Preventing Children's Involvement in Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour: A literature Review

A paper produced for the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund

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Section 1: Introduction – Concepts, Policy Context and Review Strategy

The focus of this review is on services for the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour among five to thirteen year olds (the age group relevant to Children's Fund activities). In this introduction we aim to clarify each of the key terms in this statement and, in so doing, to establish the organising framework for the paper. To begin, we will examine the meanings of the terms 'crime' and 'anti-social behaviour' as they are applied to children aged between five and thirteen.

Crime, anti-social behaviour and children

The obvious starting-point is with the legal age of criminal responsibility, which in England and Wales is ten years[1]. This means, by definition, that no child under the age of ten can commit a crime (Padfield 2002). If a child who is under ten years old behaves in a way which in anyone over ten years would be regarded as a crime, for example, physically assaulting another person or stealing another person's property, that child cannot be charged with a criminal offence; indeed, children under ten are regarded by the law as incapable of crime. To describe such acts as 'crimes' or such behaviours as 'criminal' thus has no legal validity: within the criminal justice system of England and Wales, 'crime' has no meaning in relation to children below the age of ten.

By contrast, the criminal law regards children aged ten years and over as fully responsible for their actions. They are in principle held to be capable of and accountable for the same range of criminal offences as adults. Whilst the *legal procedures* and the range of *sanctions* applicable to children aged ten and over who are guilty of a crime may be different from those applicable to adults, assumptions about their *culpability* are not[2]. 'Crime', therefore, has the same meaning in relation to ten to thirteen year old children as it does for adolescents and adults.

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[1] This has been the case since 1963 (Children & Young Person's Act). Before then it was 8 years, as it still is in Scotland. Most western European countries have higher, though varying, ages of criminal responsibility, e.g. 14 in Germany, 16 in Spain, 18 in Belgium. (Bandalli 2000).

[2] The distinctive set of procedures and sanctions applied to young people aged 10-18 forms the basis for what has come to be known as the 'Youth Justice System' – a subset of the Criminal Justice System

At this point, it is worth noting, in brief, a recent change in the law that has had the effect of hardening the impact of the age of criminal responsibility. Until 1998, children aged ten to fourteen who were charged with a criminal offence were presumed, in any court hearing, to be *doli incapax* ('incapable of evil'); that is, they were presumed not to be capable of knowing that a particular behaviour was 'seriously wrong' as opposed to being merely 'naughty'. It was the responsibility of the prosecution to demonstrate, beyond reasonable doubt, that the child in question was capable of recognising behaviour that was seriously wrong. Children aged between ten and fourteen were thus afforded some procedural protection from the full weight of the criminal law (Bandalli 2000; Newburn 2002). The presumption of *doli incapax* was abolished by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, resulting, in the words of one commentator, 'in an untrammelled age of criminal responsibility (ten years) in England and Wales' (Bandalli 2000: 81).

It is evident then that the structure of this paper must take account of a fundamental demarcation line that separates our target age group: on one side are children aged five to nine years for whom the legal concept of crime is irrelevant; on the other side are children aged ten to thirteen years for whom it is wholly relevant. The effects of this demarcation line on the provision and pattern of services for children in each of the two age sub-groups are very considerable.

The scope of this paper, however, reaches beyond the clear distinctions lying either side of the age of criminal responsibility – because it reaches beyond the specific concept of 'crime'. The interest in children and 'anti-social behaviour' raises difficult issue of definition and meaning that are in the process of being addressed through current (or very recent) legislation and policy guidance[3]. The term 'anti-social

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(Newburn 2002).   But many commentators regard the insistence that children and young people be regarded as fully responsible for their behaviour and its consequences, and thus treated as *morally equivalent* to adults, as a defining feature of the current government's policies on children, young people and crime (e.g. Bandalli 2000; Goldson 1999; Muncie 2000; Smith R. 2003). An early statement of New Labour's ethic of personal responsibility in relation to youth crime is found in Straw and Michael 1996.

[3] The most recent legislation is the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, based on a substantial White Paper that signalled a substantial development of Government policy on the issue (Home Office 2003).

behaviour', especially when used in the context of criminal justice concerns, is a very recent addition to the official vocabulary of discourse on social order and control. This contrasts with the state's concern with the *criminal* behaviour of children and young people, which in its recognizably modern form dates back to at least the mid-nineteenth century and in more archaic forms to the middle ages (Muncie 2000; Newburn 2002).

Although 'crime' is a fiercely contested concept (Muncie 2001), in legal terms a crime occurs when a specific act that is proscribed in law is committed; an act may have harmful consequences and be regarded as morally reprehensible, but if it is not so proscribed then a criminal offence has not been committed. Anti-social behaviour, on the other hand, is not defined in terms of individually proscribed behaviours but rather a set of general conditions; a specific individual act may be legally deemed 'anti-social behaviour' when it can be shown that it meets those conditions. The meanings attached to the concept of anti-social behaviour, as it is currently evolving in political and legal discourse, include:

a) It is behaviour that is harmful to other people (but not including immediate family members)
b) It is persistent and serious (that is, it is not a one-off event and is not of a trivial nature arising from 'ordinary' disputes of everyday life)
c) It does not necessarily constitute an infringement of the criminal law
d) It is (particularly in the case of children and young people) an indicator of the risk that the perpetrator will go on to commit criminal offences
e) It constitutes a serious and widespread social problem and therefore justifies the use of formal, legal interventions.

Examples of what may currently be viewed as acts of anti-social behaviour (i.e. that meet the conditions a) and b) above) include harassment of residents or passers-by, including racial abuse; vandalism and criminal damage; noise nuisance; graffiti; threatening behaviour in large groups; substance misuse; begging; prostitution; joy-riding and vehicle crime (Home Office 2002). A number of these anti-social behaviours clearly overlap with behaviours that may also be criminal: the borderline between anti-social behaviour and criminal behaviour is not clear-cut. Others of these

anti-social behaviours are, as the name implies, perceived as infringements of social or moral norms, not criminal codes (Muncie 2000).

This concern with social or moral transgressions is reflected in the nature of the sanctions available to deal with the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, which are *civil*, not criminal, remedies and require only a civil burden of proof. (The requirement of a less rigorous burden of proof helps explain why some behaviours, which are clearly criminal, have been prosecuted using the anti-social behaviour legislation.) The sanctions themselves tend to be geared towards the protection of the public by preventing the perpetrator from repeating the behaviour, rather than punishing the offender (Home Office 2002) – again offering a contrast with the overwhelmingly punitive remedies deployed against those who commit crime. Thus the principal sanction available, the Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO), prohibits the perpetrator from doing certain things or being in certain places for a fixed period of time (typically two years) but does not impose any penalty as such. However, the legal distinction between anti-social behaviour and criminal behaviour again becomes blurred since non-compliance with the provisions of the ASBO ('breach') can lead the perpetrator to the criminal court and a penalty of up to five years imprisonment; and an ASBO can be imposed by a court at the same time as a sentence for a criminal conviction (for example, a fine) is passed. This also underlines the fact that anti-social behaviour is viewed by Government as an issue to be dealt with within the framework of the criminal justice system (rather than, say, a matter for welfare services).

There is a further example of the way that the state's concern with addressing anti-social behaviour creates ambiguity in terms of the nature of the resulting interventions, particularly when the focus is on the behaviour of children and young people. This is the Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC), developed specifically to address the anti-social activities of young people aged between 10 and 17 years (although subsequently used with adults in certain circumstances). The ABC has a curious status. It is approved and recommended by the Government as a form of intervention within the broad framework of criminal justice, but does not result from any formal legal process. Acceptable Behaviour Contracts are described in the Home Office guidance on ASBOs and ABCs as:

> voluntary agreements made between people involved in anti-social behaviour and the local police, the housing department, the registered social landlord, or the perpetrator's school. They are flexible in terms of content and format (…) They have proved effective as a means of encouraging young adults, children, and importantly, parents to take responsibility for unacceptable behaviour. They are being used to improve the quality of life for local people by tackling behaviour such as harassment, graffiti, criminal damage and verbal abuse (Home Office 2002).

There is clearly, then, a close overlap of the kinds of behaviours addressed by ASBOs and ABCs, with the critical distinction that a child can become a party to a 'contract' in the absence of even the civil burden of proof to show that they have committed such behaviours required for an ASBO. In comparing ASBOs and ABCs, the guidance notes that whereas 'the ASBO is a statutory creation and carries legal force; the ABC is an informal procedure, *though not without legal significance*' (ibid; emphasis added). This significance resides in the recommendation, contained in the guidance, that if the anti-social behaviour continues and the contract is thereby broken, then that should be used in evidence in applying for an ASBO. There exists, therefore, at least the theoretical possibility of a child aged between ten and thirteen failing to keep to the terms of a voluntary agreement, thereby progressing to becoming the subject of a formal court order, with the threat of custodial sentence for a criminal offence if breached.

The legal status accorded to anti-social behaviour thus blurs our understanding of what is, and is not, crime. It also, however, blurs the relationship between age and criminal responsibility. This is because the anti-social behaviour legislation allows action to be taken against children *under the age of ten* if their behaviour gives particular cause for concern. Formal orders are available to ban 'unsupervised' children under ten from specified public places at specified times (the Child Curfew Order) and to place children aged below ten under supervision for between three and twelve months (the Child Safety Order). Orders are also available to address the failings of parents of such children (Parenting Orders).

The significance of 'anti-social behaviour', then, from the perspective of this paper, is that it both broadens the range of activities that can bring a child into contact with the criminal justice system and makes possible the earlier intervention of that system in

the lives of children. One official justification for this identification of a new range of legally sanctionable behaviour and its application to very young children is the need for public protection against 'low level' disorders and minor incivilities, both because these are viewed as unacceptable in themselves and because they are seen as indicators of the tolerance of more serious crime (Home Office 2003: 13-15)[4]. But equally important is the justification that addressing early anti-social behaviour by children, or the *risk* of such behaviour, is a key measure in the *prevention* of the child's development of more serious offending behaviour (ibid: 21-22)[5]. The focus on prevention provides another of the key issues for this paper.

Prevention

Drawing on the foregoing discussion of crime and anti-social behaviour in relation to children, literature will be reviewed using two distinct categories of prevention:

1) ***Onset and escalation***: the prevention of the *onset* of criminal and anti-social behaviour amongst children who have not previously exhibited such behaviour and the prevention of the *escalation* of anti-social behaviour from minor to more serious levels. In both cases, a key concept in supporting preventive interventions is 'risk' – the identification of, and provision of services to support, children who are judged to be *at risk* of engaging in criminal and anti-social behaviour is of paramount significance.

2) ***Re-offending***: the prevention of *further offending* among children who are officially known to have committed previous criminal offences, i.e. who have admitted guilt and received a Reprimand or Final Warning from the police, both of which become part of the child's official 'record' and, in the case of

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[4] The evidence base for this justification rests on the famous 'broken windows' thesis, developed by academic researchers in the US in the early 1980s and subsequently used as the theoretical underpinning for 'zero tolerance policing' (Wilson & Kelling 1982). It is interesting that the UK Government's current White Paper on anti-social behaviour still makes use of the broken window imagery (Home Office 2003: 14).

[5] A further indication of the rapidly evolving state of government policy is that a Green Paper on 'Children At Risk' is promised for late 2003/early 2004. This will focus on 'children who are at risk of a wide range of poor outcomes' including both anti-social behaviour and offending *and* becoming victims (Home Office 2003: 21).

Final Warnings, involve referral for participation in a rehabilitation programme; or have been convicted and sentenced following a court hearing.

There is a third important focus for preventive work: the prevention of children's involvement as *victims* of crime and anti-social behaviour[6]. Again, the concept of risk is significant here, with particular individuals or groups of children identified as more likely to become victims of crime and to require preventive interventions; although interventions are also geared towards whole populations. However, we are not able to deal with research on victimization of children within the scope of this paper.

These different categories of prevention generate a range of different policies and service interventions with children. The development of these policies and practices is shaped by a distinctive theoretical discourse about the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour among children and the kinds of psychological, social and cultural factors that contribute to preventing it. This discourse is the product of what we refer to in this review as 'primary research' – the study of children and their families and of the varied circumstances that seem to result in some children becoming involved in crime and others not – and 'evaluative research' – the study of the effectiveness of particular preventive interventions.

This research is not necessarily concerned exclusively with the prevention of anti-social behaviour and crime as the terms are used in this paper; it is often concerned – and particularly where younger children are the focus – with broader concepts such as 'troubled children' or 'children in need' (see, for example, Buchanan 2002). It is however concerned with identifying the factors that cause children to be at risk of damaging outcomes, of which involvement in crime may be one, and with ways in which such outcomes can be prevented. There is also, moreover, a considerable and highly influential body of research on the specific issue of children 'at risk' of criminal involvement and on the most effective means of intervening to ameliorate that risk (for an authoritative overview, see Farrington 2002). There are clear links to

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[6] Although the victimisation of young people generally attracts much less attention in policy documents than offending, the current White Paper on anti-social behaviour does note that: 'Young people are more often the victims of crime and anti-social behaviour than the perpetrators' (Home Office 2003: 22). Crime statistics also show, in fact, that young people are largely the victims of young perpetrators. Young people assessed as at risk of offending are also likely to be most at risk of being victims of offences, so that strategies to reduce offending and victimisation among the young are closely related.

be drawn out here between the models of risk-identification and prevention used by criminological researchers and models used by other 'child care' researchers relevant to the NECF approach (e.g. Hardiker 1999).

In this review, we address both *primary research* on the factors associated with the risk of criminal involvement among children, and *evaluative research* on the range of interventions designed to prevent the commission of crime and anti-social behaviour by children.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The discussion so far has sought to clarify the key terms contained in the research question that shapes this review. Before setting out the organising framework for the review, however, it is necessary to describe another of the key structuring topics. This is the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the first piece of criminal justice legislation enacted by the New Labour government following its election the previous year and, in many respects, a landmark in the history of the state's response to issues of children and crime (Padfield 2002).

The 1998 Act can be described as a landmark for two reasons. First, as Newburn points out, it provides 'for the first time, an overarching mission for the whole youth justice system' (Newburn 2002: 560): Section 37 of the Act states that the principal aim of the system must be 'to prevent offending by children and young persons'. Moreover, the Act created, and placed at the heart of the system charged to fulfil this aim, an entirely new set of organisational arrangements: at national level, the Youth Justice Board (a non-departmental public body linked to the Home Office); and in every local authority area in the country, Youth Offending Teams – multi-agency partnerships tasked with co-ordinating youth justice services within the area. The architecture of service provision in relation to children and crime was thus transformed by the Crime and Disorder Act and subsequent legislation, especially the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999; a transformation that Goldson describes as 'the most radical overhaul of the youth justice system in fifty years' (Goldson 2000: vii).

Second, it is through this act that the criminal justice system is empowered to engage with the issue of anti-social behaviour and therefore to intervene with children, and the families of children, who have not committed a criminal offence or, indeed, cannot do so because they are below the age of criminal responsibility. As indicated above, a range of sanctions is available to effect these interventions and, while they have been refined and extended in subsequent legislation, it is in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 that they originate. Further, the 1998 and 1999 acts mark a clear shift from the imperative expressed in earlier legislation to divert young offenders (particularly those without an established criminal record) away from the criminal justice system, to an emphasis on earlier formal interventions intended to change behaviour before it becomes entrenched (Goldson 2000: 35-37). (To further underline its significance, it is, as noted above, also in the 1998 Act that the presumption of *doli incapax* is abolished.)

Reviewing the research: context, parameters, protocol and criteria
It is the assessment, based on published research, of service interventions available to prevent the onset of offending and the occurrence of re-offending, and the theoretical assumptions underpinning these interventions, which is the core subject matter of this review. However, one consequence of the sweeping changes introduced by the 1998 Act (and followed through in a raft of policy directives, guidance and further legislation) is that much of the current service response in England and Wales to the challenge of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour among children has developed only in the last four or five years. For the purposes of this review, this has both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that most of the post-1998 innovations are subject to formal evaluation (in line with the government's commitment to evidence-based policy and practice), thus providing ready material for review. The disadvantage is that, because all this development is so recent, many evaluations are not yet complete. In practice, therefore, the volume of useable research literature on current interventions is limited.

What *is* clear, however, is the nature of the knowledge base on which both the provisions of the 1998 Act itself (and those contained in subsequent legislation) and the range of new interventions to which it gave rise are founded. One of the early actions of the newly created Youth Justice Board was to commission a series of

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research review studies on topics related to the Board's overall agenda of 'preventing youth offending' in order to inform the development of effective practice. These studies were undertaken by independent researchers and are methodical and comprehensive in their general approach; they therefore provide an invaluable foundation on which to base this present review.

In turn, these studies drew on a substantial body of research-based knowledge that developed during the late 1980s and through the 1990s. Much of this research was undertaken in the context of a perceived 'crisis' in governmental responses to offending by children and young people. The crisis was precipitated by a combination of seemingly inexorable rises in crime rates (and a particular growth in crime committed by young people) and the collapse of rehabilitation as the dominant framework of theory and practice for the prevention of offending – the political and professional pessimism associated with the latter being encapsulated in the slogan 'nothing works'. Importantly, the message that the hitherto prevailing rehabilitation framework was ineffective, if not actually counter-productive in preventing crime was in part promulgated as a result of academic research into prevention and treatment programmes (Martinson 1974).

Two main consequences followed. The first was a theoretical, ideological and legal swing away from 'welfare' understandings of crime and how to respond to it, centred around psychological and sociological explanations of why crime happened, assessment of the needs of the individual offender and the potential for 'treatment'; towards a 'justice' discourse that emphasised the personal responsibility of the offender, the irrelevance of theories about what caused crime and the need for consistent and fair punishment regardless of individual circumstances. (Unsurprisingly, the contrast between the 'welfare' and 'justice' schools of thought was especially sharply drawn in relation to children and young people, where welfare considerations had traditionally been even more paramount than with adult offenders.)

The second consequence was the development of more rigorous research into the effectiveness of different interventions, partly because of a recognition within the academic community that it was not at all evident that 'nothing worked' (see, for instance, Cullen and Gilbert's (1982) 'reaffirmation' of the value of rehabilitation).

Rather, existing research seemed to suggest that certain rehabilitative approaches could be effective whilst others were generally not; the problem was a lack of reliable research evidence that could confidently be used to shape policies and services.

The subsequent body of research that has developed now underpins both mainstream academic understandings of approaches to preventing crime and many of the legislative and policy initiatives of UK and US governments, in particularly being closely associated with initiatives pursued by New Labour (Muncie 2000; Pitts 2001). The slogan now is 'what works' – denoting both a specific discourse of policy and practice that prioritises service interventions based on demonstrable evidence as to their effectiveness, and the theoretical and methodological parameters of the research that provides the evidence. Such is the scale and extent of this research, and the desire to extract usable lessons from it, that we are now seeing not just reviews of groups of studies (often using statistical techniques of meta-analysis) but systematic reviews of reviews. Much synthesis of core findings has been undertaken in both the US and UK in recent years.

Review Strategy

For the purposes of undertaking this current review for NECF, the basic strategy is two-fold:

First, we aim to distil the key messages relevant to our research question from the existing body of primary and evaluative research, drawing particularly on systematic reviews and meta-analyses of studies that meet core criteria of rigour and replicability, and on the findings from large-scale longitudinal studies. The majority of this material is North American in origin, though it includes studies from the UK and other countries (particularly Australia). The reviews we draw on have mostly been published in the last five years; they can therefore be relied upon to cover relevant research completed up to around 1997. We have conducted specific searches of social science databases for relevant studies published since 1997 in order to supplement these reviews with the most up-to-date findings.

Second, we aim to identify and assess significant research studies in the UK that seek to evaluate preventive interventions developed in the wake of the Crime and Disorder

Act 1998[7]. It is these interventions, and the policies that shape them, that provide the principal context in which the work of Children's Fund initiatives with children involved in crime and anti-social behaviour is taking place. To identify these studies, we have searched social science databases but have also drawn heavily on material published on the websites of government departments and agencies that commission evaluative research such as the Youth Justice Board, Nacro and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Not all of these evaluative studies are as yet complete, and not all meet the highest standards of methodological rigour. However our selection of studies for inclusion in this review has been influenced by the significance of particular interventions for current practice.

The social science reference databases we have searched are ASSIA, Zetoc (Mimas) and COPAC, using combinations of search terms derived from the research question, e.g. child*; youth; crim*; offend*; behaviour; prevent*; risk; etc; and by date. Selection of studies for inclusion was determined principally by criteria of methodological robustness, comprehensiveness and relevance to the research question. Selection was aided by cross-reference to the Oxford Handbook of Criminology, 3rd Edition (Maguire et al 2002), the most authoritative UK sourcebook for academic studies of crime and criminal behaviour.

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Sections 2 and 3 present our detailed review of the research literature. Section 4 offers a reflective conclusion on the strengths and weaknesses of this body of research, and the implications for those with responsibility for developing and implementing preventive programmes.

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[7] It is perhaps worth making clear that this paper does not address those preventive strategies associated with 'situational' or 'environmental' crime prevention. Although these strategies are often prompted by the perceived behaviours of young people, they explicitly do not focus on interventions with young people themselves; rather they are concerned with changing the physical characteristics of places to reduce opportunities for crime. We take these approaches as falling outside the activities of Children's Fund programmes.

Section 2: Preventing the Onset of Anti-social and Criminal Behaviour

Research into risk and protective factors

The concept of risk is central to the concerns of this section. 'Risk' is a critical concept in analyses of 'postmodern' society and has become a complex and contentious topic in recent years, within criminology as well as other disciplines (Kemshall 2003). Here, the concept is used in a narrower and perhaps simpler way to refer to the presence of factors in a child's life that, within large population samples, have a statistical correlation with anti-social or offending behaviours; in other words, the risk of becoming an offender is statistically more probable if the child experiences or is exposed to certain factors. Conversely, other factors are identified as having a 'protective' effect in reducing the likelihood of a child becoming involved in anti-social or offending behaviour. (For a discussion of some of the issues involved in using the concepts of risk and protection in relation to children's welfare, see Hansen and Plewis 2003: 1-5).

The Youth Justice Board Research Note 5 (2001)[8] provides the most recent comprehensive review of relevant research on risk and protective factors in relation to children's involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour, and is the principal source for this section (see also Farrington 2002 for a condensed authoritative overview). It reflects and builds upon Farrington (1996) and Rutter et al (1998) – the two major UK reviews up to that time – in distinguishing between individual, psychosocial and society wide features of risk factors. These factors can themselves be both causal and symptomatic of what is broadly referred to as anti-social behaviour, that is, they may be factors that generate anti-social behaviour or they may be factors that are a result of anti-social behaviour. However, it notes that reviews of longitudinal research and meta-analyses have identified connections which are more clearly causal, and can be further differentiated as either direct/proximal or distant/distal. Perhaps the most crucial theme noted is that delinquency, conceived of as entrenched but low-level offending, seems to arise from the way in which: '…multiple risk factors cluster

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[8] This substantial and detailed review, published under the name of the Youth Justice Board, was in fact written by a group of academics, including David Farrington who is probably the leading international authority on the topic.

together and interact in the lives of some children, while important protective factors are conspicuously absent' (YJB 2001: 8).

YJB 2001 summarises the effects of protective factors in terms of:
- Their *directly protecting* function – where they represent situations or environments which are opposite to those represented in risk factors, they serve to protect against the initial development of involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour
- Their *moderating function* – where they may moderate the effects of exposure to risk.

The review notes that adoption of this concept of protective factor assists explanations and explorations concerning why some young people are exposed to clusters of risk factors predictive of potential escalation into criminal behaviour, yet do not grow up to behave anti-socially or to commit crimes. The concept also provides the basis for intervention programmes aimed at preventing the onset or escalation of anti-social behaviour in children.

Protective factors may impact by
- Preventing the occurrence of risk factors
- Interacting with a risk factor to reduce its adverse effects
- Interrupting the developmental and mediational chain by which a risk factor influences or underpins ensuing behaviour.

Rutter et al (1998) note that some protective factors represent individual characteristics that are 'actuarial', meaning that they are 'given' in a way that makes them difficult or impossible to introduce deliberately. However, consideration of these factors is useful not only for predictive purposes, but also in terms of potential intervention, through inquiry into circumstances and situations where the protective effect may be lessened, or through inquiry into the underlying causes of particular patterns, which have been superficially identified but not explored causatively. Female gender constitutes an example of such an actuarial factor. Other factors, though, are more directly amenable to influence and change through prevention

strategies. So, importantly, the concept of a 'protective factor' has relevance in terms of both its predictive and preventative properties.

The particular aspects of a young person's life reflected in these risk and protective factors, following YJB 2001, can be helpfully grouped into categories of Individual, Family, School and Community factors.

Individual factors

YJB 2001, with particular reference to studies by Rutter et al (1998), Farrington et al (1990) and Hawkins et al (1998), identifies a web of connections between three key behavioural manifestations which predispose to both onset and continuation of anti-social behaviour. These are:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Impulsivity
- Cognitive Impairment.

The hyperactivity-impulsivity-attention deficit connections were identified in the Cambridge longitudinal study[9] as being more than a simple measure for, or aspect of, anti-social and disruptive behaviour. Rather, they are identified within this study as typically the starting point for a developmental sequence which leads to some children becoming both persistent and violent offenders.

The issue of cognitive impairment is addressed in the research, but specifically in terms of

- Low non-verbal intelligence (Farrington1992)
- Difficulty in manipulating non-verbal concepts (Farrington1996)
- Poor reasoning skills (Farrington 1996).

All of these factors are seen as significant in terms of the development and consolidation of cognitive impairment (the inability to predict consequences and empathise with victims being two examples of these), but also in terms of their linkage back to wider underpinning factors which interact with, sustain, and are sustained by, these deficits. Similarly, Rutter et al (1998) suggest that a link between

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[9] 'The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development' is the major British longitudinal research study of factors affecting criminal behaviour. It tracks a cohort of 411 males in inner London from age 7 into adulthood (Farrington and West 1990).

the emergence of more extensive aggressive behaviour and early bullying behaviour may be consolidated through a tendency for aggressive children to be more apt than others to interpret social responses and actions of other children as hostile or malicious. They note that this 'biased cognitive processing' can be offset by direct work with children in order to help them interpret cues more accurately and respond more positively.

A range of studies, cited in YJB 2001 (and see also Rutter et al 1998), have highlighted the significance of aggressive behaviour as an indicator of increased risk of delinquency, and specific connections have been made between

- Aggressive behaviour and attention seeking disorders
- Aggression and the continuing development of anti-social boys at the transition into adolescence
- Aggression which is linked to withdrawal, isolation or hyperactivity especially within the early years. This has been identified as the strongest individual predictor of later delinquency when identified in children 8 to 10 years old by the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development
- Aggression which hardens into the 'repeated oppression' (Farrington 1993) of bullying is strongly connected to an increased risk of both offending and violent offending. Bullying in itself reflects a clustering of many risk indicators, including connections with low achievement at primary school, pro-criminal parents, and experience of neglect or abuse. Significantly, Farrington (1992b) identifies the link between fathers who have bullied and the emergence of bullying behaviour in a child, though there is some evidence that boys are more likely to bully than girls. So it would seem that bullying is a catalyst for both onset and perpetuation of the risk factors which precipitate and sustain offending.

In terms of connections between cognitive deficits and wider factors, the resultant emergence of a sense of alienation and lack of social commitment (Hawkins et al 1987) and also of anti-social and pro-criminal attitudes (Jessor and Jessor 1977) are particularly noted. Arising from this, the negative influence of peer groups, who share this sense of alienation and its resultant social attitudes, has been noted with particular

reference to drug misuse and early involvement in crime (Thornberry et al 1995), and the extension of criminal careers beyond adolescence (Farrington 1992b, as part of the Cambridge Study). What is not apparently explored in great detail is the possibility of any direct impact of poverty and deprivation on behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal development.

Certain individual characteristics are identified as core protective factors:
1. *Female gender*. This is actuarially protective in that studies show that young men commit more offences than young women (Home Office 1997). Notwithstanding similar risk factors in their backgrounds (Graham and Bowling 1995), women are less likely to become recidivist or serious offenders and their criminal careers tend to be shorter, with a peak at 15 years rather than 18 as in males (Rutter et al 1998). Differentials continue through the range of early risk factors with less harmful effects being evident within young women. What is not evident from research, though, is why this should be, and Rutter et al (1998) note that girls who would otherwise be high risk may be diverted from anti-social behaviour by factors which are associated with key relationships, such as differing styles of parental supervision, and even diversion from negative peer pressure by early parenthood, with the close relationships notionally implied by this. They note though that this needs closer investigation, and as we will see later, the effects of early parenthood constitute a recognised risk factor in relation to other factors, and to the reality of its potential effects on relationships.

2. *Resilience of temperament, a sense of self-efficacy, a positive and outgoing disposition and high intelligence.* These represent a cluster of individual protective characteristics only partly susceptible to intervention, as Rutter et al (1998) note that genetic characteristics impact on elements of personality and intelligence. However, the notion of resilience provides a helpful direction when translating the predictive tool represented by the protective factor into a dynamic means of intervention. It is suggested that, although evidence is sparse, resilience may be especially relevant to qualities which elicit positive responses from adults and peers (ibid). The regularity of positive response from adults may encourage the greater social problem solving skills and belief in their own self-efficacy that resilient children display. Such children are likely to be more outgoing, easily teachable, and have positively reinforced bonds of

affection with parents or carers. As a result they are likely to be pro-socially committed and to have an investment in their own futures and in their community. (See, also, Buchanan 2002: 260, who identifies resilience as 'The X-Factor' in the capacity of some children to survive negative experiences).

Family factors

A series of factors around the time of birth appear to be associated with the onset of behavioural problems as the child develops, but this connection is associated with the effects of structural issues, in turn impacting on the capacity of a parent or parent to offer sufficient care to the child (YJB 2001: 8-13). Specific examples are:

- Low birth weight, abnormality, and perinatal complications, the effects of which depend on whether or not a child is raised in deprived or disadvantaged circumstances.
- Maternal response pre-natally and post-natally, specifically in terms of the interplay between high alcohol and drug consumption, subsequent development of physical and cognitive abnormalities and deficits in the unborn infant, maternal youth and lack of parenting skills. This constellation of factors has been shown to lead more readily to poor performance in school and subsequent delinquency and involvement in crime.

Issues of parental supervision are reflected in risk factors associated with polarities in parenting approaches – risk being embodied in harsh and cruel responses as well as in passive or neglecting parenting (Farrington 2002). Within both patterns:

- High inconsistency of approach appears crucial.
- Parental modelling through harsh and violent supervision of the child is strongly linked to increased risk of later involvement in violent offending.
- Modelling of harsh responses gives rise to learned attention seeking through bad behaviour, which is further reinforced through the interaction of inexperienced parents with other inexperienced parents. Still greater reinforcement takes place through the tendency for resultant escalating disruptive behaviour to bring about exclusion of the child concerned by peer groups.

Whilst the presence of a biological father has been found by Morash and Rucker (1989), in a review of four longitudinal studies, to be a protective factor, it would seem that this protective effect must be subject to the findings in relation to parental supervision, and could indeed become a further risk factor in some circumstances. The emphasis on family conflict as a major risk factor rather then the structure of a family would seem to bear this out (Utting et al 1993; Graham and Bowling 1995; Farrington 1996). Another longitudinal study found that the presence of observed affectionate relationships between parents, and existing between the child and a parent or parents, constitutes protection (McCord 1982).

A family history and parental attitudes which exhibit and condone anti-social and criminal behaviour appear to be risk factors in their own right, quite apart from parental skills and responses (Rutter et al 1998). It has been observed by Hawkins et al (1992) that parental modelling and favourable attitudes to drug use are interlinked, leading to greater likelihood of drug abuse in the adolescent child and subsequent adult, which might seem to be reflected within the wider span of modelled pro-criminal behaviour. What seems not to have been demonstrated in research is the interplay between the impact of harsh, or passive, hence inconsistent parenting, and pro-criminal modelling.

Low income, poor housing and large family size appear, in interplay rather than in isolation, to be factors which increase the likelihood of developing delinquency (Utting et al 1993). Importantly, direct links with economic class have been found to be weak, compared with more specific measures of poverty and its impact. Rather, the impact of the stress caused by low income and the resultant reduction in life-chances and resources, seems to be more strongly indicated – although the association between offending and low income appears, in the Cambridge study, to be strongly indicated in itself (West 1982). Again, a cumulative effect has been observed in adolescent young men where unemployment appears linked to greater likelihood of escalation in offending. Specifically, though this occurred among young people who were already at increased risk of offending as a result of their upbringing in a family of low income and the effects of the resultant parental stresses (Caspi and Moffitt 1993; Conger et al 1995).

In turning to consideration of family factors which can enhance protection, bonding and warmth of social relationship with parents or carers has been identified as a crucial protective factor (Farrington 2002). Where conflict and splits in families exist it has also been noted that a strong relationship with one parent protects the child in relation to the development of anti-social behaviour (Dubow and Luster 1995). The *Communities that Care* project[10] and its underpinning theoretical base, known as the social development model (Hawkins and Catalano 1992), extended the concept of social bonding to include relationships between children and teachers and peers who model positive and pro-social behaviours, and through these, with their communities. The connection between the valued relationships and the unwillingness to put these in jeopardy through anti-social behaviour has been identified as a core protective 'cluster'.

The previous cluster connects closely with the identification of healthy attitudes and modelling of pro-social values as protective factors in their own right, highlighting the significance of the predominant norms and values which surround the young person, particularly in relation to his or her valued relationships. A third connection to the social bonding cluster is the availability of opportunities for involvement, use of social and reasoning skills, recognition and due praise**.** Availability of these opportunities at the heart of the child's core relationships takes the form not only of the presence of those relationships, but also of ensuring that the child has the capacity to use social and reasoning skills within their personal relationships and educational and familial settings (Rutter et al 1998).

Evaluation of prevention programmes with a family focus
Farrington and Welsh (1999, 2003) reviewed, using meta-analysis, a number of British, Canadian and North American programmes which included or focused on intervention with families, and in so doing identified significant information relating to the effectiveness of these interventions in a protection and prevention programme, as well as to such programmes overall. Programmes were only included in the reviews if they met strict methodological criteria.

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[10] *Communities that Care* is a programme that originated in the US but has subsequently been implemented in the UK. It is discussed more fully later in this section.

Farrington and Welsh (1999) undertook initial evaluations of programmes which included family-based interventions, where children were showing early risk indicators of disruptive behaviour, or developing patterns of delinquency. It emerged that family interventions were often effective in reducing the risk indicators to some extent. Parent education was particularly effective, especially in the setting of home visiting, day care or formal parent management training. Some large scale and well designed programmes with a multi-disciplinary community focus were found to be ineffective; the primary reasons for this were identified as lack of parental commitment and participation, and also poor attendance and commitment from the young people with whom programmes of intervention were implemented.

Farrington and Welsh's further review and meta-analysis (2003) centred on programmes where the family was the focus of intervention. Whilst endorsing the effectiveness overall of family-based intervention, particularly parent education programmes, it indicated that greatest effectiveness lay with programmes in settings other than schools, and with programmes which were based on cognitive-behavioural approaches. Whilst positive effects on risk indicators were widespread, there were some differentials in terms of greater effectiveness where specific kinds of offending were targeted (for example, violent offending) rather than more diffuse offending behaviour. Overall, it appears that specific focus, development of positive adult modelling and reinforcement, and approaches (both therapeutic and environmental) which enhance parental engagement indicate greatest effectiveness.

School Factors

Research reviewed in YJB 2001 and Farrington 2002 shows that risk factors which are school-related involve issues of

- achievement
- interaction
- commitment to or investment in, schooling
- quality of schooling.

Low achievement that begins at primary school level reflects a cluster of issues which may differ in individual cases. These issues essentially reflect all the risk factors noted

under family factors, which in turn underpin the child's capacity to learn and respond. YJB 2001 notes that low achievement at primary level paradoxically represents a useful, indeed, vital, indicator which can be acted upon relatively easily through programmes designed to raise readiness to learn. However, longitudinal research, for example, Maguin and Loeber (1996), shows that low achievement which extends to late junior school level is more likely to be a precursor to delinquency and drug abuse. Farrington (1992b), moreover, has shown that it is the sense of failure and feelings of alienation in children who are underachieving, rather than the underachievement itself, which connects most strongly with anti-social behaviour during adolescence, including drug abuse.

The significance of the relationship which children have to their school appears in studies to take two directions: the first being that of their own attitudes, and the issues that influence this; the second being the culture of the school itself, including its response or collective attitude to children. The context of the school's wider role in integrating children into their community and into society as citizens with a sense of achievement is a crucial theme. This emphasises the sense of alienation and subsequent connection with involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour that is linked with children who lack commitment to school.

The tripartite link between lack of commitment, truancy and delinquency is attested to by a number of studies (for example, West 1982; Farrington 1996). This link reflects a cycle, in which delinquency may lead to truancy as well as vice versa, and a connection is noted between truancy and disruptive behaviour when in school (Graham 1988). Interestingly, in view of recent community and policing responses to truanting, some earlier surveys have found that children who truant rarely offend during school hours (Ekblom 1979).

The impact of the school's organisational structures and processes on the levels of truancy and delinquency in its pupils has been found to be important. This appears to take the form of low levels of achievement and high levels of disruption, which further reinforce a culture of alienation. This particular issue is the subject of conjecture in studies such as Graham (1988) and Farrington (1992b). Secondary school intake characteristics reflect locality (connecting back to structural risk

factors); however, whilst the schools themselves make only a limited contribution to the level of risk in relation to offending, Rutter et al (1979) approached the role of school functioning using a measure of 'school process'. This measure reflected characteristics of the school's organisation, process and functioning and significant connections were made between the operation of this process and links with misbehaviour, low achievement and truancy. After controlling for locality, no freestanding association was made with actual offending, but high levels of punishment and low levels of praise – in other words, ineffective modelling – were significantly linked to delinquency.

The significance of 'process' has been borne out in work relating to primary schools (YJB 2001: 15). Positive correlations have been identified which connect educational progress, improvements in achievement and lower levels of truancy and anti-social behaviour, to:

- High quality teaching and organisation
- Dynamism, energy and commitment
- 'Whole school' approaches to problems of bullying, truancy and anti-social behaviour.

However, Rutter et al (1998) emphasise that, whilst schools do appear to exert an influence in relation to anti-social behaviour, more needs to be identified concerning the precise nature of this influence, and the significant variables which affect this influence.

Evaluation of prevention programmes with a school based focus
Wilson et al's (2001) meta-analysis of a large number of North American schools based programmes approached the term 'prevention' as one encapsulating reduction of negative behaviours and risk indicators as well as prevention of future development or occurrence.

The importance of 'focus' again emerges as a key element of effectiveness in this analysis, with cognitive behavioural programmes showing particular effectiveness in the reduction of anti-social behaviour and delinquency across the broad range defined. Specific elements of self control and social competency are effective consistently, as are non-instructional cognitive-behavioural programmes. The effect of the school

environment and its management appears particularly important in reducing delinquency and drug use, and this would seem to echo previously noted studies in relation to the impact of the modelling of consistent and pro-social values at organisational and practitioner levels in schools.

Community Factors

There seems to be clear evidence that children who grow up in economically deprived areas, with the likelihood of poor living conditions and high rates of unemployment, are at increased risk of involvement in crime, including violent crime (YJB 2001; Farrington 1992a). However, YJB (2001) notes that it is difficult to isolate variables relating to economically deprived neighbourhoods per se, and the other well cited risk factors which cluster together in the lives of families who live there, and who move in there as a result of housing policies. Rutter, Cox et al (1975) and Rutter, Yule et al (1975), for example, found that higher rates of conduct disorder among 10 year olds in London as compared with the Isle of Wight, could be explained by causative risk factors already noted such as parental conflict, family breakdown, criminal parents and large family size (though it is not noted whether or not the latter was combined with resultant economic deprivation).

Most importantly, Farrington (1996) concludes that the interaction between poor neighbourhoods and individual, family and peer group factors is likely to explain the higher proportion of young offenders in poor areas. Brooks Gunn et al (1997) also identified the association between criminality, deprived area and violent crime, citing perceived lack of social cohesion and informal social controls as a strong sustaining factor in this ongoing association.

The physical environment has also been cited as part of this associational and interactional process, connecting with:
- lack of formal and informal social controls
- loss of social cohesion

The resultant tendency towards a disorganised neighbourhood with a tendency towards high crime itself leads more readily to:

- difficulty for local people in forming friendships and supportive neighbourhood networks
- difficulty for parents, schools and faith and other neighbourhood communities in reinforcing positive pro-social attitudes.
  (Power and Tunstall 1997; Sampson 1997.)

Further significant issues for Risk and Protective Factors

Ethnicity

Rutter et al (1998) note that the impact of differences between ethnic groups, their experiences and the impact upon them of both risk and protective factors has been under-researched. However, some American studies show consistency across different races and cultures in terms of the overall significance of both sets of factors. Differences though, have been noted in the prevalence of both risk and protective factors (for example, greater experience of deprivation and unemployment among minority groups, but closer and more consistent family bonding systems). Significantly, Berthoud (1999) suggests that the experience of racial discrimination constitutes a risk factor in its own right, in terms of its biasing effects on the perceptions and interactions in the systems and environment surrounding the child's capacities. Not the least important of these systems is the Criminal Justice System itself and Rutter et al note the dangers of the effects of racism and bias in considerations of differences in levels of anti-social behaviour between various ethnic groups (Rutter et al 1998).

Child Abuse and the experience of 'looked after' children

YJB 2001 identifies further questions (as opposed to answers) concerning whether certain childhood experiences, such as violent or sexual abuse, and the experience of being in local authority care, should be treated as separate risk factors. Despite removal into local authority care being an action designed to protect children from harm, the Social Exclusion Unit (2001), notes the disproportionate numbers of young people leaving 'care' without qualifications, who then have difficulty becoming employed, who more frequently become young parents, and are more likely to commit offences which result in a prison sentence. The question remains as to whether children experiencing earlier abuse have experienced a particular intensity of

risk factor clustering, and a lesser exposure to the interconnected protective factors than others, or whether the process of removal from home and of local authority care presents a risk factor in itself.

Differential developmental impact of risk and protective factors

Hawkins et al (1995) identify the importance of the varied salience of both risk and protective factors at different developmental stages in a child's life. Social bonding, for example, needs to be established from birth in terms of parental bonding, but negative peer group pressure towards criminality and drug use is unlikely to be an issue for another decade. Hawkins et al suggest that a sequence of issues impact, at different stages, between birth and 6 years. All of the relevant risk factors have been noted in this section, but what also seems to be of importance here is that interventions to enhance protective factors must reflect awareness of developmental priorities if they are to be effective in 'protecting', through whichever form they are applied. Awareness of this developmental dimension has significance when considering the progressions from anti-social behaviour and delinquency to persistent, serious and violent criminality.

YJB 2001 makes, through its review, a clear distinction between 'life-course persistent' and 'adolescence-limited 'offenders (see also Smith, D.J. 2002). Evidence of exposure to multiple risk factors at an early age is a key theme in relation to the former, whereas the latter's exposure to risk may occur at a later stage. Does this mean , though, that exposure to risk has or has not been a factor in relation to the 'adolescence-limited' group, or does it mean that the cluster of risk factors at an earlier stage has been less intense than for the 'life-course persistent' group? Also, we have noted that the impact of protective factors can only be effective if it takes into account the child's developmental phases and priorities. Equally important is an awareness of the impact of parental, social and wider environmental significances on the child in relation to these phases.

In an important meta-analysis, based on longitudinal studies, Lipsey and Derzon (1998) identified age-phased 'early warning 'signs, signalling particularly important risk factors which indicate potential progression into life-course offending. What does not seem to be fully clear is the importance of the identified risk factors as indicators

in themselves, as opposed to their clustering effect, in terms of the intensity of their impact.

Troubled or Troublesome? Welfare or Justice? Risk factors and other youth problems

YJB (2001), in its overview of risk and protective factors, identifies close and clear connections between those risk factors which orientate towards offending and illegal activity and those orientating towards access to life-chances, well-being, and investment in society. Thus the 'justice' and 'welfare' polarities begin to become more balanced within a concept of the child's well being and potential. A resulting perspective on prevention and protection therefore suggests a holistic approach, which addresses the child's capacities, their social environment, and, crucially, the interaction between the two.

Farrington (1996) observes that the multiple and connected risk factors identified in relation to a number of indications (offending, illegal substance use, mental disorder, educational underachievement, youthful parenthood, for example), contribute to a syndrome of anti-social behaviour with impacts far wider than offending. This suggests that holistic programmes applying protective factors that target clusters of risk factors in a child's life and social environment, linked to relevant developmental stages, can potentially prevent negative outcomes which spread far beyond involvement in a criminal career and cycle.

Catalano and Hawkins (1996), in their Social Development Model arising from the *Communities that Care* projects, link notions of protection, prevention and risk through a process of reducing risk by enhancing protection. As Farrington (2002) has noted, the paradigm of 'risk-focused prevention' has gained international recognition as an approach which harnesses current knowledge practically and enables prediction and intervention to be targeted effectively.

The next section of this paper starts from the premise that risk and protective factors which apply to the development of anti-social behaviour, delinquency and criminality also mesh with those indicators of the overall welfare of the developing child in society. It reflects upon the relationships between prediction, intervention and

prevention particularly in relation to the strengthening of protective factors. It identifies recent approaches which enact the paradigms of reducing risk by enhancing protection, and of risk focussed prevention.

Current programmes for prediction, intervention and prevention

The two programmes considered below both incorporate the following components, reflecting the knowledge base relating to identification and application of risk and protective factors outlined earlier:

- Clear outcome setting on a multi-agency basis at community and individual level.
- Use of specific predictors for a range of risk factors and protective responses.
- A research component which compares interventions and measures their effects as located within individuals and communities.
- A clear awareness of the interaction between the community environment and the child's developing capacities.
- An emphasis on involvement of community, family and the child in the processes of decision making relating to protection and prevention.
- An emphasis on prevention which reflects a community perspective, incorporating concepts of protection of both children and communities, including victims of crime.

Communities that Care (CTC)

Hawkins (1999) and France and Crowe (2001) have examined the CTC Programme. This is a process which aims at prevention and protection by focusing on community functioning. It works by creating opportunities for local people and professionals to identify risk factors for juvenile crime and drug abuse in their community, and develop a risk profile for their community, on the basis of which a range of interventions are identified at individual, family, school and community levels. Two main theoretical strands underpin the programme, which reflect, in each case, the premises that:

- A range of key risk factors linked specifically to certain types of behaviour can be identified, which connect individual child, family, community systems (eg. school) and communities themselves. These factors include lack of

discipline in families, academic under-achievement in primary school, lack of neighbourhood attachment, and friends involved in problem behaviour.

- Reducing risk and enhancing protection requires leadership and modelling by adults. To achieve positive behaviour, a relationship is necessary between effective modelling and reinforcement of positive values and behaviours, and the provision of opportunity for children to become involved, develop skills and achieve recognition and praise.

- Underpinning both theory and practice of CTC, prevention should be guided by research evidence and methodology at each stage of the programme.

Through a systematic and structured approach to focused community involvement, the programme has succeeded in initiating a new emphasis on effective interdisciplinary working, which integrates local community member and service user involvement. This involvement relates to the process of using research evidence about prevention and effective problem definition, and focus of intervention. Through its emphasis on positive modelling as a core preventative strategy, it involves professionals and community members in an active process of shared value and preventative behaviour. However, whilst outcome setting is a fundamental activity in the work of all participants, France and Crow identified the significance of 'mobilisation' of these outcomes into practical action and intervention as a particularly significant factor in effectiveness and a particular challenge. Whilst this would seem self-evident, the processes surrounding mobilisation emerged as the most challenging to initiate and sustain, at both local and professional levels. A further significant aspect of this mobilisation process is the need to maintain adherence to evidence-based approaches and to avoid drift which would undermine both intervention programmes and preventative strategies.

France and Crow concluded that the programme's particular contribution was to identify a process for establishing community access to, and involvement with, prevention and protection, and to develop inter-professional working at multiple levels towards this end.

The Pathways to Prevention Project

This Australian research and intervention project, discussed in Homel et al (1999), is underpinned by an emphasis on the connections between personal history, social experience and structural issues. It developed from the premise that crime is exacerbated by lack of meaningful social pathways for (crucially) a diverse range of young people, and by not enhancing and promoting the attachment of children, parents and communities to mainstream social supports and institutions. The project also emphasises the importance of scientifically evaluating the all important interventions into early indicators, not only in individual terms but also in terms of enhancing positive attitudes to children within communities.

The project first established an evidence-led perspective which underpinned policies for prevention, and, whilst comprehensively addressing risk factors, added a developmental perspective through an emphasis on staged and focused application of protection strategies. Particular to this project, but yet to be fully evaluated, are themes emphasising the importance of critical transitional points in a young person's life, where they may be more susceptible to movement into 'harmful paths' (Wong 2003) but also more open to preventative interventions. Again, the notion of attachments and bonding are seen as fundamental to the success of intervention and policy alike.

Information emerging from the project evaluation identifies some important issues salient to the impact of both risk and protective factors:

- Child maltreatment emerges as particularly important in the development of aggression, juvenile offending and substance abuse. Initial direct links with deprivation have suggested that the 'social fabric' surrounding deprived families and communities influences the likelihood of abuse. Children with experiences of physical violence from families are more likely than others to be arrested for serious or violent offences, and children in some form of 'looked after capacity' are more likely than others to come into contact with the justice system, primarily because of the impact of care facilities and process as well as more harmful peer group influence.

- Abuse must be distinguished from neglect. Neglect has been found to be as strong an indicator and predictor of violent offending as abuse, and the cluster of factors linking neglect, poverty, stress, inadequate supervision and support have been found to be more significant in some cases than where abuse is present, in opening the gateway to a wider range of risk factors – such as deviant peer influence.
- Other connections between maltreatment and offending include modelling of aggressive behaviour, subsequently more likely to be replicated through the child's own behaviour, and greater likelihood of homelessness following abuse, leading to contact with criminal justice systems.
- Age-related processes may be linked more than previously thought to several risk and protective factors.
- Parental education and advice need to be central in any preventative or interventive programme.
- Connections between parent training, early social skills training for children, and high quality pre-school education are emerging as having particular significance for prevention.

Current Preventive Programmes in England

Finally, and briefly, there are two Government-funded preventive programmes of substantial scale and significance currently running in England that are highly relevant to the subject of this review. These are *On Track* and *Splash* (including *Splash Extra*).

On Track is a programme aimed at preventing the involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour of children aged 4-12 years. It is a large programme, initially funded by the Home Office and now incorporated within Children's Fund, with projects operating in 24 deprived areas in England (22) and Wales (2). Its approach draws heavily from the research literature on risk and protective factors, being based on five core interventions whose effectiveness is indicated by research: home visits; pre-school education; parent support and training; family therapy; and home/school partnerships. Evaluation of process and outcomes is incorporated as an active and central part of the programme's development.

Clearly, results from the evaluation of the programme are of great interest and relevance to Children's Fund activities in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour and ought to one of the most useful sets of research data for Children's Fund purposes. It is unfortunate, then, that because of a range of early difficulties with the project implementation and evaluation arrangements, very little outcome data is available to include at the time of preparing this review. The first substantial report on the evaluation appeared late in 2004 (France et al 2004); this provides useful detail both on the problems encountered with the initiative and on its scale and scope. A helpful guide to issues arising in the process of implementing large-scale programmes, based on the *On Track* evaluation, is provided by Hine (2004).

The scale of the initiative is certainly impressive: between them, the *On Track* projects were planning to deliver 693 separate interventions over the first 3 years, some of which would be targeting large numbers of children; after 18 months, 57% of these interventions had actually been delivered; and over 250,000 attendances by children at intervention activities had been recorded (France et al 2004). Information on outcomes or impact from this substantial body of activity is, however, limited. Whilst some evidence of positive impact is identified, this is derived from very small samples and the evaluators conclude that: 'On Track is now starting to show some early indications of how it might start to have an impact although it is too early to say if real change is taking place' (ibid 13). On the basis of evaluation published to date it does not seem possible to say with any confidence that the kinds of preventive outcomes hoped for from the initiative are being achieved[11].

Splash and *Splash Extra* are programmes commissioned by the YJB on behalf of the government. They began in 2000 and are described as 'locally run holiday schemes based in high crime estates ……… to engage young people in constructive activities over holiday periods and thus reduce levels of crime and incidents most commonly associated with youth offending' (YJB 2002). The programme targets 'at risk' 13-17 year olds and operates on a large scale: the YJB reports that the 2002 schemes achieved 237,012 attendances by young people at 13,479 activities, for a total of 961,189 'young person hours'. Activities ranged from 'sport, music, drama and arts

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[11] The second phase of the national evaluation of *On Track,* being undertaken by the Policy Research Bureau, will be reporting final findings in March 2006.

through to residentials and personal development sessions' (ibid). The outcomes claimed for the project areas are that

- Total crime reduced by 7.4% from June to August 2002 compared to a 2.9% increase in 2001 during the same period
- Juvenile nuisance increased by 0.1% from June to August 2002 compared to a 13.2% increase in 2001 during the same period (ibid).

However, all output and outcome data are provided directly by the project areas (i.e. they are not independently collected) and various difficulties and variations in the submission of data means that the two outcome figures summarised above are derived from very small samples (N = 10 and 18 respectively). A limited evaluation of the summer 2000 schemes was undertaken by Home Office researchers (Loxley et al 2000). This looked only at six schemes, was able to obtain outcome data in relation to just three, and the analysis of the impact of the schemes in reducing crime was inconclusive.

Nonetheless, the 2000 and 2001 programmes were judged sufficiently successful for the government to provide the YJB with funding to launch *Splash Extra* in the summer of 2002 – essentially an extension of the original programme to cover a wider 9-17 year old age range (DCMS 2002).

Like *On Track*, the *Splash* programmes are clearly of great relevance to the Children's Fund. They are not, however, being independently evaluated and the only national data on their impact appears to be of the type quoted above; there are more detailed reports on individual local projects, but again these are internally produced and with varying and sometimes uncertain methodologies. Given the relevance of the approaches being pursued, the absence of independent and rigorous evaluation of *Splash* and the delays and difficulties in the evaluation of *On Track* constitute regrettable gaps in current research-based knowledge of effective preventive work with children.

Section 3: Research on preventing re-offending

Types of preventive interventions

There is an extremely large body of research on the effectiveness of interventions to prevent re-offending by children and young people (although this rarely relates specifically to 10-13 year olds). A number of methodologically rigorous reviews of this research, including those using meta-analysis techniques, have been published, leading to a high degree of consensus among scholars about what is, and what is not, effective in preventing re-offending. Recent summaries of these analyses and findings for a UK audience are provided by YJB (2001) and McGuire et al. (2002), and more briefly by Hollin et al (2002) and Utting et al (2002).

Interventions to prevent re-offending by children already involved in criminal behaviour are overwhelmingly the province of criminal justice agencies. Whilst agencies outside the mainstream criminal justice system can and do play important roles in preventive initiatives with young offenders, the planning, commissioning and monitoring (and usually the bulk of the delivery) of such initiatives is principally a criminal justice responsibility.

A distinction can then be made between two broad categories of approaches from within the criminal justice system to preventing re-offending (Vennard and Hedderman 1998). The first category comprises *coercive* interventions; these are sanctions primarily designed to generate restrictive, regulatory or punitive impacts on the offender – fines, surveillance, curfews, community penalties and incarceration of varying levels of severity and discomfort. The 'philosophy' underpinning this category is *deterrence*: the preventive effect of the different sanctions is assumed to result from the decision of the offender to change their future behaviour in order to avoid painful consequences.

The second category comprises *developmental* interventions[12]; measures that seek to provide the young offender with an increased range of personal resources that can

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[12] There is of course a sense in which developmental interventions, imposed by a court of law, are 'coercive'; the distinction we are drawing relates to the content of the intervention and its intended impact, not to the question whether the individual has a choice of whether to accept the intervention or not.

support new possibilities for action – greater self-esteem and understanding, changes in attitudes, personal and social skills, education, training for work and so on. The philosophy underpinning this category is *rehabilitation*: the preventive effect is assumed to result from the capacity of the individual to develop a more socially constructive lifestyle, given access to appropriate opportunities for positive change. Developmental interventions can be further categorised in terms of the focus of intervention: the individual offender (beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, skills); the family context (roles, relationships, support, conflict resolution); and the school and other spheres of the individual's life.

In practice, it is not uncommon for coercive and developmental interventions to be combined. Examples are the use of rehabilitative programmes within custodial settings, or a community sentence which combines restrictive requirements with developmental opportunities. Where appropriate, the specific effects of such combined approaches will be addressed in the discussion that follows.

Coercive interventions to prevent re-offending
A number of clear messages emerge from the research on this issue. Firstly, meta-analytic reviews indicate that there is no evidence that punitive sanctions and other interventions concerned with the restriction and regulation of the individual can be relied on to prevent re-offending or reduce rates of recidivism among young offenders (conclusions from these reviews are summarised in YJB 2001 and McGuire et al 2002). The great majority of studies demonstrate that these sanctions either have no impact on re-offending or are associated with an *increased* level of re-offending.

Secondly, a systematic review of over 500 outcome studies of a variety of deterrence-oriented programmes, whilst not using meta-analysis, confirms the findings that coercive interventions have predominantly nil or negative effects on recidivism among young people (Sherman et al 1998). A more recent review of 140 studies, with a total sample size of over 53,000, covering interventions in both custodial and community settings ranging from intensive supervision through electronic monitoring and drug testing to boot camps, found that only fines had a small impact in reducing re-offending. All the others were ineffective or worse (Gendreau et al 2001).

Thirdly, 'Get Tough' approaches to young offenders appear, in particular, not to work. A systematic review of experimental studies shows that interventions explicitly designed to instil a fear of punishment in the young offender, or young person judged to be at risk of offending, are more harmful to young people than doing nothing (Petrosino et al 2003). 'Short, sharp shock' regimes of the kind adopted in American 'boot camps' and some UK detention centres either have no discernible impact in preventing recidivism or, again, have negative effects (Lipsey & Wilson 1998); interestingly, a government-commissioned evaluation of such regimes established in the UK as long ago as the early 1980s found that they had 'no discernible effect on the rate at which trainees were reconvicted' (Thornton et al 1984, cited in Muncie 1999: 294).

An important contemporary development in England and Wales is the Detention and Training Order (DTO), introduced in April 2000. This is a custodial sentence to be applied to virtually all under 18s whose crime is judged serious enough to warrant custody; its new and unique feature is that half the sentence is served in a secure institution and half under close supervision in the community. An initial evaluation of the first two years of DTO implementation, and covering over 6000 DTOs, reported very mixed results (Hazel et al 2002). A number of positive indicators were compromised by poor preparation prior to the trainee's move from custody to community and limited engagement with educational and work activities once resettled in the community, often because of limited inter-agency co-operation. As regards the principal aim of DTOs of preventing re-offending, the evaluators concluded that, 'There were clearly problems in addressing offending behaviour' and that '……the models about good practice in addressing offending [found in the effectiveness literature] were unlikely to represent the majority experience of these trainees given the stresses and strains in the system in these early days' (Hazel et al 2002: 100). It would appear that, at best, the DTO shows signs of a more constructive approach to young offenders receiving a custodial sentence but that it does not yet demonstrate an effective means of reducing re-offending.

Developmental interventions to reduce re-offending

Offender focused interventions

There is a very substantial body of research designed to evaluate interventions that address the offending behaviour of individual young people. Based on the most recently published meta-analyses (for example, Dowden and Andrews, 1999; Losel, 2001), McGuire et al (2002) state that by 1999 nearly 2000 primary outcome studies were available for scrutiny and their own review updates this with findings issued in the subsequent two years. They identify and assess 23 meta-analytic reviews of evaluations of young offender behaviour programmes, published since 1985. Amongst these, reviews of particular significance and influence because of their size and scale include those by Andrews et al (1990); Lipsey (1992); Lipsey and Wilson (1998); and Dowden and Andrews (1999). Those are reviews of studies of primarily North American provenance. There are a few meta-analytic reviews that focus exclusively on studies of European programmes, some of which were conducted in the UK: Redondo, Garrido and Sanchez-Meca (1997); Redondo, Sanchez-Meca and Garrido (1999, 2002). The findings from these meta-analyses are supported by other reviews using systematic review techniques; particularly significant here is Sherman et al (1997). The main conclusions from all these reviews are consistent between North America and Europe.

Overall, this large body of research demonstrates that offender programmes that meet certain criteria (see below) can achieve modest but significant effects in reducing recidivism. Some of the programmes in Lipsey's (1992, 1995) analyses achieved 20% or more reductions in recidivism rates, compared with non-programme control groups. The same types of programmes were found to be more effective than other interventions even with those young offenders convicted of violent and serious crimes, although with lower levels of reduced recidivism (Lipsey and Wilson, 1998). More substantial reductions in re-offending rates can, however, be achieved: programmes classed as a result of analysis as the 'most consistently effective' demonstrated an average impact of 40% reduction in recidivism in community settings and 30% in custodial settings (ibid).

As a result, the prospects for rehabilitative work with young offenders are now viewed with 'cautious optimism' (Utting et al, 2002: 168) and the key findings from

this research are used extensively to develop policy on reducing re-offending, shape practitioner training programmes and inform practice guidance in the UK. They provide, in fact, the foundation of the 'what works' discourse (see, for example, McGuire 1995; Nacro 1999; Hollin et al 2002; Utting et al 2002; YJB 2001; McGuire et al 2002). These findings can be summarised by saying that research shows the likely effectiveness of interventions to be increased when they:

- *Focus on the offending-related (criminogenic) needs of the individual* (i.e. those risk factors that increase the likelihood of offending behaviour), as opposed to factors that are less directly related to offending behaviour; as an example, Hollin et al state that 'some of the research on the effectiveness of skills training……showed that while the young people became more socially competent, this had no effect on their offending' (2002: 6).

- *Relate the level of intervention to the level of offending*; effective interventions with more serious offenders and those assessed as at greater risk of re-offending are characterised by an intensity and duration matched to the scale of the offender's needs.

- *Take place in community settings*; interventions located within the young offender's familiar social environment show more effective outcomes than those in custodial settings – and those that do take place in custody are more effective if linked to community-based work.

- *Demonstrate 'programme integrity'*; effective interventions are based on a planned and managed process that links aims, methods, resources, staff training and support, monitoring and evaluation in an integrated way.

- *Respond to the general and specific learning styles and needs of offenders*; staff delivering effective interventions operate with an active, participatory approach that is structured and focused around meeting offenders' behavioural and skills needs, and that takes account of specific differences of age, gender, ethnicity and cultural identity between offenders.

- *Tackle the multiple needs of offenders with multiple services*; effectiveness is demonstrated, though not consistently at the highest levels, by 'multi-modal' interventions in which a range of opportunities for personal, social, educational or economic development are made available to the young offender.

- *Develop cognitive, behavioural and inter-personal skills*; the most effective interventions are characterised by programme content and methods that are 'skills-oriented, concentrating on problem solving and other personal and social interaction' (Utting et al: 169) and 'include a cognitive component in order to focus on the attitudes and beliefs that support anti-social behaviour' (Hollin et al: 7).

As well as highlighting these characteristics of effective interventions, reviews of research also indicate the importance of young offenders being assigned to programmes on the basis of 'sound and thorough assessments of variables including risk, need, responsivity and context ………… Reviews have emphasised the importance of employing risk-needs assessment tools that are well validated; and of providing staff with sufficient training in the use of them' (McGuire et al 2002: 37)

The research also provides clear conclusions about the kinds of individual offender-focused developmental interventions that do not demonstrate effectiveness in preventing re-offending (and in some instances are associated with increased recidivism). These are: vocational training that offers no genuine prospect of employment; outward-bound or 'wilderness challenge' programmes that are not linked to other interventions; and some types of therapy – 'Traditional psychodynamic and nondirective client-centred therapies are to be avoided within general samples of offenders' (Andrews et al, quoted in Hollin et al 2002: 7).

Family, School and Community-focused interventions

The rigorous research on wider social interventions with young offenders that does exist is overwhelmingly North American. It is summarised here by reference to studies by three sets of authors who provide systematic reviews of relevant programme evaluations: Farrington and Welsh (1999; 2003) on family based interventions; Wilson et al (2001) on school based interventions; and Sherman et al's (1997) review of a range of preventive interventions including those with a family, school or community focus.

Farrington and Welsh (1999) provide a descriptive review of 24 family based programmes conducted in experimental conditions and meeting an explicit set of criteria, including a sample size of at least 100 children (ibid: 287). Only a small minority (three) of the programmes were clearly aimed at existing offenders; most were aimed at younger children in various 'at risk' categories. These three programmes tested interventions using multi-systemic therapy (MST): 'a multiple component treatment programme conducted in families, schools and communities. The particular type of treatment is chosen according to the particular needs of the youth; therefore, the nature of the treatment is different for each person. The treatment may include individual, family, peer, school and community interventions, including parent training and skills training' (Farrington and Welsh 1999: 297). In follow-up studies of between one and four years, all three programmes showed substantial reductions in measures of offending behaviour (numbers of arrests or incidence of incarceration). Farrington and Welsh conclude that, 'Overall………MST is an effective method of treating juvenile offenders' (ibid: 298) but highlight two qualifying issues: first, the relative effectiveness of the different components of the interventions could not be assessed; second, and crucially, that outside of experimental conditions, implementation factors such as the capacity of staff to adhere to MST treatment principles could reduce effectiveness (see below).

Farrington and Welsh (2003) build on their earlier work by reporting a meta-analysis of 40 programme evaluations in which family based interventions played a key part. Eleven of these programmes explicitly targeted existing young offenders (the remainder again targeted pre-offending age children or those indicating factors associated with risk of offending). Programmes using multi-systemic therapy were

again found to be effective, as were those using behavioural parent training as a principal method of intervention. This latter approach is based on social learning principles and is likely to include 'training parents how to provide positive reinforcement for desirable behaviour, to use non-punitive and consistent discipline practices, and to develop family crisis management techniques' (Farrington and Welsh 2003: 139). Again, however, the conclusions to the analysis are hedged with qualifications about the difficulty of distinguishing between the effects of different programme components and the uncertainties generated by implementation variables.

Wilson et al (2001) undertook a meta-analysis of 165 studies covering 216 school-based interventions designed to prevent 'problem behaviours' including 'crime, substance use, dropout/non-attendance and other conduct problems' (ibid: 247). The great majority of the interventions (80%) were individually focused, albeit in a group setting within the school (ibid: 259). They used the same range of interventive methods as discussed in the previous section and with broadly the same results: those methods aimed at improving self-control or social competency via cognitive-behavioural or behavioural instruction techniques showed consistently positive effects, whilst those using general counselling and other therapeutic approaches, mentoring, work study and recreational programmes produced negative effects (ibid: 265) although it is noted that the latter have been 'sparsely evaluated' (ibid: 258). More interestingly, the remaining 20% of interventions were 'environmentally focused', that is, they sought to change aspects of class management and organisation through the establishment of behavioural norms and expectations, delivery of classroom management programmes and, to a lesser extent, management of school discipline and reorganisation of classes. The analysis found that these 'environmentally focused programmes were […] particularly effective for reducing delinquency and drug use' and, overall, that school-based interventions can be especially effective with higher-risk groups such as those who have previously offended (ibid: 268). However, as with the Farrington and Welsh studies, Wilson et al are cautious about the strength of the claims that can be made for the relative effectiveness of different preventive approaches, again because little is known about the effects of individual programme components and because many interventions have not been properly evaluated. It is also important to bear in mind that the studies analysed by Wilson et al are predominantly US-based; there may well be difficult

issues to consider regarding the transferability of knowledge about prevention programmes within schools to the British context.

Finally in this group of systematic reviews, Sherman et al (1997) assessed over 500 evaluations of prevention programmes employing rigorous methodologies. So far as programmes targeting existing young offenders are concerned, their findings anticipated those of the three meta-analyses described above for family and school-based interventions (as would be expected since they included many of the same programmes). As regards community-based interventions, the first point is that there are few properly evaluated studies to draw on. However, Sherman et al suggest that among such studies as do exist and meet their methodological criteria, no programmes proved to be effective in reducing re-offending, although they classed as 'promising' certain programmes that involve formal monitoring of gang activities, community-based mentoring in relation to drug abuse and community-based after-school recreation activities. Each of these is, however, heavily qualified and again there are likely to be transferability issues for the UK context.

Evaluation of Post-1998 Interventions

Recent and current research on the range of interventions to prevent re-offending by young people in England and Wales is largely shaped by the requirement to evaluate the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) 1998 and subsequent related legislation. This falls into four main categories:

- 'Youth Inclusion Programmes' in deprived areas, offering a range of preventive activities to those young people at highest risk of offending
- Specific targeted programmes for offenders designed to address different dimensions of youth offending
- The introduction of elements of 'restorative justice' in the sentencing of young offenders
- Interventions targeted at the parents of young offenders rather than the young people themselves.

In all these areas, the role of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) in developing policy and guidance on the implementation of legislative requirements *and* in commissioning the evaluation of programmes is extremely important, as is that of the Youth Offending

Teams (YOTs) as the principal agents for local co-ordination and delivery of programmes.

Youth Inclusion Programme

The Youth Inclusion Programme is an initiative of the YJB established in 2000, building on the earlier development and implementation of the approach by Crime Concern. There are 70 youth inclusion projects (YIPs) currently running throughout England and Wales and these have been subject to a 'phase one' evaluation (Morgan Harris Burrows 2003). YIPs are required to identify 50 of the most 'at risk' 13-16 year olds in their area (the 'top 50') and engage them in activities that will prevent them from offending or re-offending. In addition, YIPs are expected to encourage all young people in the area to participate in project activities. Participation by both the top 50 and the other young people is voluntary, i.e. involvement in a YIP does not result from a court order.

Stringent targets for reducing crime and anti-social behaviour are set for YIPs:
- Reduce arrest rates in the target group by 50%
- Reduce truancy and exclusions in the target group by 33%
- Reduce recorded crime in the area by 30%.

Project activities are wide-ranging, including educational, training, recreational and personal development activities. Expectations are that an individual young person in the 'top 50' group will spend an average of 10 hours per week on such activities. The evaluation suggests that the Programme is 'strongly grounded in the research evidence identifying the major correlates of offending behaviour by young people' (ibid: 4).

The evaluation report provides a highly detailed account of how the 70 projects were developed and implemented, the characteristics of the young people involved, the extent and nature of their participation and its effects. Inevitably, perhaps, the evaluation of outcomes (i.e. performance against the targets set) indicates a complex and diverse picture. In very general terms however, the evaluation found:

- 60% of the top 50 'most at risk' category across all projects who were actively and consistently engaged had not previously been arrested; 73% of them remained un-arrested but 27% *were* arrested despite participation in a YIP

- 40% of the top 50 had been arrested before joining a YIP and 75% of these were subsequently arrested for fewer offences, 18% for more offences

- the seriousness of offences decreased, with a 68% decrease in the 'average gravity score' of offences committed by those engaged in YIPs

- the average rate of truancy (both authorised and unauthorised absences from school) among the top 50 cohort increased by 40%

- the average rate of fixed term exclusions reduced by 12%

- the number of permanent exclusions reduced by 27%

- overall crime in the YIP areas increased by 11.4% (but there were substantial differences between areas, and the evaluators express a number of reservations about the relationship between this target and interventions limited to one specific 'at risk' age group.

The very mixed and complex results emerging from the evaluation are evidently sufficiently positive for funding to be made available to support YIPs through to 2006. This is a major initiative designed to prevent youth offending in England and Wales and thorough evaluation of the projects through to their conclusion will be a significant source of knowledge regarding effective prevention.

Specific Programmes

The five programmes grouped under this heading cover projects concerned with: cognitive behaviour; mentoring; education, training and employment; drugs and alcohol; and crime prevention. They are therefore diverse in terms of their focus of intervention, but share the common characteristic of being centrally funded by the YJB as part of a co-ordinated national initiative of policy and practice development, targeted at existing young offenders and subject to formal independent evaluation. They thus form part of what can be regarded as a major experiment intended to generate new knowledge on ways of preventing youth offending. Each of these programmes was the subject of detailed evaluation reports published in 2004; what

follows is intended only as a summary of the key points emerging from the evaluations.

(i) Cognitive Behaviour Projects

The national evaluation report for this programme (Feilzer et al 2004) describes the results of local evaluations of 23 separate projects providing cognitive-behavioural interventions with young offenders, the majority (15) of which targeted 'persistent' young offenders while 4 targeted 'adolescent sexual abusers'. The remaining 4 projects targeted young people with less serious offending histories. Between September 1999 and October 2001, over 1100 young people began involvement in a project with 540 having completed by the end of the period. Completion rates varied considerably, with 70% achieved for the 'adolescent sexual abusers' but only 47% for the persistent offenders. Evidence of success in achieving project aims and objectives was very limited, in large part due to lack of data. A study of reconviction rates was hampered by a very small sample size, and the evaluators' conclusions about the effectiveness of the approach used by the projects are, at best, cautious. Thus while both young people and project workers reported positive effects, reconviction rates among the 'persistent' young offenders remained high at 80%. The evaluators report some extremely useful findings regarding the planning, development and implementation of the projects but are unable to reach firm conclusions about the impact of the interventions on young people's offending behaviour.

(ii) Mentoring Projects

The YJB provided funding for 43 one-to-one mentoring schemes, in which young people were matched with adults who provided advice, guidance and support, in particular targeting those factors that contribute to offending behaviour. The national evaluation report (Tarling et al 2004) discusses findings from 39 of these schemes, which dealt with almost 3600 referrals between April 2000 and September 2001. In assessing outcomes, the evaluators suggest that given the characteristics and circumstances of the young people referred to the schemes, establishing and sustaining a mentoring relationship for even a brief period should be regarded as a success. In these terms 58% of mentoring matches were completed as planned and 42% were not; and the report examines the reasons for relationships breaking down. It

also discusses in some detail important implementation issues about the recruitment of the volunteer mentors.

A specific smaller-scale study of re-offending conducted by the national evaluators examined 359 cases. This found that 55% of the young people had re-offended and been dealt with by the police or courts within one year of entering the mentoring relationship. A number of factors are identified as associated with the tendency to re-offend: males are much more likely to re-offend than females; those aged 10-13 years are less likely to re-offend than those aged 14-17; conversely, those whose offending career began at age 10-13 were much more likely to re-offend than those whose first offence occurred between 14-17 years; there is a strong association between re-offending and having a high number of previous convictions; and the more severe the disposal the young person had received immediately prior to joining the programme, the more likely they were to re-offend.

(iii) Education, Training and Employment
The national evaluation report on projects under this heading presents findings from research on 42 projects involving around 3350 young people (Hurry & Moriarty 2004). Since these projects were mostly focused on older young offenders (the majority were aged 16+ years) and concerned with the transition from education through training and into employment, the findings are not directly relevant to Children's Fund projects and are not discussed here. It is however worth noting the evaluators' overall conclusion that in relation to the aim of reducing offending, 'Evidence that this goal has been met through education, training and employment projects is not convincing' (ibid: 6).

An earlier research review undertaken for the YJB confirms a point made above that there is little reliable research-based knowledge of the detailed connections between young people's engagement in education and training and their offending behaviour (ECOTEC n/d – but published not earlier than 2002). What is known at a general level is that educational under-achievement (especially in literacy and numeracy) and absence from school (whether caused by exclusion or non-attendance) are significantly related to offending behaviour; thus, interventions that improve learning and skills and so lead to stronger employment prospects, and interventions that

increase school participation, are most likely to be effective in reducing youth offending (ibid: 3).

Drawing on Ayers et al (1999), the ECOTEC review suggests that 'the route to rehabilitation for the vast majority of young people is through the attainment of very normal milestones often denied to them due to their marginalized status. These are:

- learning to read and write

- gaining qualifications

- getting a job

- entering further education and training' (ECOTEC n/d: 3).

However, while these needs seem remarkably commonplace, a problem is identified in securing the means of achieving them for young offenders. This is that the responsibility for reducing youth offending overall and for rehabilitating individual young offenders, rests with the youth justice system and specifically the Youth Offending Teams; yet the YOTs do not have responsibility for mainstream educational provision or the capacity to deliver educational interventions. Rather, the YOT's role is to broker appropriate services, ensure participation, monitor standards and progress, and encourage progression to recognised qualifications – they thus operate both strategically and through the process of individual supervision of young offenders, and they do so in response to specific education and training targets for offenders set by the YJB. ECOTEC suggest, however, that this effort is hampered by the lack of a clear evidence base: 'Educational research has not supplied a body of well-grounded knowledge about the efficiency and effectiveness of various approaches to teaching and learning …… The needs of those in the criminal justice system have not been examined by researchers from an educational perspective' (ibid: 4).

In the absence of a developed and research-grounded knowledge base, ECOTEC highlight a number of general principles culled from related literature that should guide the work of YOT members and their steering committees in developing better educational and training opportunities for young offenders. Given the focus of this current review on children up to the age of 13, these principles are presented here with

more emphasis on those relating to school-based education and less on training and employment:

- Interventions to improve educational outcomes for children and young people at risk of re-offending should conform to the 'what works' effectiveness characteristics
- Young people need to learn new skills (e.g. cognitive skills) in the mainstream school environment where those skills are required; such learning does not transfer easily from specialist or segregated environments
- Learning materials and delivery styles used in educational interventions must reflect the age, attainment level and cultural background of the young person
- The likelihood of successful development of core literacy and numeracy skills is greater when the young person is exposed to longer and more intensive learning-based interventions
- The learning needs of parents/carers need to be considered to ensure that they can provide appropriate support to the young person's educational experience and can engage with school staff
- Maintaining progress towards nationally accredited qualifications is vital.

As with all developmental interventions with young people, considerable emphasis is placed on the importance of full assessment of individual needs and the subsequent stages of planning and review.

(iv) Drug and Alcohol Projects

The national evaluation report on the YJB's drug and alcohol projects (Hammersley et al 2004) discusses data from 27 projects, although only 24 provided final reports. The report catalogues numerous and severe problems both in the development and implementation of projects and in the evaluation process, such that overall conclusions about the effectiveness of interventions are difficult to draw. Whilst the report does provide useful detail on the types of approaches offered by the projects and on the factors which contribute to successful implementation, little reliable evidence was available on project outcomes. Thus the evaluators, in their summary, state that outcome data was provided by only six of the projects and that this was

'uniformly weak self-reported or staff assessment data' (ibid: 7). Moreover, in a reconviction study conducted by the national evaluators themselves, it was found that:

> most young offenders referred to (or treated by) alcohol and drug services re-offended…………… There was no evidence that substance treatment reduced re-offending, but such evidence would have required a better control group than was available (ibid).

To date, then, evaluation is unable to demonstrate much in the way of positive change resulting from the YJB's investment in drug and alcohol projects.

(v) Crime Prevention Projects

This heading refers to what appears to be a miscellaneous group of sixteen YJB funded projects that do not fit comfortably with any of the other headings. The national evaluation report for this group of projects (Powell 2004) notes that 'most of these were not offering specific forms of intervention but a wide range of activities for both those at risk of offending and young offenders – so they were categorised separately as prevention' (ibid: 5). All the projects were based on a multi-agency approach and fell into one of three categories:

- Projects working in support of pre-court disposals and court orders
- Diversionary programmes
- Establishment of multi-agency partnerships.

Much of the work of these projects was developmental in nature and therefore difficult to assess in terms of the core objective of preventing and reducing crime. Where such an assessment should have been possible was in the specific reconviction study of a sample of all young people starting an intervention during a 3-month period and then tracked for one year. Only 9 of the 16 projects were involved in this study, and a range of methodological and organisational problems meant that an initial sample of 216 cases became reduced to just 26. Whilst analysis of these cases does indicate some positive impact in reducing levels of offending among the young people, the evaluation report suggests that because of the very small sample size the measures of change identified should be 'interpreted with extreme caution' (ibid: 31). Moreover, while the evaluator highlights 'the benefits of providing a programme based on multiple interventions', she also notes that 'it is impossible to identify which elements of the programme were the most successful' (ibid: 32). However the report

notes that a further, more extensive tracking study was due to be initiated which it is to be hoped will shed light on these issues.

Referral orders and restorative justice

Restorative justice is perhaps the 'hottest' topic in current academic discourse on ways of responding to crime and the people who commit it; and there is a particular interest in the extent to which it may offer a more effective means of responding to young offenders than those offered by traditional criminal justice sanctions (for example, see Morris and Maxwell 2001). Whilst the concept itself has a certain slipperiness, one frequently quoted definition is that it is a 'process whereby the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future' (Marshall 1996: 37). Thus, restorative justice shifts the focus of attention from the offender to the offence and its impacts, opens up the process to people other than legal professionals (who do not have any stake in the offence) such as victims, the offender's family and wider community members, and seeks to achieve a satisfactory resolution through a process of deliberation in which all the participants, including the offender, have a voice. Crucially, the offence is seen as having caused harm to relationships between the offender and victim and within the community generally, and the resolution should involve some means of restoring or repairing those relationships. Hence, the outcome of restorative justice is typically an act of reparation by the offender in return for acceptance as a valued community member.

Restorative justice processes have been introduced in different forms in different parts of the world in recent years (Morris and Maxwell 2001; McLaughlin et al 2003). Its principal manifestation in the UK is in the form of the referral order, introduced by the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999. The intention is that it should, other than in very specific circumstances, be applied to *all* cases involving

> 10-17 year olds pleading guilty and convicted for the first time by the courts. The disposal involves referring the young offender to a youth offender panel. The intention is that the panel will provide a forum away from the formality of the court where the young offender, his or her family and, where appropriate, the victim can consider the circumstances surrounding the offence(s) and the effect on the victim. The panel will agree a 'contract' with the young offender …………Panels consist of one YOT member and (at least) two community panel members (Crawford and Newburn 2003: 59-60).

The length of the contract, but not its content, is specified by the court at the time of referral; breach of the agreed contract can result in imposition of a more traditional sanction.

Two major evaluation studies of the use of restorative justice approaches in England and Wales have been undertaken: a Home Office funded study of the initial referral order pilot schemes that preceded full implementation; and a YJB funded study of projects concerned with developing restorative justice interventions for young offenders that the Board itself was funding.

The new system of referral orders and panels was introduced in summer 2000 in 11 pilot areas. The pilots were comprehensively evaluated (Newburn et al 2002) and full national implementation occurred on 1 April 2002. The evaluation of the pilots addresses many issues in the operation of the system, including the conduct of panel meetings, the range of activities encompassed in the contracts, and the benefits and disbenefits experienced by the various stakeholders; here we will focus only on the conclusions drawn about the effectiveness of the process in preventing re-offending by the young offender.

The first point to make is that, given the time constraints of the evaluation, this 'outcome' question could only be posed in terms of whether or not the contract was successfully completed without the young person offending again – it could not examine the longer term impact on offending. Indeed, the evaluation could only examine outcomes in relation to around half of the orders that were imposed during the pilot phase: those that had been completed by the time the evaluation ended (Crawford and Newburn 2003: 139). There was thus an unresolved question about whether this kind of 'restorative' process was effective in achieving lasting changes in behaviour.

A success rate of 75% was found in those completed orders where only one offence was under consideration; 64% where there was more than one offence; and 50% where there was more than one count of the main offence. There was little difference between boys and girls. There was an indication that the nature of the offence was

connected to the likelihood of successful completion, leading the evaluators to conclude that 'the less serious offences, and therefore shorter orders, will tend to have the highest completion rates' (ibid: 160). There was also an indication that the more complex contracts, i.e. those with three or four separate elements, were less likely to be successfully completed.

The restorative justice projects funded by the YJB commenced either prior to, or at around the same time as, the referral order pilots began. The projects were not limited to young offenders receiving referral orders but worked with young people who could be referred to them from different points in the justice process – for instance, at the point of Final Warning. The national evaluation report (Wilcox, with Hoyle, 2004) analyses data from 42 projects (of a total of 46 actually funded), which between them had worked with over 6800 young people. Most of the projects are described as 'generalist' in that they offered a range of restorative interventions, including family group conferencing, mediation, reparation and victim awareness. Although the evaluators reported considerable problems with the quality and availability of the locally produced evaluation data, they nevertheless found that 83% of young offenders successfully completed their intervention and that over 75% of both offenders and victims felt positively about the restorative process.

The evaluators conducted a follow-up study of reconviction rates with a large sample of 728 offenders from 34 projects; they found that 'Nearly half (46.6%) of the offenders were reconvicted within 12 months of the date of conviction' and as in other studies 'gender, age at first conviction, number of previous appearances, number of offences at current appearance and type of disposal are all strongly correlated with the reconviction rate' (ibid: 44). However, because of difficulties in comparing this result to any other reconviction studies and the absence of a control group, no strong conclusions about the effectiveness of the interventions in reducing offending could be drawn although the evaluators suggest there is some slight evidence of positive impact.

The current position, then, in summary, is that the great majority of first-time offenders aged 10-17 who acknowledge their guilt are now being dealt with through a system embodying distinctively different values and principles from those associated

with traditional criminal justice processes. There is, however, only very limited research evidence as to the impact and effectiveness of this system.

Parenting

The idea that parents of children and young people who commit crime should accept some responsibility for the offending behaviour and are therefore legitimate subjects for intervention themselves can be traced back to at least the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act. However, academic commentators see the 1998 CDA as embodying a decisive shift in the preparedness of the state both to define aspects of parental responsibilities and to provide for their legal enforcement (Muncie 1999; Drakeford and McCarthy 2000; Gelsthorpe 2001). This shift is most obviously signalled by the introduction of the Parenting Order, which may be made against the parent(s) of any young person convicted of an offence; importantly for the perspective of this paper, however, the Act asserts a legal presumption that a Parenting Order *will* be made in the case of a child aged 10-16 who is convicted of an offence. A Parenting Order comprises two elements: a requirement that the parents attend guidance or counselling sessions at least once a week for up to twelve weeks, and any additional requirements the court believes necessary, for example, ensuring the child attends school regularly.

The guidance issued by the YJB to support effective practice in relation to programmes for the parents of young offenders (PRB/TSA n/d) draws on a range of research evidence to identify factors that can strengthen parents' capacity to reduce their children's anti-social or criminal behaviour. These factors are:
- Positive monitoring and supervision
- Consistent and fair discipline
- Reduction in family conflict
- An increase in positive communication and warmth
- Support in the parent-child relationship

Programmes designed to address such factors have been developed and implemented by YOTs since the 1998 CDA came into force and have been the subject of a national evaluation (Ghate and Ramella 2002). The evaluation, although not conducted in experimental conditions (i.e. there were no control groups with which to compare

results), is a large scale, systematic study of 34 separate parenting projects across England; information on 'impact' was obtained on approx. 800 parents and 500 young people, with assessments of parents progress from approx. 800 project workers. A sub-sample of 200 participating parents provided 'impact' data via 'before' and 'after' questionnaires.

All projects were available to parents of young offenders on a voluntary basis as well as to those referred by the court via a Parenting Order. Voluntary referrals outnumbered those on Orders by 4:1, although the report suggests that Referral Orders may have been initially slow due both to unfamiliarity with and some reluctance to use the new Order on the part of some courts. There were no significant differences in the characteristics of those referred voluntarily and those by the courts. Overall, the young people involved were a 'high offending' group: 89% of those in the before and after study had been convicted of an offence in the year before their parents' involvement in the programme, and each young person had an average of 4.4 recorded offences in the same period. The project programmes were thus working with the parents of young people with a very high risk of re-offending.

Findings from the evaluation were broadly positive. In particular, parents felt strongly that they had benefited from the programmes in terms of their parenting abilities although project staff were more cautious in their assessment of parental benefits (ibid: 39). However, in the year after programme completion, there were significant reductions in both the conviction and offending rates of the young people concerned, and a 50% reduction in the average number of offences per young person (ibid: 46-7). These findings indicate very positive changes, but Ghate and Ramella warn that:

> It would be dangerous to attribute these effects to the family's participation in the Parenting Programme per se. At least some of the young people were just passing the peak age of offending; there were several interventions going on with these young people in addition to the intervention involving their parents; there was no comparison group with which to compare these rates. Thus, it is hard to be confident that the Parenting Programme itself is giving added value over and above the other substantial activity of the youth justice system........ (ibid: 50).

Given that the intervention with parents came at a relatively late stage in the young person's 'offending career', when behaviour patterns were well established, the researchers suggest that the positive findings regarding impact on parents' skills and confidence may hold out more hope for a preventive effect on younger siblings in the family rather than the original young offender (ibid: 50). This, therefore, has possible implications for children within the Children's Fund age range.

It is interesting to look at the Ghate and Ramella study in the light of Gelsthorpe's assertion, supported by evidence, that, 'Put simply, the [parenting] order embodied in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 flies in the face of expert views' (Gelsthorpe 2001: 158). She notes that: 'The reality of parenthood in many cases where young people are in trouble, undoubtedly involves vulnerability and poverty, with many parents (especially mothers) living on state benefits and experiencing housing problems....' (ibid: 159-60), and suggests that there are 'core questions' about the social and cultural assumptions on which the order is based and the extent to which social and cultural differences in parenting practice can be accommodated. She warns of the dangers associated with interventions that set out to stigmatise children and parents, 'especially if such interventions promote white, middle-class notions of parenthood without recognition that this may not, perhaps even cannot, be the norm' (ibid: 160). However, Ghate and Ramella's research found that the response of parents to the Parenting Programme was equally positive whether they were there compulsorily or voluntarily, and despite half of them being lone parents, the great majority being unemployed and in general experiencing a high incidence of problems such as poor mental health, substance misuse, domestic violence, debt and so on (Ghate and Ramella 2002: 27). On the other hand, 96% of the sample were white (91% of the overall study population) (ibid: 26) – a statistic which in itself raises interesting questions about the routes into the parenting projects – so no conclusions can be drawn about the appropriateness or otherwise of the programme to non-white parents. There is some evidence from the study (as from others) that the contrast between its positive findings regarding parental response and the serious doubts cast by Gelsthorpe and other commentators can be explained in terms of the sensitive and socially aware practices of the project workers, which can overcome the negative associations (which many parents did experience) of a court-ordered programme. This highlights the critical issue of implementation to which many research reports refer.

Section 4: Conclusion – what the research literature does, and doesn't, tell us about preventing crime and anti-social behaviour among young people

Introduction: a critical reflection on the research

In this final section, we want to step back from the detailed discussion of research studies and reviews in order to reflect on the overall nature and scope of the dominant body of research that has given rise to them. We want, in a very schematic and provisional way, to offer some evaluation of that body of research itself, to identify its strengths and weaknesses and, perhaps most importantly, to raise some issues that we believe need to be borne in mind by anyone looking to draw on the research literature in support of policy and practice development.

In this context, it is helpful to quote the recent words of two of the leading British researchers and commentators on youth justice:

> The study of youth justice and young offenders in the UK is currently dominated by three, somewhat unconnected, bodies of work. There is, first, writing of a largely theoretical and abstract kind that focuses on the analysis of policy together with what are generally polemical critiques of the politics of youth justice. Second, and by contrast, there are the highly empirical, relatively technically sophisticated longitudinal studies, and other studies of risk and protective factors, that have underpinned much of the 'what works' movement. Finally, and the most recent development, there is the burgeoning market in what are often small-scale, empirical studies of local practice …… often underpinned by small research budgets and technically unsophisticated approaches to methodology (Crawford and Newburn 2003: 234).

In preparing this review paper we have clearly focused on the second of Crawford and Newburn's categories. We have made occasional reference to writing that falls within their first category (mostly in Section 1), where this has seemed helpful and relevant, but we have not explored in any systematic way the arguments pursued by the authors whom Crawford and Newburn have in mind. We have made no reference at all to work in the third category, partly on the grounds that most of it fails our methodological criteria for inclusion and partly on the purely pragmatic grounds that there is simply too much of it to address in any systematic way.

In what follows we do draw more substantially on the 'category 1' body of work, since it is there that a critical engagement with the research work in 'category 2' is

found. Our interest is not in 'polemical critiques of the politics of youth justice' – though there is plenty in that genre that is highly worthy of note – but rather with what we might call 'the reflective critique of youth justice research'. We believe such critique is important in furthering our understanding of, and capacity to assess, the current state of knowledge about the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour among children.

It should be apparent that two very general conclusions can be drawn from our assessment of relevant research. First, the volume of research literature on the topic is extremely large, even when fairly stringent criteria of validity and reliability are applied. Applying different criteria, and thereby including small, single case studies and evaluations that may be methodologically sound in themselves but lack any comparative element, yields a truly enormous body of work.

Moreover, a core claim is that the principal findings from this research provide a tested knowledge base from which it should be possible to develop, with some confidence, appropriate policies and service interventions. And, indeed, much policy and service development in the UK in relation to young people's offending in recent years has drawn explicitly on this research-generated knowledge base. The identification of children at risk of involvement in anti-social behaviour and criminality, the development of interventions to strengthen the protection of those children in the face of known risks and the construction of new service responses to children and young people who have already offended, have all been strongly shaped by the relevant research evidence. There is, perhaps unusually for the social sciences, a clear and positive relationship between the production of research findings and their acceptance and use by policy makers.

It is arguable that this body of knowledge, particularly as translated into the 'what works' effective practice agenda and because of the perceived strength of its research foundations, has exercised an almost hegemonic influence over government policy in the last five or six years; and that the resultant wave of service initiatives all carrying similar values, aims and principles of intervention has, in turn, determined the nature of further research.

This points to the second general conclusion from our review: that despite the scale and evident success of the 'risk and prevention' research, there are a number of significant gaps or weaknesses in the research knowledge base. The dominance of one particular view of what constitutes reliable research knowledge means that other views are squeezed out of the mainstream. The result, put crudely, is that there are important issues that do not get researched, or do not get researched at the right time and in the right place, or only get researched from one methodological perspective.

Chief among these gaps and weaknesses, from a UK viewpoint, are:

- A surprising lack of detailed attention to the particular circumstances and needs of black and ethnic minority children.

- A similar lack of attention to the particular circumstances and needs of girls.

- Little systematic attention given to issues of mental health among at risk children and young people.

- A heavy reliance on research conducted in North America, with the assumption that findings are transferable across time and space and will be applicable in the UK.

- The absence of rigorous evaluation of certain major types of service intervention, even in North America – youth work is perhaps the prime example.

- A general failure to explore rigorously the relationship between 'structural' factors such as poverty, unemployment, bad housing, deprived neighbourhoods and poor environments and the anti-social and criminal behaviour of young people.

Why do these weaknesses in the research knowledge base exist? In what follows we draw on two broad (and closely related) sets of critical views to try to answer

this question: the first focusing on the scope and range of the dominant research literature; the second focusing on methodological issues.

Limited horizons: what's excluded from 'What Works'

Raynor, writing in the principal academic resource book for probation practice, states that: 'What Works is no longer a minority interest struggling for influence in penal policy, but an orthodoxy and a basis of policy……..' (Raynor 2000: 167). Our account, in Section 3, of individual offender-focused interventions describes the knowledge base underpinning the currently dominant policy and practice discourse of 'what works' in the prevention of youth re-offending in this country (see, for example, McGuire et al's 2002 source document for the Youth Justice Board; and the same author's manual on cognitive-behavioural approaches, written for and used extensively within the National Probation Service and promoted as the exemplar of 'evidence-based practice': McGuire 2000).

Acknowledgement is made in this discourse of the significance of the wider social context of young offenders' lives – family, school, peer networks, community – and, as we have seen, research has been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of preventive interventions that target those contexts. Reviewing the literature in 1998, Vennard and Hedderman suggested that there is 'increasing evidence that interventions with high risk young offenders are more effective if they address the links between personal (including cognitive) and social (family, peer-group and school) problems' (Vennard and Hedderman 1998: 112). Such is the dominance of the individually-focused cognitive-behavioural methods of rehabilitation, however, that there is a sense within much of the literature that the role of social contextual factors is understated, if not marginalized (Rex 2001). As a result, rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions at the level of family, school or community is limited in comparison with evaluations of interventions targeting individual offending behaviour (Farrington and Welsh 2003; Wilson et al 2001). There is, further, the suggestion that by giving insufficient attention to social factors the dominant prevention discourse may be unresponsive to aspects of the diversity of the young offender population (Rex 2001); this lack of 'diversity awareness' is arguably reflected in the greater part of the evaluation research literature (Gelsthorpe 2001).

Thus, for example, Rex notes that 'cognitive-behavioural programmes have been criticised for ignoring social factors and being insensitive to the needs of women and ethnic minorities' (Rex 2001: 69-70). She quotes examples of evaluations of adult offender programmes using cognitive-behavioural methods where effectiveness was found to be impaired through insufficient attention to the impacts of the offenders' social environments (ibid.:70-73). Gaes et al suggest that, 'One limitation of the psychological perspective is that there may be many contexts in which behavioural changes, despite the best treatments, are limited by structural and cultural obstacles beyond the control of the treatment provider' (Gaes et al 1999, quoted in Gelsthorpe 2001: 154). In similar vein, Vennard and Hedderman concluded that programmes focused on offending behaviour could be rendered ineffective by powerful factors in the individual's wider social context: 'An impoverished childhood may, for example, explain why an individual fails to acquire certain cognitive skills, acts impulsively or is unable to empathise with others. Because early experiences are so crucial, interventions later in life may have limited impact. Even fairly lengthy and well-targeted interventions are, as Losel (1995) puts it, "only one episode in a long development of criminogenic habits and lifestyles"' (Vennard and Hedderman 1998: 111).

Rex concludes that, 'What is needed is an approach capable of examining the inter-play between an individual's decisions and actions and the social situation in which they are taken' (Rex 2001: 71); however, little or no research seems to have been done to test this proposition. Warning of the dangers of this omission, Rex refers to the current orientation of the National Probation Service for England and Wales, noting that the findings from some research suggests that 'a focus on the Probation Service's main aim of reducing offending may discourage probation areas from undertaking what might be viewed primarily as welfare work……… (and) that preoccupation with 'offending behaviour' may lead to a neglect of other important areas of criminogenic risk and need' (ibid:73). In support of this, and having reviewed the limited research on women offenders, Gelsthorpe states that 'nationally recommended programmes are based on an act of faith that programmes for men will work for women'; moreover, 'there is at least a possibility that it may be important to address broad social differences as indicative of pathways into crime' (Gelsthorpe 2001: 157). She notes further that as the UK research evidence underpinning current

national programmes derives principally from programmes with white males, there are similar questions about the assumptions that they will be effective with ethnic minority offenders (ibid: 157).

These criticisms of the 'what works' approach are not specific to the situation of young offenders, but it is clear that similar concerns about the tendency within the currently dominant discourse to marginalise social factors are voiced in relation to interventions with children and young people. Thus Muncie suggests that within the framework of effective preventive practice with young people, 'the social contexts of offending are bypassed' (Muncie 2000: 26). He further notes that: 'A policy of "what works" tends to focus on the immediate problems of young people and their parents. Whilst this may well deliver some successes……….. [it] is reflective of a failure to impact on the broader social contexts of disadvantage and offending' (ibid: 28). As is apparent from some of our comments in Sections 2 and 3, this failure is evident in the research literature on the 'social context' of offending. Even where the research literature does attempt to engage with issues of social context, the attempt grows weaker the further the research focus shifts from the individual offender: quite a lot of research is available about the family context, less about the school context, even less about community and next to nothing about the macro or structural context. We have little research-based knowledge about the impact of factors such as poverty, poor housing, long term unemployment among family members and deprived local neighbourhoods on children's anti-social behaviour.

The appliance of science? The uses and abuses of methodology
One reason for the under-emphasis on social factors in the criminological research canon is the methodological hierarchy to which most of Crawford and Newburn's 'category 2' researchers subscribe. This hierarchy is constructed on a particular reading of research methods in the natural sciences, and positions 'experimental' method as the epitome of good research design. Thus, at the top of the hierarchy is the randomised control trial (RCT), followed by comparisons of non-randomised experimental and control groups and then other studies which display strong internal rigour but lack a comparative element (see, for example, Sherman et al 1998: 6; and Rutter et al 1998: 316ff). As this hierarchy represents the conventional wisdom on what counts as methodologically rigorous research (Farrington 2002), it provides the

criteria by which the authors of the systematic reviews and meta-analyses discussed in this paper determine which studies to include and exclude, and also, of course, provides the criteria for our own selection.

However, the RCT and other quasi-experimental methodologies rely on the researcher's ability to ensure consistency between the factors being studied, i.e. to compare like with like; the greater the potential for variability between the factors, the more difficult it becomes to maintain methodological rigour. It seems self-evident that highly complex factors, such as schools, communities, deprived areas, will be extremely difficult to control in an experimental research design (Tilley 2001). Hence, as a broad generalisation, research tends to shy away from the attempt to test the effects of such factors and to focus on apparently more controllable subjects such as individual young people. The result of privileging a particular type of methodology is the relative neglect of certain subjects for research.

Tilley, one of the leading British criminological researchers, with a long association with the Home Office's crime reduction research programme, offers a trenchant critique of the 'gold standard' RCT design for evaluative research (Tilley 2001: 84-86). He is particularly critical of the tendency for RCTs and other experimental studies to focus on the 'net effects' of the intervention studied – to be able to demonstrate statements of the kind that 'intervention X produces effect Y' – without examining the particular circumstances or context in which the effect happened. The problem with this becomes apparent when 'intervention X' is subjected to another experimental study somewhere else and produces different, sometimes contradictory effects; as Tilley notes, there is a weakness in the RCT approach when faced with 'the fact that the same measure may work in different ways and thus have different effects according to variations in the circumstances of those involved. The preoccupation of RCTs with net effects obscures these general features of interventions' (ibid: 85).

Tilley builds on the inability of experimental methodologies to take account of the intervention context to criticise Sherman et al's hugely influential report on 'what works, what doesn't and what's promising' (Sherman et al 1998), describing the results of their system of scoring research studies according to the validity of the research method used – with RCTs receiving the top score – as 'dangerous nonsense'

(ibid: 87). He notes, in fact, that Sherman and colleagues do at times (but not consistently) acknowledge the context dependency of findings of effectiveness and that this constrains the generalisability of findings from evaluations:

> The conclusions drawn in the report about what works and what doesn't should be read, therefore, as more certain to the extent that all conditions of the programs that were evaluated (e.g. population demographics, program elements, social context) are replicated in other settings. The greater the difference on such dimensions between evaluated programs and other programs using the same name, the less certain the application of this report's conclusions must be (Sherman et al: 1998: 6).

As Tilley points out, the requirement to replicate 'all conditions' is impossible and, in his word, 'absurd': 'A judgement has to be made about what matters in terms of similarity, both in terms of the intervention method itself and in terms of the context in which it is introduced. The key question, therefore, is what [conditions] need to be the same, and why? And this is precisely the issue which the experimental approach misses or fudges' (Tilley 2001: 88).

Finally, Tilley states that, because of the failure to take account of the context-dependency of interventions, the findings to emerge from reviews and meta-analyses are repeatedly inconsistent – and this is clear from our own study of such reviews. Traditional evaluation, using experimental methods, 'is concerned with finding whether measures do or do not work, and nothing else' (ibid: 89); inconsistent results, where measures work in some instances but not in others, are therefore a major problem and bring the whole value of the approach into serious doubt.

Conclusions – key messages for Children's Fund programmes
What, then, are we to conclude about the worth of the research literature considered in this review? What are the key messages that those involved with the development of Children's Fund programmes need to bear in mind?

A first point is that the criticisms discussed above are directed mainly at evaluative research into the effects of interventions; they are not principally concerned with primary research aimed at identifying causes and risk factors. In this latter body of research, longitudinal surveys represent the 'gold standard' and provide the source of much of the knowledge about causes and risks that currently exists. A high degree of

consistency in the findings of longitudinal surveys around the world suggests that the knowledge about risk factors presented in Section 2 of this paper is can be used with a high level of confidence (Rutter et al 1998: 13; Farrington 2002: 660). Despite this, there seems to be a lack of detailed evidence about specific factors that may be relevant to understanding the differential involvement in crime of both young people from ethnic minorities (Rutter et al 1998: 235-249) and girls and young women (ibid: 266-278) – this remains a gap in the primary research literature.

With regard to the evaluative research, the criticisms noted above are clearly powerful. They suggest that considerable caution needs to be exercised in taking 'findings' from studies of interventions that have occurred in one place and time, and attempting to transfer them to another place and time. The conclusion is not that the evaluative research is of no use to policy makers and service developers; rather, it is that statements about 'what works' should be read as 'this intervention has been shown to work in certain circumstances' (see Tilley 2001). Implementation must take account of the particular context in which the intervention is to operate. Awareness and understanding of that context should also alert implementers to the possible limitations of a chosen intervention: if a cognitive-behavioural intervention is proposed, yet the context is one in which young offenders are clearly subject to the stresses and strains of living in a severely deprived neighbourhood, then the intervention programme is likely to disappoint in its achievement of desired outcomes (Pitts 2001; Young 1999). And, as already indicated, the research is rather weak in relation to ethnicity and gender. If these factors are significant in the particular context of intervention, then implementers must consider whether evidence of effectiveness derives from research that took proper account of those factors; a successful intervention with white boys may not deliver the same results with black girls.

A limitation of a different kind is apparent in respect of the particular Children's Fund age range, the 5-13 year olds. We noted at the outset that the English age of criminal responsibility effectively divides this group in two so far as research on crime and anti-social behaviour is concerned. Much of the research we have discussed can only be relevant to 10-13 year olds, but in practice it is invariably focused on older teenagers, particularly 14-17 year olds among whom much the greatest volume of

youth offending occurs. The research on risk factors does address younger children, but includes those below 5 as well as those over 13. The exhortation to programme implementers to take close account of the particular context of an intervention thus applies strongly in relation to age factors. Careful consideration must be given to whether an intervention that has been positively evaluated in relation to one age group needs to be adjusted or modified to assist successful implementation with a different age group.

In relation to the current programme of evaluative research underway in England and Wales in response to post-1998 policy and service developments, there is much that is emerging that is of interest and relevance to Children's Fund programmes – although most findings are provisional and relate to the early stages of the new developments. What is also very clear from many of the evaluation reports published by the YJB in 2004 is that there have been serious difficulties with the process of evaluation itself. Thus national evaluators have been faced with inadequate or even non-existent outcome data from local initiatives and with very small sample sizes in studies of reconviction rates (for more detail on this issue and its implications, see Prior 2005). However, the key point about the relevance to practitioners of the findings from this programme of research remains, both in relation to the evaluation of the effectiveness of particular types of intervention, as discussed in this review, and to the evaluation of new organisational processes. Central to these processes are the Youth Offending Teams and the multi-agency networks with which they are engaging in order to deliver preventive outcomes with children and young people. Issues around the functioning of YOTs and their networks are of crucial relevance to the achievement of Children's Fund objectives. This is an area of research that will warrant close attention over the next two to three years.

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