to reduced actual and potential offending amongst secondary school pupils. The programme ran for two years, and provided funding for schools to work individually and collaboratively to test a range of approaches. Recognising that the outcomes were more likely to be identified over time, the programme was also evaluated against changes in levels of attendance and truancy, fixed term and permanent exclusions and bullying, which are recognised predictors of potential future offending.

Some 38 projects were funded, involving over 100 schools in England and Wales in single or multiple-school projects. The projects received approximately £100,000 for each school involved. For the most part, the schools were facing multiple challenges, being located in areas suffering considerable social and economic stress such as high levels of long-term unemployment, poor housing conditions and high crime rates.

A central objective of the CRISS programme was the collection of robust evidence, or at least firm recommendations for promising approaches, to inform 'evidenced-based' policy development. The evaluation of CRISS took place at both a national and local level. At the national level, the programme was assessed against change in primarily quantitative indicators, whilst at the local level the focus was as much on qualitative as quantitative research. The complexities and short duration of the programme meant that any evaluation would be challenging. On the basis of quantitative evidence alone it was not possible to conclusively prove (or disprove) that certain approaches were effective but when combined with more qualitative and anecdotal evidence a series of intervention types emerged as promising approaches for future consideration.

What was trialled

Working as single or groups of schools, the CRISS projects developed and implemented a wide range of interventions featuring a mix of preventative and restorative approaches. These included the use of existing approaches with new target groups, in new circumstances or in new combinations, alongside more innovative activities. Schools also involved a range of partner agencies in their work, where their specific expertise was utilised in a variety of contexts.

The different interventions were broadly grouped into a classification system developed by the National Evaluation Team, as shown in Box 3 below:

Box 3: CRISS interventions by national classification	
Primary classification	Examples of sub-classifications
Attendance and monitoring systems	*Electronic registration systems* – for the more accurate recording of attendance on a day and lesson basis. *First day calling* – immediate responses to non-attendance, to identify if authorised absence, truancy or condoned absence. *Attendance officer/manager* – member of school staff with specific responsibility for attendance issues. *Truancy patrols/sweeps* – combined approaches, usually featuring the police, to identify and challenge young people not in school during the school day.

Behaviour management and institutional change	*Policy review and development* – covering behaviour management, pastoral support and anti-bullying policies. *Staff training and development* – often accompanying policy and practice development, and covering topics such as inclusion, behaviour and attendance management, developing parent groups and peer counselling. *Pupil-led initiatives* – such as school parliaments and in one case leading to the establishment of a School Council and peer mentoring course.
Internal referral units	Different centres varied considerably in terms of targeting, approach, staffing and activities, including: *Containment centres* – where seriously and consistently disruptive pupils can be separated from others. *Support centres* – where pupils at risk of exclusion are supported and others reintegrated following exclusion or transition between schools. *Off-site centres* – featuring similar provision to on-site centres, with sessional inputs from teaching and other agency staff.
Personal development	*Mentoring* – the training of pupils to act as mentors to other usually younger, pupils who had often been identified as victims of bullying. *Counselling services* – provision of 1:1 counselling sessions for pupils. *Group behaviour activities* – activities to raise awareness of/address behaviour issues on a group basis. *Assessment/referral panels* – panels of school and professional staff who discuss appropriate responses to incidents, exclusion and new admissions.
Curriculum change/ enhancement	*Modified curriculum* – changes in the curriculum to support individual or groups of pupils, e.g. those unable to cope with a full-time timetable after a long period of exclusion or non-attendance. *Extra-curricular activities* – including a range of education and diversionary activities, including work experience tasters, physical/outdoors activities, etc. *Supplementary classroom assistance* – additional in-class support.
Work with parents/ carers and families	*Home/school liaison* – a number of mechanisms for engaging parents/ carers and families, commonly through Home-School Liaison Officers. *Parent/carer activities* – a range of activities to both engage and work with parents and carers around school-based issues. *Meetings with parents/carers of 'at-risk' pupils* – where regular, purposeful meetings are held between parents and the schools.
Other activities	*Awareness raising* – activities to raise awareness of issues in schools and formulate responses to them, such as improved reporting processes. *Safe havens* – offering pupils 'safe' and private space on school premises (often, but not exclusively, part of internal referral centres). *Reward schemes* – where pupils were offered rewards for sustained positive changes in their behaviour.

Broadly the interventions could be characterised as either 'universal' (available to all pupils within a year or a school, regardless of specific need or pupil characteristics) or 'targeted' (targeted towards pupils with specific needs, or where their characteristics and histories made them most likely to benefit from the intervention on offer). Commonly, schools implemented between five and ten separate interventions with their CRISS monies, with some piloting as many as 18 in the larger multiple school projects.

Promising approaches

Across the CRISS projects a series of intervention types were identified, at the national or local levels, as having some form of impact on the intermediate CRISS objectives of attendance, truancy and exclusions. Three broad intervention 'types' appeared as the most 'promising' approaches for the future, and which could feature as components in schools' responses to the promoting life-chances and preventing offending agendas. Some national evidence demonstrated the role that interventions providing additional supervision outside of lessons, and group behaviour activities, can play in reducing authorised absence rates.

The three promising approaches were:

● Attendance monitoring and management systems – the local evaluations identified that attendance management approaches, combined with responses such as first day calling and truancy sweeps, were linked to improvements in pupil attendance and exclusion rates. The national evaluation also suggested that attendance monitoring systems reduced increases in fixed term exclusion rates amongst target pupil groups. More qualitative local studies suggested first day calling was particularly effective. One project using contracted services described first day calling as *"the single most cost-effective way of improving attendance"*. Apart from more accurate recording of attendance (including in-school/lesson truancy), other reported benefits included improvements in parents'/carers' views on the importance of reporting absence, the quality of pupil records held by the school; and in some cases improved relationships with parents more widely. While fewer schools included truancy sweeps and patrols as part of their CRISS projects, those who did described them as useful in enhancing multi-agency co-operation. The information exchange between schools and the police was found to be particularly beneficial.

● Working with parents/families and carers – the national evaluation provided evidence of relative improvements in school attendance rates in the schools that implemented interventions working with parents/families and carers. More specifically, attendance rate reductions were smaller in these schools as compared to schools not implementing such interventions. This was supported by the findings of the local evaluations, where more qualitative and anecdotal local evidence suggested the establishment of links with pupils' parents and carers was associated with success across a range of issues. This local work also identified, in some areas, an encouraging degree of willingness for parents to work collaboratively with the schools to solve school-based problems. Indeed, a number of parents described how their views of the school had improved, with many feeling they were listened to and accorded respect as partners. One of the most common forms of parent/school links were through *Home School Liaison Officers (HSLOs),* who provide an extra non-teaching resource. HSLOs bring their own specific skills and experience to the school and free up other school and agency staff. They can also allow rapid responses to attendance and behaviour issues, being able to examine the root causes of visible behaviour problems and combine support with sanctions.

● Internal referral units – the national evaluation suggested that the schools with internal referral units had smaller increases in target group excludee rates than schools without this intervention type. The more qualitative local evaluation work suggested a range of more positive benefits from internal (and off-site) referral units. One study described how there was overwhelming evidence that the centres contributed substantially to the CRISS objectives by preventing fixed term and at least delaying permanent exclusions, reducing truancy and contributing to the higher attainment of targeted pupils.[2]

These different intervention types are described in more detail below, including case examples from different CRISS projects and a series of key success factors for implementation identified from national and local programme evaluation.

Attendance management and monitoring systems

Attendance management interventions were the most common CRISS interventions, frequently featuring the introduction of electronic monitoring systems supported by responsive measures such as first day calling, in-school attendance officers and truancy sweeps. Different projects followed different combinations of approaches, with some improving their existing manual registration systems and introducing first-day or rapid response systems. Examples of different approaches feature in Box 4 below.

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2. Individual grants which were previously available to enable schools to keep pupils at risk of exclusion have now been subsumed into the revised funding regime for schools.

Box 4:   Attendance management and monitoring systems

- One CRISS project invested their funding in the purchase of an electronic registration system, supporting its introduction with staff training and awareness raising around absenteeism. Recognising the need to parallel the use of the registration system with a proactive response, the school established an out-sourced first day calling approach and worked with local police on truancy sweeps.

- In one school project a multi-method approach to attendance management was implemented, with their existing manual registration system being supplemented with the aim of raising attendance. A school-based Attendance Officer undertook a range of activities including first day calling, surveillance via CCTV, pagers, random daily attendance checks, attendance prizes and the use of vertical tutor groups. The school reported that the combination of interventions had been successful, and cited a recent OFSTED report which endorsed their multifaceted approach to tackling the whole spectrum of attendance.

- Another project used CRISS funding to support truancy sweeps and visits to the homes of persistent truants, jointly co-ordinated between the CRISS Home-School Liaison Officer, Education Welfare Service and the police. One sweep identified 192 school-age young people not in school, of whom 113 were away from school without parental knowledge (or knowledge could not be confirmed), 43 were known to the police and 15 had a known history of offending. The project reported that truancy sweeps and home visits had an immediate positive impact on school attendance, as well as providing useful information for each of the agencies concerned.

The introduction of such monitoring and response systems also allowed particular pupils who were deemed to be 'at risk' or had already displayed behavioural difficulties to be monitored closely, as well as being used 'universally' to identify the first onset of truancy. In addition, truancy follow-ups identified additional issues in pupils' home lives and environment, such as wider family problems and pupils with caring responsibilities, and allowed channels to be opened with parents and carers.

Interestingly, but not unexpectedly, many of the schools introducing electronic or improved registration systems reported a reduction in attendance in the period following their introduction. Rather than being a negative impact of the intervention, this was more likely to be due to more accurate recording, with new baselines needing to be set to measure future improvement, and special attention paid to new data sources such as 'lesson' absences.

The local evaluation work identified a series of key success factors for attendance management systems and potential responses, as summarised in Box 5 below.

Box 5:   Key success factors for attendance management and response systems

A series of key success factors were identified from local evaluation work, firstly for *attendance management systems*:

- allow time for introduction, embedding and integration of the system with the school's existing systems. Technology problems may arise, so arrange technical support

- the importance of combined approaches – with identifying absence being just the beginning, and change being the result of any responses made

- allocating clear responsibilities within the school for monitoring and acting on any attendance data produced

- approaches must be implemented across the whole school (after phased piloting and introduction) – and engender a whole school commitment to implementation and use

- plan in advance for support and maintenance costs, which can be 10 per cent, of system cost per year

- importance of re-setting 'attendance baselines' following the introduction and stabilisation of new or improved registration systems.

The following factors are likely to improve the effectiveness of *first-day calling/in-school attendance officers*:

- the ability to respond rapidly and consistently to non-attendance

- existing good relations with parents and carers

- schools consideration of how best to resource truancy follow-up activities – by existing staff, dedicated attendance officer or through external contractors

- the abilities of the individuals contacting parents to handle individuals who are worried, angry or frustrated – empathic and well trained personnel are vital

- ensuring accurate attendance data and careful registration procedures – so the correct parents are targeted and others not put to undue concern

- prompt feedback systems between the school, parents/carers and individual staff – so absences that cannot be explained can be appropriately followed-up.

Working with parents/carers and families – Home-School Liaison Officers

The CRISS projects demonstrated both the importance of, and different approaches to, working with parents/carers and families to prevent or address behavioural problems in school. One common approach often titled differently and frequently with different remits, were Home-School Liaison Officers (HSLOs), whose broad role was to liaise between various parties to identify and support pupils who are not attending, attaining or behaving appropriately.

HSLOs act as a bridge between school and home, with their work tending to be around behaviour management or with truants/school refusers – indeed HSLOs may carry out the function of attendance officers described previously. They also tend to be non-teaching staff, with Education Welfare, police or social service backgrounds, so can adopt a different relationship with pupils and draw upon their previous specialist skills, experience and knowledge. Examples of approaches to home-school liaison are provided in Box 6 below.

Box 6:   Working with parents/carers and families – Home-School Liaison Officers

A number of different approaches and foci for home-school liaison were identified under CRISS, including the following:

- Each of the four schools in one project had a full-time HSLO based in them, seconded from the Education Welfare Service, with each having dedicated office space and IT equipment with access to pupil data across the four project schools. The HSLOs worked primarily to increase attendance by supporting pupils and their families to address bullying, provide financial support for school uniforms, help establish alternative curricula/timetables and draw in other support agencies as relevant. In addition to their work with pupils, they are considered to have also improved: communication and information exchange systems both between and within schools, partner agencies and parents/carers; registration processes and their accuracy; and changing attitudes to behaviour problems and responses in schools.

- In another multi-school project the HSLO represented a major expansion of the former Education Welfare Service's capacity, allowing a more rapid and intensive response. This had been particularly helpful around examination times, where vulnerable families were targeted to clarify exam timetables and ensure pupils arrived for their exams on time. The project described a key strength of the HSLO as their ability to combine support with sanctions – "At one level the HSLO is the big stick for non-attending pupils. However, she is also their champion to get a better deal within the school. Most families feel that the worker works with them, not against them."

- In a third project two ex-policemen acted as HSLOs for the three project schools, working with small cohorts of six pupils on an intensive basis. These included pupils with particularly low attendance rates (around 25%), which anecdotally rose in most cases to around 50 per cent with accompanying improvements in engagement and behaviour. Key factors identified by the schools included the ability of pupils to just 'drop in' on the HSLOs at times of stress, and the development of close working relationships and excellent communications with school staff. Specific benefits of using ex-policemen were also identified, including having local knowledge and first-hand dealings with 'difficult' local families, a 'special status' with pupils, and providing informal legal advice on issues such as parental entry to the school to see pupils who are the subject of court orders.

A series of key success factors were identified for the effective operation of Home-School Liaison Officers, as summarised in Box 7 below.

Box 7: Key success factors for Home-School Liaison Officers

The evaluations identified the following key success factors:

- recruitment of appropriately qualified and experienced staff – able to establish credibility with school staff, pupils, parents/carers and external agencies

- HSLOs must have the time, skills and external contacts to uncover and address factors behind a pupil's poor attendance or behaviour, utilising external support where relevant

- careful matching of individual HSLOs to individual schools, to ensure that personalities 'match' and good working relationships develop

- HSLOs should have regular, if not full-time, attachment to schools – suggests 1:1 or 1:small number coverage – for pupil continuity and intensity of support, and allows pupils access on a 'drop-in' basis

- HSLOs should have a suitable 'base' – with IT to allow access to pupil information, and a private area to meet with pupils and parents/carers

- HSLOs must have the commitment of the school management team and staff – with good working relationships, shared aims and understandings, and communications being vital. Need to balance support from senior staff with flexibility to adopt their own style of working and interacting with pupils

- HSLOs should be seen as independent/distanced from the school (i.e. not teachers or authority figures such as Heads or Deputy Heads) – so must balance the views of pupils, parents/carers and the school; the objectives of the school and those of their 'home' agency; and their supporting role with sanctions

- where HSLOs are seconded from other agencies, maintaining contact with 'home' agencies helps ensure professional development is maintained, individuals feel supported, and independence is retained.

Internal referral centres or units

A common approach to improving behaviour and reducing exclusions was the establishment and operation of in-school centres or units, staffed by a full-time manager with support staff. The projects followed very different approaches, in terms of target pupil groups and objectives, but most commonly focussed on pupils at risk of exclusion, poor attenders, or those being reintegrated into school following exclusion or a lengthy period of absence. Teaching and other inputs were provided on a sessional basis by school and other agency staff (e.g. YOT, social services, police etc). Key components included supporting pupils with learning and managing relationships with teachers and peers, providing a safe, stress-free environment; providing a trusted point of contact and offering advocacy and ensuring pupils are listened to.

Some projects followed different approaches – such as using off-site centres, providing safe havens/quiet areas where pupils could work in peace or seek support, and units used to house pupils during fixed term exclusions. The national evaluation classification drew the distinction between centres with mainly containment roles and those with mainly support roles, although they are best described individually as in the examples in Box 8 below.

Box 8: Internal referral units

A variety of internal (or, less commonly, external) referral centres or units were supported under CRISS, with differing objectives and target pupils, as illustrated in the examples below:

- A multiple school project targeted pupils at risk of exclusion, with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and others with a range of social, physical and educational difficulties. Clear referral systems support an ethos of providing extra support to address identified problems, with pupils attending on a part or full-time basis for an agreed period of time. Whilst at the centres, pupils receive sessional inputs from teaching staff as well as from the centre managers and a counsellor for circle time, individual and group work. In one, a reward system for improved behaviour and performance featuring quad bikes is in place, and in the other working on a farm is included as part of careers support.

- Four of the six schools participating in another multiple school project operated inclusion centres, catering for six Key Stage 3 pupils at a time and targeting those who are disaffected, at risk of exclusion or exhibit poor behaviour or attendance. Attendance can be on a part, full-time or self-referral basis, with referrals being managed by the relevant Head of Year, the school management team and the centre manager. Parents are also involved in the referral process, either actively or at least being consulted, and in some schools pupil-parent-school contracts have been developed. The main aim of the Centres are to reintegrate pupils into mainstream school, with activities including coursework for the national curriculum, basic literacy and numeracy, one-to-one counselling/therapeutic work (such as anger management and problem solving skills), and group work through circle time.

- In a single school project, a lesson withdrawal system was developed for up to nine pupils in any year group, who had demonstrated serious misbehaviour at any one time. Referrals were based on a points system, and considered by a small committee who oversee all behaviour management decisions. The system initially operated as a sin-bin, working on a reactive rather than a planned basis to provide an alternative to fixed-term exclusions of up to five days. Following a review of the approach, pupils are now limited to a single day stay, with a structured programme of sessions relating to behaviour improvement. All pupils returning to school after fixed term exclusions are obliged to attend.

- A final multiple school project established an independent support centre, with a clear set of referral criteria and procedures and close entry and exit management. Pupils attending the centre wear uniform and continue work set by their schools, with daily behaviour reports being produced by teachers and peers and copied to parents. The centre has a staff of five, with the local Youth Service, YOT, police and Mental Health Service providing sessional inputs or addressing specific pupil needs. Pupils can attend either as an alternative to a fixed term exclusion for between one and three days; for two week summer courses for Year 6 pupils displaying poor behaviour or predicted to face transition difficulties; or for four week small group programmes of assessment, therapy, small class learning and behaviour modification prior to reintegration.

Despite the variety of approaches to referral units and centres, a series of broad key success factors could be identified, which may be useful for similar approaches being developed elsewhere. These key success factors are summarised in Box 9 below.

Box 9:   Key success factors for internal referral units

The following key success factors were identified from local evaluation work:

- Provision of a safe, calm, welcoming and productive work environment, including space for group as well as private work, with orderly routines and shared understandings on acceptable behaviour.

- Need for a firm and clear policy on when, how and why the centre should be used, ideally written into the school's behaviour management plans. Referral criteria should be clearly set out and adhered to and the balance between individual and group work judged on an individual pupil basis.

- Experienced teachers should be involved in the development of curriculum-based activities, and work setting co-ordinated with clear lines of responsibility. Curriculum sessions should be delivered alongside PSE and behaviour/anger management work.

- Unit staff must be suitably skilled and able to develop relationships/rapport with pupils and parents/carers. They must be approachable, patient, sympathetic and supporting – but able to impose their authority in a firm but non-confrontational manner.

- Inputs from other agencies, such as educational psychologists, Education Welfare Officers (EWOs), Social Services and mental health staff are vital to ensure that the range of issues arising can be suitably addressed.

- The commitment of all staff to the units and their work is essential, to allow them to establish status and credibility. The involvement of a range of staff through sessional inputs helps them integrate with other school services, and ensures the quality of teaching.

Alternative Education Initiatives (AEIs)

This section draws on research conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (see Kendall et al, 2003) and Matrix MHA

While the approaches described above applied to the school environment, it may be that for a number of reasons alternative forms of provision for young people may be required. This section examines the findings from the research into six AEIs, which identified a range of key factors in their design and delivery.

Key AEI characteristics

AEIs provide educational provision for young people who have been permanently excluded from school or who are out of school for other reasons. They are separate from Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), and unlike PRUs are not all under LEA control. While the six AEI programmes are only a small sample of the level of such activity nationally, they shared many of the features of AEIs found more widely, including:

- Aims and objectives – four aimed to reintegrate young people back into education (mainstream or otherwise), while the others focused more on engaging/re-engaging young people in opportunities suited to their individual needs and including employment or training options as well as education. In addition to their educational objectives, specific AEI aims included helping young people prepare for the future, and supporting and facilitating their social and emotional development.

- Full and part-time provision – only one of the AEIs offered full-time provision, with the others offering a range of part-time activities often accompanied by college or work-based placements.

- Models of provision – either on-site/in-house provision or outsourced/brokered services (most commonly in the form of local colleges, work experience placements and vocational training providers).

- Range and nature of activities – the range of activities provided by the AEIs is described in Box 10 below, but included a combination of education, work experience and college placements, personal and social education (PSE) and counselling and leisure and other off-site pursuits. The emphasis on these different components varied between the AEIs – in one case attempting to replicate the school environment and focussing largely on education; in another a work environment, where young people were expected to behave as if they were employees in the workplace, and incorporating a large vocational training element.

Box 10:   Activities provided at the six AEIs

The AEIs offered a range of activities, in common with other programmes nationally, including:

- education programmes – all the AEIs offered some form of educational provision, including classes based on the national curriculum; basic literacy and numeracy skills; art, music and drama classes; the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme; Oxford, Cambridge and RSA qualifications; and Associated Examination Board (AEB) qualifications

- work experience – all the AEIs offered work experience placements, arranged with local employers in sectors such as retail, childcare and motor vehicle trades. Work experience placements tended to be offered to older pupils (i.e. 16 years)

- vocational training – arranged with external organisations to assist the young people in gaining work-related skills, for example in vehicle mechanics, childcare and building-related courses

- careers education – all the AEIs offered careers provision for their young people, either via careers development work delivered in-house or by visiting the local careers service

- college placements – to undertake, for example, GCSEs, NVQs, IT courses, literacy classes and vocational 'taster courses'

- PSE – including sessions on basic nutrition, cooking, independent living, 'life skills' groups (covering communication, health, employment and finance) and talks from outside agencies such as the police, YOTs and drug projects

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- counselling – both on an outsourced basis as well as integrated features of programmes

- leisure-based activities – all the AEIs offered a range of sporting and leisure-based activities, including trips to the theatre and museums, and residential events

- environmental activities – including involvement in a local community garden project, environmental walks and activities arranged by a local forestry organisation

- work in the community – one AEI participated in a Princes Trust scheme which targeted young offenders and involved them in community type work

- family/carer work – with the families or carers of the young people, for example regular groups sessions with parents/carers.

Impact of the AEIs

The impact of the case study AEIs was assessed following one year of operation, through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to identify observable changes in educational outcomes (with measures including attendance, attainment, exclusions, bullying and destinations) and offending outcomes (offending behaviour).

The study showed that, of the 162 young people involved in the programmes during the course of the evaluation:

- twenty-five received fixed term exclusions and 11 were permanently excluded – with the reasons for exclusion including disruption, misconduct, unacceptable behaviour, drug use, defiance and disobedience. However, over three quarters of the young people reported an improvement in their behaviour as a result of attending the AEI

- three quarters had attendance rates equal to or better than in their previous provision – with median attendance rates ranging from 56 to 71 per cent

- the number of early leavers varied considerably across the AEIs. While the most common reason for removal from roll was non-attendance, other more positive exits were identified, such as reintegration into mainstream school. In addition three young people received custodial sentences across the study period

- information on the young peoples' offending records for the year prior to, and the year of, the project showed an increase in the number of offences by the young people, but that the number of young people who had offended decreased.

A self-reporting crime study undertaken with 57 young people across the AEIs showed that, by the Summer Term, about three-quarters of respondents indicated a reduction in, or cessation of, offending activity, with one in eight acknowledging an increase. In addition, around half of the young people registered with the AEIs were awarded some form of qualification, such as ASDAN Youth Awards and basic health and safety certificates. Some students, however, were concerned that the qualifications they were working towards were not equivalent to those awarded in the mainstream. As one young person described *"It was a bit weird doing the Youth Awards because they seemed so easy. I was used to working really hard at school because I was in the top groups, and my work was harder"*.

Key success factors for AEIs

To effectively contribute to the promotion of individual life chances, AEIs must offer a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum which addresses pupils' basic skills needs and prepares them for progression to the next stage of their lives. The study identified a series of key success factors, from the perspective of staff delivering AEIs and young people engaged with them, many of which are similar to those for internal referral units. These success factors are summarised below.

From the staff perspective:

- the personalised, flexible and varied nature of programmes within AEIs – so programmes could be designed to meet individual needs

- the quality of staff-student relationships

- quality of the working environment and the importance of creating an ambience that would appeal to young people

- high levels of pastoral support

- low staff to student ratios

- involvement and support of families and carers

- effective use of other agencies

From the *young people's perspective*:

- AEI staff and their approach – importantly being treated as an adult and with respect, by staff 'on the same wavelength' and able to give individual time and attention

- number of other young people also attending the AEI – in terms of receiving more help from 'teachers', and making learning easier with fewer distractions in a friendly environment

- pleasant, welcoming, safe and non-school environment – free of the fear of bullying and where young people can make new friends

- as one young person described "They treat you like grown-ups basically so you feel like a grown up, and then you have to start acting like a grown up".

Missing the benefits – children missing from education

This section draws on research conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research.

To benefit from the positive influences of education and school, as well as the preventative measures introduced above, young people must of course attend school on a regular basis. The research into children missing from education provided a series of anecdotal insights into the reasons young people 'go missing' from education, and suggestions for the key components of reintegration approaches. The research is based on the perceptions of 'strategic' and 'operational' professionals in agencies such as education, social services and YOTs and of a sample of young people who were absent from school for most of the previous year and had already committed criminal offences.

The research identified a series of issues, including:

- the scale of the problem – clear statistical data is not available on the number of children lost to the education system, and the professionals interviewed provided considerable variations in 'local estimates' even within single authorities

- definition issues – a range of definitions of 'missing from education' were used across the professional group – the most common being "on a school roll, but not attending", although some fairly regular attenders were considered 'missing' due to their exclusion from mainstream activities and routines in other areas of their lives. The need for a common set of definitions was stressed

- routes to becoming missing – a series of specific 'push' and 'pull' factors were identified, as well as routes to becoming missing, and included:

  - formal, permanent exclusions by schools

  - action by young people to exclude themselves – for example due to disengagement from the curriculum, poor relationships with school staff, or as a response to bullying at school

  - the action of families in withdrawing their children – for example as a consequence of moving and not arranging education in their new area.

General contributory factors included chaotic family lifestyles, the cultures of specific neighbourhoods (e.g. cultures of alcohol and drug abuse providing diversions from education) and poverty (in terms of poor housing and high levels of deprivation). Employment issues (such as limited local opportunity and inter-generational unemployment) led to low aspirations and disengagement and geographical isolation, notably in rural areas, where horizons may be limited and fewer schools make the reintegration of pupils excluded from school more difficult, were also important factors. In addition, children in local authority care may become missing from education if they move placements and school places are not secured on their behalf. Where children in care move between placements frequently they can risk missing long periods of education.

The professionals and young people provided different views on strategies for reintegration back into mainstream education. All agreed that delays in returning to school were a major factor in increasing the chance of permanent loss to education. The professional group identified four areas of potential response, namely:

- *procedural issues* for schools and services – including the importance of 'joined up' multi-agency working, the possibility of shared targets, and the importance of information sharing between agencies to track vulnerable pupils

- *professional development and awareness* issues – such as the need for awareness raising and specific training for staff working with young people at risk

- *curriculum* issues – for example providing more 'alternatives' within the mainstream setting, in terms of both learning context (such as learning support and in-school units) and content (such as more vocational opportunities, more personal/social education)

- approaches to *young people and their families* – for example giving young people a voice and designing programmes based on their needs.

In addition, the importance of *communicating the value of education* to the young people was stressed at all levels, with operational workers referring to the need to revise the ethos and opportunities afforded in schools.

Practice and process - the importance of multi-agency working

One of the key findings to be drawn from the examples of practical approaches described in this chapter is the importance of partnership and multi-agency working to effective multifaceted approaches to working with the most challenging pupils.

While schools can and have introduced a range of approaches to pupil attendance and behaviour management built on their own internal expertise, the scale of the challenges affecting some pupils can be such that school-based activities on their own may be insufficient to address the root causes of their problems. Here the role of external agencies, exemplified in the CRISS programme by the involvement of agencies such as social services, YOT, health and police partners, were crucial in providing additional specialist resources, skills and experience. The CRISS schools also showed that as they undertake more 'outreach' work through home visiting and family contact, they identified issues which were increasingly beyond their remit and were unable to address alone.

The Looked After Children study also identified a particular example of good practice in multi-agency working with young people in local authority residential care, relating to the development of a protocol around the reporting of offending. Here benefits were identified in terms of both the practical aspects of the resulting protocol, and the process by which it was put together, as summarised in Box 11 below.

Box 11: Local protocol for reporting incidents in Local Authority children's homes

In one area a formal protocol had been developed between police and social service departments to establish a transparent and shared approach to the reporting of offending in local authority homes. A clear lesson from the local experience is that the protocol is *"more about a process than a final document or agreement, no matter how useful that final document may be"* – with the wider benefits of its development extending beyond the reporting of offending.

The protocol was developed as a response to a series of concerns:

- the *levels of offending* by looked after young people, and particularly those in residential care – with a new police IT system for recording youth offending allowing the scale and nature of offending to be identified for the first time

- in addition, the *costs and diversionary impacts* in terms of police time spent attending often inappropriate incidents were estimated – and provided clear evidence of over-reporting

- a view that certain care staff were abdicating their responsibilities in terms of behaviour management, and relying on the police to enforce discipline

- a view, described by Social Service staff, that the *police were responding less rapidly to call-outs* at their homes.

The protocol aimed to balance the needs of the young people in care with the rights of staff to report incidents of abuse and physical assault, and the Local Authority's decision to instigate police action. This included the consideration of any unintended consequences of reporting.

A range of benefits were attributed to the protocol:

- *a dramatic decrease in the numbers of incidents reported* – a significant decrease in the number of incidents where young people are reported/charged with lesser offences (e.g. minor criminal damage) was described

- a *change in staff views of reporting* and an increased focus on the *outcomes for young people and preventing criminalisation*, through a consideration of the context and wider reasons for individual incidents

- a *confirmation of the responsibilities of the Homes for the behaviour of their residents* – as one manager described, the protocol *"confirmed it was our job to manage behaviour in the Home, not the police's"*

- *changes in the procedures* followed in the homes – including more consistent responses and allowing different options to be considered

- the requirement to report to a senior management *forced space between the incident and report for a cooling off period* and more considered response.

Benefits were also identified from the process of developing the protocol, including providing a framework of reference for Social Services and police to continue to work together, and the development of strong links between the individual Homes themselves. Police representatives described how their experience had helped them to understand and appreciate the pressures influencing both staff and residents of care homes. The homes described the development of positive networks and the ongoing exchange of ideas and good practice resulting from the protocol process, as well as the fostering of new and enhanced partnership links between the authority, police and the YOT.

Conclusions and key learning points

Introduction

This document has sought to bring together the key lessons from four pieces of research funded under the Crime Reduction Programme, which are of current relevance for a range of audiences working with children and young people.

As described initially, research in this field is constantly being updated, so this document closes with a list of references for future attention. Before that, it set out some of the over-arching conclusions and key factors from across the research studies.

Common lessons and factors

While the scale and focus of the different studies varied considerably, a series of common points appear consistently as key factors in the delivery of the interventions described and working with young people more broadly. These included:

● relationships between schools and young people

● the role of parents

● common key success factors for delivery.

Each of these are examined below.

Relationships between schools and young people

The introductory chapter described how schools with high delinquency rates are characterised by high levels of distrust between pupils and teachers, resulting in low commitment from pupils. Effective schools are also inclusive schools, where a positive ethos, clear leadership and strong management can have a considerable influence on behaviour and attainment – offering pupils a sense of achievement (irrespective of ability), encourage commitment and full participation in all activities, and have fundamentally positive relations between staff and pupils.

The importance of staff-pupil relationships has also been identified in the research reviewed, both in positive and negative aspects. The *Children Missing from Education* work cited poor relationships between pupils and staff as a potential 'push' factor in young people's decisions to exclude themselves from education. At the same time, the effective communication of the value of education, review of school ethos and work with young people and their families may play a crucial role in their re-engagement with education.

The *CRISS programme* included a range of interventions that sought to either re-balance pupil-staff relations, or build on positive links where they existed already. Interventions comprising pupil-led initiatives, such as school parliaments, were directly intended to provide pupils with a voice and inferred both staff respect and a willingness to hear pupils' points of view. More widely, staff-pupil relationships were at the core of many of the more complex interventions. In the case of Home-School Liaison Officers, establishing credibility and positive working relationships with pupils emerged as a key success factor in their delivery. Similarly, the importance of establishing trust, confidentiality and offering pupil advocacy were key factors in the delivery of internal referral units – where firm but clear rules, delivered in an authoritative but non-confrontational manner often formed the basis for re-establishing relationships between pupils, staff and education.

The *Alternative Education Initiatives* provided an insight into the importance of staff-pupil relationships from both perspectives, with both staff and young people recognising their value and benefit. Staff recognised that the quality of their relationships with their young people were key in achieving their objectives and delivering individually customised provision. The young people stressed the importance of being treated as an adult and with respect – too often for the first time – and the individual time and positive attention dedicated to them.

Key success factors for work with pupils

● Enable the establishment of strong, trusting and sustained relationships with teaching, non-teaching professional staff and parents/carers – and allow the benefit of such mutual collaboration to be realised.

● Ensure that pupils are treated equitably and with respect – and have experienced sustained, respectful attention paid to them by school staff.

- Establish a positive working environment, atmosphere and ethos.

- Provide an individual to act as an advocate – to mediate, de-escalate incidents, and provide a sense of equity to proceedings. This may often be a project worker or staff in in-house centres.

- Provide opportunities for pupils to improve their sense of self-worth, as well as accepting responsibility for their actions, through the illustration of their consequences.

The role of parents and carers

The involvement of parents and carers in both preventative and restorative interventions is acknowledged to be an important element in their success – with the establishment of a 'bridge' between school and home allowing ongoing and positive relationships to develop. However, in some ways this relationship is a more complex one. Parents and carers can have both positive and negative influences on the young peoples' development – which can correspondingly influence perceptions of the value of education, the establishment of behavioural norms, and provide positive or negative role models. Research into young people's aspirations consistently shows that parents remain the main source of influence on young people throughout their key development stages, and so the importance of ensuring these influences are appropriate and positive is considerable.

The importance of parent and carer involvement in their children's education is widely recognised, and many of the interventions described featured a range of parental inputs. Within the *CRISS programme*, interventions such as first-day calling and other behaviour and attendance monitoring systems were used to provide alerts to parents and carers concerning the behaviour of their children. Others, such as Home-School Liaison and a range of other activities with parents, sought to establish positive relationships between parents and schools that extended beyond the reporting of negative behaviour. In many cases, they recognised the need to change parental views, recalibrate what is considered acceptable in behavioural terms, and extend ambitions and world views beyond the immediate or fixed perception.

However, interventions based on parental involvement rely on their willingness to engage, or even to recognise that a problem exists that needs to be addressed. While many schools have become expert in working 'beyond their remit' in parent and family support activities, the level and nature of family dysfunction may be such that the services of other more specialist agencies are required. In these cases, schools can play a vital role in both identifying the symptoms of deeper problems, and facilitating solutions through appropriate referral elsewhere.

Key success factors for working with parents and carers

- Working in a co-operative and equal partnership was found to be supportive and should be prioritised – here home-school liaison was an effective means of engagement.

- Establishing key relationships between pupils, their carers and school – which should be prioritised to maximise benefits of in-school approaches most strongly. Again home-school liaison and in-school centres were felt to be particularly effective.

Where the relationship between the young person and their carer is a statutory one, namely when the young person is in local authority care, the importance of establishing relationships between schools and the relevant care provider will be key. When young people are in stable, long-term foster placements these relationships will be easier to foster and continue, although when in residential care the absence of a single 'parent figure' may make this more difficult.

Common success factors for delivery

A series of common success factors for the delivery of preventative and behaviour management approaches, as for other school-based programmes, were identified in the studies. These included:

- *Whole school commitment to positively influence behaviour and take preventative measures* – senior management commitment to individual interventions has been shown to be key to their implementation and adoption. However, wider commitment throughout the school is essential, and may require the development of shared understandings, an appreciation of the importance and challenges for work in this area, and a process of individual and group culture change.

- *Integration into wider school practices* – a process of matching with and enhancing existing practice, building into existing systems and finding mutual reinforcement, and becoming "the way we do things here".

- *Recognise the importance of project management* – consideration of whether a dedicated project manager is needed, or if the role can be taken by existing staff, is required. Indeed this applies to wider staff – does the current staffing complement have the necessary skills and empathic qualities?

- *Importance of individual staff abilities and strengths* – a key factor as exemplified by the importance of staff-pupil relationships above and the need for empathy, understanding and a consistent approach. Consistency of staffing arrangements are also important – so that understandings, expectations and relationships are established, maintained and can be relied on.

- *Importance of multi-agency working* – as described in the previous chapter, schools and other agencies often need to work collaboratively if they are to address the issues affecting the most challenging pupils. Multifaceted problems often require multi-agency solutions, and the examples provided earlier in this document provide clear examples of the positive benefits that can result for all parties concerned.

Lessons from the evaluations

The four studies examined as part of this report showed the difficulties of providing robust, 'evidence based' findings to inform national policy and practice. While it is important to base wider programmes on a notion of 'what works', or at very least seems promising, this requirement brings its own difficulties. The preventative programmes described in the introductory chapter were evaluated over many years to ensure that the issues of causality and attribution could be confirmed and other influencing factors edited out.

While this may be of interest to the evaluator, many of the issues identified in the CRISS evaluation in particular are also of relevance to the practitioner, who may be trying out a new approach for the first time and wants to identify its early effectiveness. Some of the issues surrounding the findings from the CRISS programme, and their interpretation, are summarised below.

In assessing the performance of their own behaviour management programmes, schools should be aware of these issues but not constrained by them. *Performance targets set for interventions should be realistic and achievable*, but also ensure they do not emphasise apparent 'quick fixes' over more sustained impact. For example, the immediate return to school of consistent truants, following truancy sweeps or home visits, is clearly a positive move. However, the *sustained impact of such interventions will only be revealed with time*, and the challenge across all behaviour management interventions is to effect sustained change.

Schools should also be wary of the significance of *apparently 'negative' early effects*. The example was given earlier of the apparently negative initial impacts of electronic registration systems, and how this was shown to be due to the increased accuracy of the systems and the establishment of the true picture of attendance. This finding led to the establishment of new sets of attendance 'baselines', and in some cases the identification or confirmation of suspected issues such as 'lesson' truancy and patterns of absences. Apparent 'negative' or no change may also be expected from many of the other interventions described, and here *'softer' outcome measures may be more appropriate.* Consideration of the counter-factual, namely what could be predicted to have happened to an individual in the absence of the intervention, can also be helpful in preparing a rounded assessment of impact.

In another example a number of schools who identified increases in fixed term exclusions *attributed them to approaches to keep pupils in the school who would have formerly been permanently excluded*. Although insufficient evidence was available to examine the link between the two exclusion types in more detail, the more (qualitatively at least) successful interventions considered the potential contamination effects of keeping more disruptive pupils in school, and took steps to both isolate and provide support to pupils at risk of fixed term exclusion.

Appendix 1 – References/reading list

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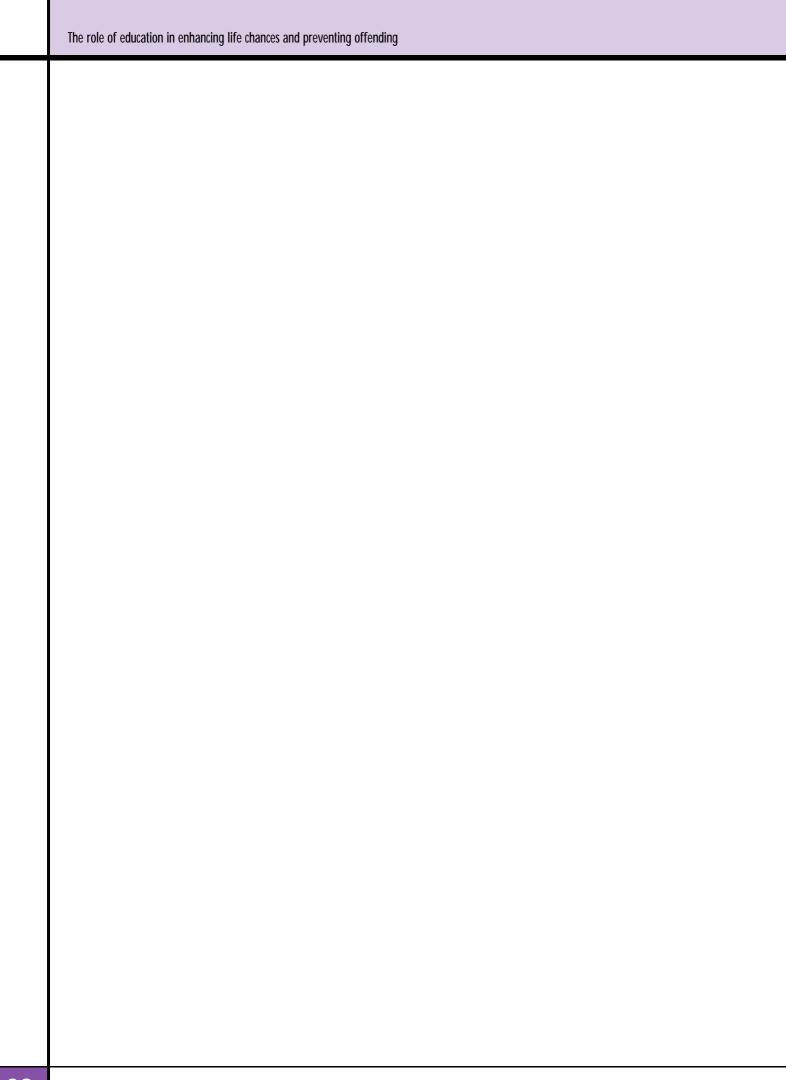
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