Solihull YISP

an evaluation

The Children’s Society Research Unit
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Acknowledgements
Thanks to all who contributed to this evaluation.

Firstly, a special thank you to all the young people, parents and carers who took part in the evaluation. By willingly contributing their views they helped in building an interesting study of the project.

Thanks also to the workers at the Solihull YISP who patiently cooperated with data collection and were happy to devote their valuable time to reflecting on their work.

In addition, to Panel members who took part in telephone interviews for the study, and to Celia Rutherford, Researcher at The Children’s Society Research Unit, for conducting and analysing those interviews.

The Children’s Society
The Children’s Society works with the most marginalised children and young people in society and campaigns to bring about positive change.

We are one of England’s most active and rapidly expanding children’s charities, working mainly with children at risk on the streets, children in trouble with the law, young refugees and disabled children.

We currently have around 60 projects offering practical support and advice to more than 50,000 young people every year.

Solihull YISP
The Solihull YISP is one element of the Solihull Children’s Fund, staffed and managed by The Children’s Society in conjunction with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This evaluation study tracked the progress of 11 young people who worked with the Solihull YISP during 2005 and early 2006. It looked at their involvement from the point of referral through to a post-intervention follow-up (between one and four months after the case was closed).

Through a detailed multi-perspective exploration of the situation for each young person at a number of points during the intervention the evaluation offered contextualised outcomes for each young person and was able to consider some of the key overarching issues present across practice.

The views of the young people themselves were at the heart of the study. The methodology used prioritised a careful and appropriate approach to eliciting their thoughts on the work done by the YISP. In addition their primary carer, their YISP key worker, the YISP Coordinator and another professional familiar with their circumstances provided insights into the effectiveness of the work.

Practitioners in the project itself and more widely across local agencies were also afforded the opportunity to reflect on practice in relation to young people at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour or offending behaviour.

Findings

- The Solihull YISP had considerable success in achieving positive change for the young people who took part in the evaluation in relation to the key targets of
  - reducing risk and increasing protective factors
  - ensuring voluntary cooperation with the ISP
  - participating in full time education
  - achieving high levels of satisfaction with the YISP

  [summary of YJB, 2003: 10]

- Given the formal assessment of being at risk of offending, the Solihull YISP had success in preventing offending/anti-social behaviour for the majority of the group of young people who were included in the evaluation. However, regarding this as the main yardstick against which to measure was problematic. A more contextualised and holistic understanding of outcomes allowed for a better appreciation of positive changes for all the young people, including those who continued to offend or be at risk of offending after the intervention ceased.

- Young people who come to the YISP commonly presented a complex set of risk and protective factors.

- The Solihull YISP had adopted a particular methodology for direct work with the young people who are accepted into the YISP. This was built around a child-centred keyworking system, where independence from the statutory sector and flexibility of approach were key to effective practice.

- The intervention had been augmented by a close link with and use of a family support service (also part of the local Children’s Fund) – a development that occurred early in the life of the YISP and had proved effective in working with parents / carers.

- The referral of a burgeoning number of young people with individual learning needs was adding to the challenge of appropriate and purposeful intervention. The Solihull YISP had been successful in engaging well with this group of young people and their families within the evaluation and had achieved considerable positive change in difficult circumstances – especially a lack of wider professional understanding of the needs of these young people and a dearth of provision of specialised services locally.

- ISPs served as a platform for the direct work, but were not viewed as a full and final assessment of need. In essence, the whole intervention comprised ongoing assessment alongside ad hoc and more long term attempts to address the needs that a young person (and her / his family) presented. It was felt that only by continually adapting the input could the keyworker appropriately engage with the young person in order to make significant progress towards the overall aims for the intervention.

- The issue of timescale for a YISP intervention was highlighted across the group of young people. Just one of the young people had their case closed within the prescribed six-month period. The evidence from the evaluation...
supported the project’s view that an unquestioning adherence to an arbitrary time frame for the intervention would have significantly undermined beneficial outcomes – however the six-month period, if viewed as a guideline, was useful in preventing drift within cases. Two problems were noted in relation to case closure – that of (some) young people developing a dependency on their key worker (something that the project could respond to and build-in strategies to deal with) and that of gaps in local service provision to respond to identified ongoing need (something the project was not able to deal with, certainly in the short term).

- Although YISPs were envisaged partially as a gateway to mainstream services for those who had slipped the net, for the young people involved in this evaluation this did not prove to be the case. For this sample those with extensive needs already had other agency inputs at the time they were referred and often this was a long term situation which remained constant throughout and after the intervention of the YISP. For those who were not involved with other agencies at the outset in most cases the provision of temporary intervention by the YISP sufficed in ensuring beneficial outcomes.

- The panel had proved to be effective in meeting its aims of implementing a multi-agency approach, screening referrals, pooling information, considering the broad needs of the young people referred to the project and providing services and resources. Panel members were keen to have more evidence on the outcomes of the work in relation to prevention of offending.

- Panel members felt that the approach that had been developed to direct work was effective in engaging with young people and their families and that this was in part a testament to the attributes of a committed project team. Some members felt that targets for processing higher numbers of referrals might put pressure on the project to change a successful model of working.

- The panel felt that the YISP had generated a good reputation in the locality and this was evidenced by an ongoing flow of referrals from different agencies. However, a lack of referrals from the police was highlighted.

- Young people and their parents / carers were unanimous in endorsing the value of the YISP’s intervention. This consensus was generated within a forum where there was no pressure to comment positively – where respondents were assured of anonymity and where questions were asked of every participant about what might not have gone well during the input.

- Other agency professionals who worked with the young people in the sample were similarly positive about the work done by the YISP.
6. **Reflections from members of the multi-agency panel**

   - Introduction and methods
   - The Solihull multi-agency panel
   - Aims of the panel
   - Strengths of the approach taken in the direct work
   - Aspects of the project that could be improved
   - Learning from operating a panel
   - Reputation and profile of the YISP with other local agencies
   - Summary

7. **Conclusion**

   - Summary of main findings
   - Discussion

**References**
1 Introduction

This evaluation and review looks at the work of the Solihull Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP), a project set-up by The Children’s Society to help young people who may be at risk of becoming involved in offending or anti-social behaviour.

National context

In April 2003 local authorities in England were given a responsibility to agree a coordinated strategy for agencies working with children and families for preventative services (in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour) for children and young people aged 0-19.¹

The onus in these Local Prevention Strategies was to be on enhancing family support, early years development, behaviour support (including development of new services within Community and Adolescent Mental Health Services – CAMHS) and youth work programmes. The preventative focus would aim to address risk factors which young people might face and maximise their access to positive experiences and opportunities in a bid to foster beneficial outcomes as well as steering them away from involvement in offending.

The funding to develop practice in line with this policy development was to come through allocation of 25% of Children’s Fund monies for crime prevention work. Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) were one of a ‘menu’ of options available to local authorities as part of their response to the new duties.

The proposal to develop YISPs centred around the convergence of three ideas:

- a consensus that prevention is better than cure in terms of young people and offending – more effective in the long term and cheaper
- an acknowledgement that research had demonstrated that there were identifiable ‘risk’ and ‘protective’ factors in young people’s lives which could (respectively) increase or decrease the likelihood of future offending behaviour (see next section on ‘Conceptual Context’)
- a recognition that those in the age bracket – 8-13 – were at a critical, transitional phase in their lives, especially in relation to the move to secondary school – but that this age group had been neglected by previous social inclusion initiatives (see for example, Madge et al, 2000)

The ‘conceptual’ context for the development of YISPs

To appreciate the political context within which the push to build preventative services grew, it is necessary to understand a little about the burgeoning research on risk, protection and resilience, which came to the forefront during the 1990s, but has its theoretical roots in US studies from the 1950s.

‘Risk factors’ could be described as factors which “either singly or in combination have been shown to render children’s failure to thrive more likely” (Howard et al, 1999, P308). In relation to the development of criminality, a number of salient factors have been identified (see the tables on the following two pages) which have been shown to increase the likelihood of a child becoming an offender – these include factors such as family instability, family conflict, poverty, deprived community environment, delinquent peers and low degree of school commitment (see table for full listing) – and have also been labelled ‘criminogenic risk factors’.

The existence or emergence of such factors in any child’s life is counterbalanced – in terms of the actual propensity to offend – by other contextual factors, know as ‘protective factors’.

Protective factors are those internal and external forces that help children resist or ameliorate risk
(Sh统计, 1997: 3)

These include factors such as a secure, stable family, a set of personal moral values, achievement in school and attachment to a community (see table for full listing).

¹ Announced by the Children and Young People’s Unit on 6th September 2002.
² See YISP management guidance, p4
³ e.g. see evidence from The Youth Lifestyles Survey, 2000
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<th>Risk factors (from Wong, 2003)</th>
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<th>Child factors</th>
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<th>School context</th>
<th>Life events</th>
<th>Community and cultural factors</th>
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| • Premature birth and/or low birth weight  
• Disability  
• Prenatal brain damage  
• Birth injury  
• Low intelligence  
• Difficult temperament  
• Chronic illness  
• Insecure attachment  
• Poor problem solving  
• Beliefs about aggression  
• Poor social skills  
• Low self-esteem  
• Lack of empathy  
• Alienation  
• Hyperactivity/disruptive behaviour  
• Impulsivity | • Parental characteristics  
• Teenage mothers  
• Single parents  
• Psychiatric disorder, especially depression  
• Substance abuse  
• Criminality  
• Anti-social models | • School failure  
• Normative beliefs about aggression  
• Deviant peer group  
• Bullying  
• Peer rejection  
• Poor attachment to school  
• Inadequate behaviour management | • Divorce or family break-up  
• War or natural disasters  
• Death of a family member | • Socio-economic disadvantage  
• High population density  
• Poor housing conditions  
• Urban area  
• Neighbourhood violence and crime  
• Cultural norms  
• Concerning violence as acceptable response to frustration  
• Media portrayal of violence  
• Lack of support services  
• Social or cultural discrimination |
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<td>Social competence</td>
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<td>Passive school climate</td>
<td>Meeting significant person</td>
<td>Access to support services</td>
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<td>Social skills</td>
<td>Family harmony</td>
<td>Pro-social peer group</td>
<td>Moving to new area</td>
<td>Community networking</td>
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<td>Above-average</td>
<td>More than two years between siblings</td>
<td>Responsibility and required helpfulness</td>
<td>Opportunities at critical turning points or major life transitions</td>
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<td>Participation in church or other community group</td>
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<td>Attachment to family</td>
<td>Secure and stable family</td>
<td>Opportunities for some success at school and recognition of achievement</td>
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<td>Community / cultural norms against violence</td>
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<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Supportive relationship with other adult</td>
<td>School norms concerning violence</td>
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<td>A strong cultural identity and ethnic pride</td>
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<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Small family size</td>
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<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Strong family norms and morality</td>
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Protective factors (from Wong, 2003)
The number of different factors and the interplay between these two ‘opposing forces’ in an individual’s life is clearly extremely complex and will vary over time – but research has demonstrated that when protective factors are present or can be enhanced or accentuated they can assist in the reduction of the potential for antisocial actions / offending – and that this effect cuts through ethnic, class, geographical and historical boundaries.

This can happen in a number of ways. The impact of protective factors can:

1. Reduce the impact of, or exposure to, risk.
2. Reduce the chain reactions to negative experience.
4. Provide positive relationships and new opportunities.

(McCarthy et al, 2004: 20)

The synthesis of these concepts for some academics leads to the theory of ‘resilience’ – which has been defined as:

*the process of, capacity for, or outcome of, successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances*

(Masten et al, 1990: 425)

or, to paraphrase in the context of offending, ‘an ability or capacity to actively or subconsciously choose to avoid or not to engage in criminal or antisocial behaviours’.

A number of models have been developed to explain the interrelationship between risk, protection and resilience (see pp26-28, McCarthy et al, 2004) but one that is perhaps most helpful in relation to the area of preventative interventions is the ‘pathway model’. Adherents of this model argue that it is helpful to think in terms of ‘developmental pathways’ of progress, where a child’s trajectory into or away from crime could be altered by a single incident known as a ‘turning point’ (Gilligan, 2000: 37-47). A significant positive experience – possibly a relationship with an adult who can act as a role model or who offers practical assistance, or a situation where the young person experiences her / his own agency in achieving a goal and is praised or rewarded – can act as a catalyst in shifting to a more beneficial overall path.

We will return to this idea later but this academic research context led to increasing momentum within the youth justice arena towards assessment of risk and protective factors (e.g. the piloting of ASSET and ONSET systems) and to the development of interventions which might steer those in danger of becoming ‘the offenders of the future’ onto a different course (e.g. YIPs, YISPs, SPLASHs).

**The YISP model**

YISPs consist of two elements:

- a multi-agency panel which meets regularly to discuss young people who have been referred to the project, to share information and to make proposals around an Individual Support Plan to address each young person’s needs

- a core team who administrate / manage the work of the panel and who undertake casework in relation to young people and families.

Young people referred to a YISP should be:

- aged 8 – 13

- have behaviour that is of concern to two or more partner agencies and / or their parent(s) / carer(s)

- be either at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour or to have offended to the extent of receiving a police reprimand

- have four or more identifiable risk factors as the criteria for referral

and direct work with young people is founded on two principles:

- all involvement is voluntary

- the Individual Support Plan (ISP) is put together to meet the individual needs of the young person concerned based on local services and resources

Fourteen pilot YISPs were set up during early 2003 with central funding and increased support.4

4 The areas concerned were Barking and Dagenham, Ealing, Greenwich, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Birmingham, Walsall, Knowsley, Liverpool, Nottingham, Lancashire, Salford, Wigan and Sheffield.
An outline for the way the service is delivered is contained in the YISP management Guidance (issued in August 2003 by the Youth Justice Board - YJB) – but differing approaches to implementation have occurred in different localities – for example with regard to who acts in a gatekeeping role for initial referrals, which agencies are represented and the size of the panel, the proportion of direct work as opposed to case management undertaken by YISP workers themselves, the length of actual intervention with each young person.

The Solihull YISP

The YISP in Solihull is unique in that it is the only YISP to be managed and staffed by The Children’s Society.

In other areas where TCS manages the Children’s Fund the preventative element of the budget has been subcontracted to a local Youth Offending Team (YOT). In Solihull the decision was made to retain the work in-house, although the manager of the local YOT was instrumental in setting up the programme, in recruitment and in offering guidance during the initial stages of development.

The project was set up in autumn 2003 and took its first referral in December 2003.

The staff team consists of a Coordinator (80% ft equivalent), a part time administrator and two key workers.

We offer a full consideration of the approach taken to YISP in Solihull in the next chapter of the report.

This evaluation – methodology

The planning for this study was done when the YISP was still in something of a nascent state. It was clear from initial discussions that the likely throughput of young people in the timescale available for the evaluation would limit our ability to comprehensively ‘test’ the outcomes of the work across a sufficient number of young people to offer ‘robust’ findings. (Also at the time the assessment process for acceptance into the YISP did not include a comprehensive, scored ONSET assessment\(^5\) – which limited the means of exploring outcomes in a structured, quantitative way).

Given this limitation, a strategy for the research was proposed that would adopt a more exploratory and participatory approach, tracking a group of young people through the course of their involvement with the YISP. The main goal was to look in depth at the type and style of intervention, incorporating the views of all those involved, as a means of evaluating outcomes and deriving learning from practice.

In consultation with the Solihull Children’s Fund Manager, the YISP coordinator and key workers a qualitative, longitudinal design was formulated as the focus for the study. This would prioritise an examination of the perspectives of the keyworkers undertaking the work, the young people themselves and their parents / carers, complemented by contacts with other agency professionals linked to each young person who took part.

An additional exercise was also planned to look at the working of the panel itself.

Overall then, the study enabled a detailed scrutiny of how the project operated and offered a number of additional benefits:

- proper participation in the study by the young people themselves and their parents or carers
- an opportunity for key workers to reflect on each case over time and the wider implications for development of practice
- a thorough contextualisation for outcomes of the intervention for each young person
- multiple perspectives on the effectiveness of practice

In evaluating the direct practice of the keyworkers, we borrowed from the ideas of Realist Evaluation (see Pawson and Tilley, 1997, and Kazi, 2003). This evaluation approach is informed by the goal of discovering:

\textit{What works for whom in what circumstances}

It therefore has an in-built assumption that interventions will have to be tailored according to the needs of the individuals on the receiving end of the intervention – that different approaches will work more or less effectively with different young people in different circumstances.

\(^5\) ONSET is the YJB approved system for assessment of risk and prot factors at the outset and at the end of a preventative intervention.
The approach also incorporates the concepts of Context, Mechanism and Outcome. To (over)simplify – an intervention (in our case the YISP) will introduce a variety of Mechanisms (different ways of working with a young person) into the service user’s current Context (what they bring to the table – what has happened to them in the past and also their personal psychology and characteristics) in a bid to generate positive Outcomes (stop offending).

The theory is that at a fundamental level:

\[
\text{CONTEXT} + \text{MECHANISM} = \text{OUTCOME}
\]

and practitioners (project keyworkers) will amend the mechanisms they employ (ways of working, materials/games/exercises, etc) in trying to achieve the desired outcomes by reference to the contexts that they encounter (through learning about their ‘client’s’ needs) in direct work.

By finding out what practitioners perceive to be the most effective mechanisms to employ – and seeing if they are as effective as they believe (by reference to the actual outcomes achieved) – the impact of an intervention can be measured.

However, it is important to stress here that these ideas were used primarily to help with conceptualisation of the work – this is not intended to be full-scale, systematic realist evaluation (although in the longer term it could feed into a more quantitative exercise by offering some ‘leads’ for future evaluation).

The evaluative element of this study rests primarily on the different parties’ assessments of the effectiveness of the intervention – of how useful the young people themselves found the work, how their parent(s) or carers perceived it (for their young person and themselves) and how workers in other agencies who knew the young person ‘rated’ it. It also asks the keyworkers to conduct some self-evaluation in reflecting on outcomes during and after an intervention.

**Data collection timescales and methods**

An initial visit was made to the YISP in December 2004 to gather information and conduct a discussion with the whole team plus individual interviews with each member. This provided a platform for the evaluation – both in terms of the workers becoming better informed about the study and in talking through some initial ideas around their theories of what worked in achieving desirable outcomes with the young people.

**Data collection for the evaluation of direct practice**

The data collection period began in February 2004.

Young people and parent(s)/carer(s) were recruited from referrals to the project during the four months, February to May.

The data collection methods and phasing for each component of the evaluation are detailed in a table on the next page.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with different parties, either by telephone or face-to-face at four points during the intervention – to look at the historical and current context for the start of the intervention, the work as it progressed and the immediate and longer term outcomes over time. This main component of the research was complemented with some paper-based data collection.

**The Panel**

Panel members were contacted for semi-structured telephone interview during March – April of 2006.

They were asked for their views on:

- the functioning of the panel – learning over time
- the profile / reputation of the YISP locally
- the effectiveness of the direct work of the YISP

This part of the research is reported in Chapter Six.
Summary
Through a primarily qualitative evaluation and review of practice at the Solihull YISP it was hoped that the impact of an innovative preventative intervention, part of a burgeoning approach to work with 8-13-year-olds across England, could be thoroughly studied so that contextualised outcomes and lessons from practice could be more widely disseminated.
## Evolution of a case

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<th>Data collection phases</th>
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<td><strong>At time of referral / assessment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Circumstances form</strong> (YISP Coordinator)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demographic characteristics of young person plus an initial assessment of her / his situation – summary of risk and protective factors</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Written consent form</strong> (Young person and parent / carer)</td>
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<td>Consent to participation in the evaluation – including contact details</td>
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<td><strong>Copy of ISP</strong></td>
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<td><strong>During first month after ISP agreed</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Early contact form</strong> – (YISP kw)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number and type of contacts with young person during first fortnight of work; initial impressions of young person’s situation / problems; plans for work</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone interviews</strong> (YISP kw)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young person’s / parent’s view on problems plus expectations of YISP</td>
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<td><strong>Three month review</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Telephone interview</strong> (YISP kw)</td>
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<td>Update on progress with work</td>
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<td><strong>Around six months (projected time of case closure)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Face-to-face interviews</strong> (Young person and parent / carer) (separately)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of situation and work done by YISP (around projected time of case closure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-completion questionnaire</strong> (Other agency professional)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of outcomes of intervention for each young person</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone interview</strong> (YISP kw)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of work and reflect on outcomes around projected time of case closure</td>
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<td><strong>Copy of Case Closure sheet</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Nine – twelve months after referral</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone interviews</strong> (Young person and parent / carer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up discussion / update on situation after end of YISP intervention – longer term outcomes</td>
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2 The Solihull YISP – HOW it operates

Introduction

As indicated earlier, in the introductory section to this report, although guidance on the management of YISPs (YJB, 2003) was issued soon after the start of the pilots, there is no ‘cut and dried’ approach to the implementation of YISP practice.

YISPs are a development in preventative work with (potential) young offenders premised on extensive research, but are still in many ways an ‘experiment’ as to how to best progress this type of practice. This point is conceded by the YJB, at least implicitly, in the commissioning of an extensive national evaluation of the pilot YISPs (which was due to be published in February 2005).

This opens up a number of possibilities in terms of where to put the emphases in the operation of a YISP – and given our remit in this evaluation it was interesting to consider how a project informed by Children’s Society principles would deliver the service and whether this would produce desirable outcomes.

In this section we look primarily at the model that had evolved in the Solihull YISP at the time the evaluation began (referring to some adaptations that have been made as lessons from practice were incorporated). The official pilot YISPs received extra support and resources during the setting-up phase – Solihull was very much left to its own devices and the staff were able to retain control of most decisions relating to how the project was run.

This section acts as a foundation for the rest of the report in terms of offering a lead as to ‘why’ the workers in the project think their practice is effective before moving on to look at ‘how’ this manifests itself in direct work and outcomes.

It is based mainly on the interviews with the YISP keyworkers – both at the outset of the study and whilst they were reflecting on the individual cases. It also draws on initial interviews with the YISP Coordinator and the Solihull Children’s Fund Manager. (A separate section later in the report focuses on the operation of the multi-agency panel).

It would have been useful and informative to make comparisons to broader developments across YISPs countrywide – and at the outset of this study there appeared to be the prospect of doing this with the intended publication of the national evaluation. Unfortunately this report has not yet been forthcoming (now due Autumn 2006) – which limits our ability to consider alternative approaches and their merits. However, the DfES did forward a copy of an interim progress report to the research team (from June 2004) and this offers some interesting insights into issues with the pilot work which we will refer to during this section.

Outline of the YISP process in Solihull

We are struck by the level of variation within and between YISPs. Most appear to be interpreting the YJB Management Guidance rather loosely and it is difficult to identify a YISP approach or a YISP process which is common to all pilots.

(DfES, 2004)

Given this situation it seems appropriate to offer an outline of the process of work in the Solihull YISP. The diagram on the next page shows the process of a case from referral to closure at the time the evaluation started.
REFERRAL TO YISP CO-ORDINATOR – check it meets referral criteria

TELEPHONE CALL TO FAMILY
to arrange first assessment visit

TELEPHONE CALL TO YOUNG PERSON’S SCHOOL
to visit young person there (preferred)

REFERRAL DETAILS SENT TO PANEL MEMBERS
who find out if the yp or family are known to their agency and source info held

VISIT(S) TO FAMILY – (and young person separately if possible)
YISP Coordinator:
• explains the work of the YISP
• undertakes an ONSET-based assessment

• seeks consent to take the case to Panel
• obtains written consents – to info-sharing, etc.

(Monthly) PANEL MEETING – Chaired by Coordinator
Coordinator presents brief report of visit - discussion around different agencies’ knowledge and views on appropriate interventions (20 minutes per child – extended if necessary). Recommendations made for Individual Support Plan (ISP) – or no YISP involvement and referral to external agency.

COORDINATOR COMPiles ISP
includes what YISP keyworker’s role will be, the main aims of the intervention, what other inputs will be made by other agencies.

RE-VISIT FAMILY TO DISCUSS ISP
Coordinator takes the ISP to the family and yp to review contents. They can request amendments or sign up and the work begins.

KW INPUT COMMENCES. – usually weekly sessions (at school if appropriate)

REVIEWS (usually three-monthly) / NETWORK MEETINGS
review conducted by YISP staff (OR)
network meeting convened (at any point) if necessary for all parties (inc. family and all agencies involved) to consider how to progress the work

EXIT MEETING – usually after six months
There are a number of key points to explain in relation to the process diagram:

- The first gatekeeping on referrals is undertaken by the Coordinator. In other YISPs referrals go straight to panel for consideration before any assessment takes place. The method used by Solihull saves time in moving a referral more quickly to ISP and intervention (if appropriate) – which may be important for a young person / family in crisis. However it relies on the Coordinator feeling confident to make correct decisions as to which young people meet the criteria for the YISP.

- The Coordinator makes contacts with the family and the young person’s school in a bid to arrange visits to introduce the idea of the YISP, to answer queries and to undertake an assessment. (At the time the evaluation was planned the Coordinator was using ONSET measures as part of her initial assessment, but without any training on how to interpret the forms or how to score the factors – this has subsequently been rectified). Every effort is made to talk to the young person separately from her / his parents / carers in order to try to properly achieve informed consent to participation in the work.

- At the same time members of the multi-agency panel will make enquiries within their own organisation to discover if the young people under consideration at the next panel meeting are known to them. They will seek all the information that their agency holds to contribute to the panel discussion on the appropriate design for the Individual Support Plan.

- The multi-agency panel convenes to discuss each young person – where organisations have additional information on an individual the representative of that agency will introduce this to the debate and all members will add their thoughts on the best way forward with regard to developing the ISP and the contributions different agencies might make.

- In the wake of the panel meeting, the Coordinator compiles the ISP and re-visits the family to seek agreement over its contents. Any party can ask for amendments which would then have to be ratified by the panel at the next meeting. However, in most cases the ISP proves to be acceptable to parent(s) / carer(s) and young people.

- The case is then handed over to the keyworker who takes primary responsibility from this point forwards. Direct work with the young person consists mainly of weekly one-to-one sessions complemented by activities and trips sometimes in a group, especially during school holidays.

- Reviews take place after three and six months – the latter one (in theory) coinciding with case closure for the YISP (the length of actual intervention is discussed below and in some detail in the ‘Themes’ section later in the report). There can also be ‘network meetings’ instigated at any time if the work appears to have become ‘stuck’ – all parties are invited to these (including panel members as appropriate) in a bid to agree strategies for moving things forward.

- Supervision and monitoring of work on cases is undertaken monthly with each keyworker by the Coordinator. However, informal ‘ad hoc’ discussions around casework take place regularly between keyworkers themselves (giving an element of peer supervision and support) and between keyworkers and the Coordinator.

**Direct practice – the role of the keyworker**

The function of the keyworker in the Solihull YISP has been elevated beyond the approach taken by many other YISPs. Elsewhere the keyworker may have a role in the first stages of YISP work, doing the initial assessment and presenting information to panel (tasks which are the remit of the Coordinator in Solihull) and then go on to undertake part of the planned intervention or merely monitor the input of other agencies in working towards the targets of the ISP – essentially performing a ‘case management’ role.

In Solihull the keyworker rapidly becomes the central figure in the intervention – as soon as the ISP has been agreed – with a primary role of undertaking a large amount of direct work with the young person.

The underlying assumption in employing this approach is that through working in a child-centred way, the keyworker will be able to gradually get to know the young person well, build a trusting relationship and learn what the young person’s underlying problems are – that over time it will be possible to address the causes of bad behaviour as well as the symptoms – the behaviour itself.
As one worker put it:

*We are getting to the grass roots of what the problem is.*

The keyworker also performs a variety of tasks – but all flow from the direct work itself:

- networking to discover additional information relevant the case
- liaison with parent(s) / carer(s)
- decision-making with regard to new referrals
- constant planning and review in relation to the case
- acting as the focal point for all other professionals working with the young person (including information-sharing)
- responsibility for meeting targets in the ISP

**Child-centred practice**

At the heart of the YISP intervention was the relationship between young person and keyworker. A large investment was made in Solihull in ensuring that this functioned well and the approach taken in all the direct work helped maintain a positive relationship.

The child-centred model of intervention employed at the Solihull YISP (and in varying ways replicated at other Children’s Society projects) is built around flexibility and independence and during the evaluation the workers in the project were often asked to reflect on how this was put into practice.

**Flexibility**

Keyworkers were actively encouraged to exercise professional discretion around how to work with the young people. The pattern of contacts – usually weekly – was generally a constant in the work, but beyond this the keyworker was allowed to determine the length of sessions, the location and the nature of the work done (from more formal exercises or games around self esteem or consequences of behaviour to ‘ad hoc’ conversations about what was problematic for the young people on the particular day of a meeting to trips to a recording studio to learn DJ skills).

Through controlling these aspects of the intervention the keyworker was also able to pitch and pace the direct work at an appropriate level for the individual young person relative to their age, ability, disposition and even mood on a specific day. The evolution of the intervention, decisions as to how and when to broach particular issues were taken by the keyworker in accordance with her / his own judgement around how the relationship and the work are progressing.

*Interviewer*  
*It seems there’s a period in a lot of casework where the worker is almost ‘treading water’ and hoping to get to the point where the young person is able, willing, trusting enough to open up and actually get to the ‘heart of the matter’…*

*Keyworker*  
*Yeah, definitely that is absolutely what often happens – ok, we come into panel and (Coordinator) does an assessment and we have all the information given to us – (but) if that child is not is not ready to talk about things you are not going to get anywhere … once they actually say themselves what the problem is you have so much more hope in trying to deal with it than if you’re putting it on them. Even if you know what it is right from the beginning … until they say it themselves, they own it, … and want to make those changes and accept things – you’re not likely to be able to move things on.*

Perhaps the clearest overall manifestation of this at Solihull was the rapid decision to re-frame the ‘normal’ length for intervention from three to six months (and sometimes beyond – see ‘Themes’ chapter) – based on early experiences that three months was an insufficient period of time to achieve worthwhile changes for any young person:

*The idea that you will turn round referrals in three months is a nonsense to our practice!*  

The onus on keyworkers being empowered to take responsibility for progression in a case means that often they negotiate with a young person around how a session develops – plans may go out of the window if there is a particular issue for a young person at the time, something which is regarded as a strength of the approach rather than a weakness.
This focus on keyworker control also allows for the building of outcomes – for a concentration on working on small problems (which can seem very large for the young person and her / his family) to achieve tangible change quickly which helps everyone’s morale and gain goodwill for work on more entrenched difficulties.

A good example from this evaluation was the work done within the initial few weeks with one boy to enable him and his carer to develop a reasonable bedtime routine. At the outset the boy was unable to go to sleep without his carer staying in the room, offering reassurance and comfort until he dropped off – which might take hours.

The keyworker initially concentrated her efforts on trying to address this – through tapes, star charts, reward strategies and talking to him and his carer. When these strategies were meeting with just limited success she said to the boy that he needed to be really honest with her about why he struggled to get to sleep. It transpired that he would dwell on worries about his mother and father – and questions which he felt unable to ask his carer – so they remained spinning in his head every night when he went to bed. This changed the direction of the work in a different direction whereby some of the questions could begin to be answered.

Although progress with the bedtime routine was slow, the fact that the keyworker was willing to engage with this practical problem for the family built the relationships for the more stressful work on sensitive issues.

Overall then, beyond the criteria of an expected weekly meeting, a three month review of progress (and if necessary, a reappraisal of ISP targets) and an anticipated six month timescale, the model was extremely flexible. Keyworkers were given licence to think and work well beyond the initial prescriptions of the ISP – which may have been composed on the basis of relatively little information about a young person’s (and family’s) real needs. The keyworker was empowered to focus on discovering what might lie behind the outward manifestation of difficulties in offending or anti-social behaviour and tailor the intervention to addressing this fully.

In effect this acknowledges an issue that is perhaps neglected in other ‘versions’ of YISP – that the assessment process around a young person involved with YISP is (or perhaps should be more overtly) ongoing throughout the intervention. An over-reliance on initial assessment may limit the extent of the work undertaken, not properly meet a young person’s needs and thereby not produce solid, long term outcomes.

Independence

Although the YISP by its nature was closely linked to a multi-agency panel, its workers were not directly associated with statutory agencies.

This distance from organisations such as social services and the police was invaluable in avoiding the stigma that many young people and parents / carers might accord such agencies.

The strange thing is that word has got around about the kind of work we do and children actually want to work with me, even though they’re not in trouble with the law! It’s the whole ‘attention thing’ that kids crave … it’s cool to have a keyworker – which is really weird!

The project was keen to preserve this and had a comprehensive confidentiality policy – which helped build trust with the young people who knew that their personal information would not be shared with other professionals except in particular circumstances and with their agreement.

This independence was also useful to workers in that it enabled them to bring pressure to bear on other agencies – with its relatively neutral position it could oblige others to ‘do the right thing’ rather than be viewed as having a blinkered agenda related to organisational priorities.

Benefits of the child-centred approach

Through flexibility and independence the workers in the YISP were able to put the young person’s individual needs at the centre of all the work undertaken for each case.

The keyworker would prioritise listening to a young person, negotiating on their behalf with others, and mediating and advocating when appropriate This degree of responsiveness meant that to a large extent young people themselves could determine the pace, intensity and direction of the work. This inclusion of young people in the control over what was happening was key in achieving effective outcomes:

There’s definite value for these young people in having a keyworker who’s there only for them and who listens to them and does things at their pace and is able to represent their views. Many of them have experienced having no input into education plans that affect their lives, having no input into decisions that social services make about their
There are some clear parallels in this model with the idea in resilience theory of a ‘turning point’, a significant event or relationship which can shift a young person towards a more positive ‘trajectory’ in the course that their life is taking (Gilligan, 2000).

The workers at the YISP were clear that many of the young people they came across were bereft of a positive adult relationship – and that this could be the cornerstone in invoking a beneficial change in them:

I know that all the children, they lack self esteem and they lack people giving them time and attention and so, even if they don’t like what we’re talking about, the fact that they’re coming out and having one-to-one with someone who is interested in them makes them feel special – and that’s part of giving them confidence.

**On Track family support**

The emphasis on child-centredness in the main model for the Solihull YISP throws up the ‘catch 22’ of a worker who is closely allied to a young person not being well placed to help effect necessary change within the home or with the family.

Keyworkers were hamstrung in attempts to negotiate with parents / carers by a need to represent the interests of a young person – interests which might directly contravene those of an adult in a household.

This problem was quickly recognised at the YISP and the response was to buy-in some On Track family support time – the equivalent of 40% of a full time worker. On Track was already operating under the auspices of The Children’s Fund, based in the same offices as the YISP, so the professional links were in place.

The practitioners in On Track were social work-trained and service offered brief, solution-focused sessions to parents, carers or whole families. This preserved the primacy of the young person-keyworker relationship in contributing to change for the young person her / himself while at the same time allowing for another (sympathetic) professional to offer some support to the adult(s) in the household in negotiating ways forward.

**Summary**

In this chapter we have described the model employed at the Solihull YISP in some detail and reflected on how it is informed by child-centred practice.

We have explored how this promotes the keyworker role in the intervention to a much more actively engaged one than is adopted by most other YISPs and explained the reasoning behind this.

This model has been developed by Solihull because it was felt to be the most authentically effective in meeting the key targets of

- reducing re-offending rates
- reducing risk and increasing protective factors
- ensuring voluntary cooperation with the ISP
- participating in full time education
- achieving high levels of satisfaction with the YISP
- accessing mainstream services

(summary of YJB, 2003: 10)

However, for the young people involved in this study, it did not lead to an increased involvement with mainstream services by the young people and their families – as envisaged in the Guidance (YJB, 2003: 9) – see table on the next page.

For the majority of young people with extensive need, there was already quite substantial service involvement when the YISP became involved. For those where there was little prior agency involvement, little extra was needed, or at least just a temporary input sufficed.

YISPs were envisaged partially as a gateway to mainstream services for those who had slipped the net. For the young people involved in our research at Solihull the burden on mainstream services was not increased by the operation of the YISP but rather to some degree offset – a particularly welcome outcome from some perspectives.
### Other agency involvement from referral to case closure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referrer</th>
<th>Professionals working with young person at time of referral</th>
<th>Workers involved during YISP intervention (underlined if instigated by YISP / YISP-supported referral)</th>
<th>Workers / agencies referred on to at case closure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sure Start psychologist (working with mother)</td>
<td>CAMHS psychologist&lt;br&gt;Social services – for home care for young person’s grandparents&lt;br&gt;On Track family support</td>
<td>None (but referral to CAMHS left open)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>(Planned session with YOT worker – not forthcoming)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EWO</td>
<td>EWO</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>New social worker&lt;br&gt;CAMHS (not accepted)</td>
<td>Ongoing sw support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>On Track family support</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Learning mentor</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>SNAP (local special needs project)</td>
<td>SNAP&lt;br&gt;CAMHS psychiatrist&lt;br&gt;CAMHS psychiatrist</td>
<td>None (awaiting new CAMHS support)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>Social worker&lt;br&gt;PAYP</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CAMHS psychiatrist</td>
<td>As at referral, plus SNAP&lt;br&gt;Meadows centre</td>
<td>Same workers as at referral point – no new referrals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Meadows Centre Speech therapist</td>
<td>As at referral, plus Social worker (support to sister)</td>
<td>Same workers involved ongoing from YISP input – no new referrals. Recent new CAMHS psychiatrist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 The group of young people

Recruitment of a sample

The young people and parents / carers who took part in the research were recruited from referrals to panel between February and May 2005.

At that time the YISP was averaging six referrals per month and the project workers were confident that we could reach a target sample of 15 young people within a planned three-month recruitment phase. However, after four months 11 potential participants had given consent to take part and this was accepted as an adequate size of sample.

Given the timescale for the study a pragmatic approach to selection was used – all families where the YISP Coordinator felt it was appropriate were offered some information on the research and asked if they were willing to participate. A small financial incentive (£10 voucher) was offered to both young people and parent(s) / carer(s) – which was to be sent out after the second interview (towards the end of planned intervention).

In the light of this it was fortunate that the group reflected a broad array of different contexts for the project’s intervention and has provided a rich source of data to look at themes from the work.

A large amount of data in relation to each young person was collected across the course of the evaluation. Some of it is synthesised in this section, to outline the characteristics of the young people and the problems they were encountering at referral.

Profile of the group

As already stated the group who took part in the research were not chosen to be ‘representative’ of project work in the technical sense – however they do represent a broad array of the issues that arose in YISP work in Solihull.

The following data relates to the situation at the outset of the YISP’s intervention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years old</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years old</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White and Black Caribbean</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The group had a good spread of ages across the spectrum for YISP intervention, with the majority falling into the ‘older’ age bracket for YISP of 12 and 13-year-olds.
Perhaps not unsurprisingly the vast majority were boys. There were nine young people for whom the Coordinator adjudged ethnicity to be white British and two whom she recorded were of mixed heritage, white and black Caribbean.

### Domestic situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living with both birth parents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with mother</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with mother and step father</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with carer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A minority of the young people – less than one in three – were living with both birth parents, and nearly half were in lone parent families cared for by their mother. (It is perhaps interesting to note that all the young people had at least one sibling and, with one exception, their sibling(s) lived in the same household).

Of those whose birth father was not living in the same household (n = 8) contact was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of contact</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular contact</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erratic contact</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular attender</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erratic attender</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily excluded</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently excluded</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[*refusing to attend]

Most of the young people had good attendance records at the start of the YISP (although some had been excluded in the past). None of the young people were attending non-mainstream educational provision.
The young people were referred from a variety of agencies – and some by their parent / carer. Four of the young people had no formal involvement with any other professionals at the time they started with the YISP, but the rest had one or more workers helping them.

**Other agency involvement (not including teacher)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency worker</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PW (special needs project) + CAMHS psychiatrist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Welfare Office + CAMHS psychiatrist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support assistant in school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Welfare Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social services family support and social worker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The young people presented with a variety of difficulties in their lives – which are described in more detail later in the report – but the Coordinator was asked to record two issues at the point of the initial assessment:

- How willing was the young person to work with the YISP?
- What did young person say were her / his particular problems?
### Willingness to work with the YISP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of willingness</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unwilling</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed feelings</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very willing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although in theory participation in a YISP is voluntary, the Coordinator assessed that a number of the young people were less than whole-hearted in their commitment at the outset and four openly expressed doubts. (All the parent(s) / carer(s) were said to be ‘Very willing’ to work with the YISP, with the exception of one who was described as ‘Willing’).

### Problems as described by the young people during initial assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gets angry – needs support about how to control it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said he does try to impress friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said he gets angry – would like support on what’s been going on inside, outside school and in the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to go and live with mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to see dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said he wants more time with mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with little brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said he doesn’t mean to do things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is happier now dad has left the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said he knows he gets angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said he only fights if the other person wants to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets angry too easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shouts at mum and dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with other children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tends to bottle things up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tends to lose his temper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in are trying to evict him from his house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in the street call him names and he retaliates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants his eyes looked at – hates his glasses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t know why people are concerned about him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said he breaks the law when he likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hits his friends when they make him mad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls people names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants people to like her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t like school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

The majority of the group of young people who took part in the evaluation were either 12 or 13-years-old and the youngest was eight when first referred to the YISP. There were two young people of mixed heritage and the remainder of the group were White British. Out of 11 there was just one girl.

Most of the young people were living in lone parent households at the time of the research and more than half had little or not contact with their birth father. The majority of the group were regularly attending school at the outset of the evaluation, with just two being temporarily excluded (although one was not attending for other reasons).

Referring agencies were spread across Health, Education and Social Services but there were two self (i.e. by a parent / carer) referrals. There were no referrals from the Police. More than a third of the group had no regular involvement with any agency worker at the start of YISP input – of the others three young people were already working with two other professionals and four had contacts with one other professional.

The young people offered a variety of analyses of their own perspective on what their particular problems were – but a common theme was an awareness of their own anger and a desire to learn how to manage this more appropriately.

Most of the young people were willing to engage with the YISP input – but more than a third had ‘mixed feelings’ about what was happening when they were first introduced to the idea. Nearly all (bar one) of the parents were ‘very willing’ to involve the YISP.

Overall then the young people in our sample offered a broad illustration of the different contexts within which a YISP is likely to be operating and offered the prospect of a rich set of data to consider the ways of working and the outcomes achieved in varying situations.
4 A summary of outcomes across the group – plus other measures of effectiveness

Introduction

To give a flavour of what the YISP achieved in this chapter of the report we firstly present a summary of risk and protective factors for each of the young people in our sample – as they were assessed at the point of referral and at the end of the YISP involvement.

This provides a basic indication of outcomes – in most cases a reduction in risk factors and enhancement of protective factors. However, as has already been indicated in the earlier discussion, these issues are extremely complex. To properly convey the impact of a YISP intervention – in the spirit of understanding the context for the intervention and the meaningfulness of outcomes (as distance travelled rather than just bald measures) one needs to look at a detailed longitudinal picture.

The outlines given here are therefore offered as an overview to introduce some of the broad issues that the work dealt with. More detail on individual cases is included in the next chapter where we consider some overarching themes that emerged from the research in relation to case studies.

In a later section we go on to look at other ‘measures of effectiveness’ for the YISP – the views of young people, parents / carers and other agency professionals.

Format for this section

The information on risk and protective factors at two points in time for each young person is presented as a ‘case sheet’.

At the time the evaluation of the YISP was first planned, the YISP Coordinator was not using ONSET measures in their fullest sense. An ONSET assessment was conducted as part of the initial process of information-gathering prior to Panel discussions to put together the ISP – but the Coordinator had not undertaken full training in the use of the assessment tool and was not ‘scoring’ the factors. (This does now happen for all referrals – and cases are re-assessed at the point of closure).

Our presentation of risk and protective factors here is therefore not a re-presentation of ONSET assessment by the YISP – it is broader in that it summarises the views of both the Coordinator and the YISP keyworker from their initial contacts during the first two weeks of direct work (from the Early Contact form).

Likewise, the data presented for the outcomes at the end of the YISP intervention is an amalgamation of information from more than one source, including the Case Closure sheet and the reflections of the young person, their parent/carer, a worker from another agency (where available) and the keyworker at the time the direct work ceased.

The young people are grouped into three subgroups – on the first seven pages are the case sheets for those who did not commit any offences or anti-social behaviour during the YISP work; the following three cases are of young people who did commit offences early on during the intervention but had ceased by the time of case closure; the final case was of a young person who did not stop offending.
Profile
Age: 13  Gender: male  Ethnicity: White & Black Caribbean

Situation at start of YISP

RISK
Young person
• Arrested for a minor offence / Peer pressure – deviant associations / Poor relationship with mother – anger and aggression at home

Home / family
• Mother – mental health issues, lone parent, stressful additional caring responsibilities / Father – not present in home, erratic contact, drug user / offender / Lack of supervision of young person / Domestic violence in the past

School
• Problems with attendance / Aggression towards others

PROTECTIVE
Young person
• Plays football (organised activity) / Motivated to change / control anger

Home / family
• Stability

School
• Young person committed to school (despite not liking)

Situation at end of YISP

RISK
Young person
• Peer pressure – deviant associations (ongoing)

Home / family
• Mother – ongoing problems / Father – ongoing problems

School

PROTECTIVE
Young person
• Young person feels more in control / Young person more aware of consequences of offending

Home / family
• Relationships improved – mother more trusting / young person less aggressive – better communication / Young person better able to cope with inconsistency of Father’s contacts

School
• No concerns at school – improved attendance and performance

NO OFFENDING / ASB
### Profile

| Age: 12 | Gender: male | Ethnicity: White British |

### Situation at start of YISP

#### RISK
- **Young person**
  - Stole money from mother – police involved / Learning difficulties

- **Home / family**
  - Seriously assaulted by older brother (who is ‘looked after’ by the local authority) when visiting home on contact visit / Older brother involved in frequent offending

- **School**
  - On report for being disruptive / Mixes with deviant peers

#### PROTECTIVE
- **Young person**
  - Aware of right and wrong – says not like his brother / Committed to boxing – regular training – feels able to control aggression

- **Home / family**
  - Stability

- **School**

### Situation at end of YISP

#### RISK
- **Young person**

- **Home / family**

- **School**

#### PROTECTIVE
- **Young person**
  - Exercising more control – has walked away from trouble / fights / Boxing training ongoing – acts as a positive outlet for young person and offers discipline and control

- **Home / family**
  - Young person more assertive in relationship with brother – less concerned about his visits home

- **School**
  - Off report at school and looking forward to beginning new school year

### NO OFFENDING / ASB
**Profile**

Age: 13  Gender: male  Ethnicity: White British

**Situation at start of YISP**

**RISK**

Young person
- Risk of abs / offending in community – wants to impress peers

Home / family
- Issues around contact with birth father – physically aggressive to young person in the past (and to mother whilst living in the household)

School
- High risk of permanent exclusion from school – disruptive in class, impulsive and easily led (number of recent temporary exclusions)

**PROTECTIVE**

Young person
- Aware of right and wrong and expresses remorse / Involvement in football club

Home / family
- Support and stability from home – mother has long term partner / Regular contact with birth father and share positive interests and activities

School
- Good support and guidance available at school (young person has had anger management support) – no problems academically

**Situation at end of YISP**

**RISK**

Young person

Home / family

School

**PROTECTIVE**

Young person
- Feeling positive around school (and outside) – avoiding negative influences / Due to be trialled by professional football club

Home / family

School
- Behaviour at school much improved – presenting a more mature attitude in class

**NO OFFENDING / ASB**
Solihull YISP – An Evaluation

Profile
Age: 9   Gender: male   Ethnicity: White British

Situation at start of YISP

RISK
Young person
• Behaviour at home – gets very angry and destructive / Has threatened to self-harm / Diagnosed learning disability

Home / family
• Emotional issues around care / domestic situation and contacts with family (especially birth mother and father)

School
SEN statement in process

PROTECTIVE
Young person
• Young person keen to stop being angry / involvement in football club

Home / family
• Good support at home from great grandparents – regular contact with two brothers (who live with maternal grandmother)

School
• Positive support at school – young person enjoys school

Situation at end of YISP

RISK
Young person
• Still much insecurity but issues being addressed (see below)

Home / family
• Death of close relative (uncle) – during intervention

School

PROTECTIVE
Young person
• Feeling positive about himself – feels people now listening to him / Life story work due to commence / Involved in constructive activities during evenings

Home / family
• Behaviour at home has improved / Regular weekly contacts with birth mother – social worker due to assess situation regarding contacts with birth father

School
• SEN statement in place

NO OFFENDING / ASB
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Age: 13   Gender: male   Ethnicity: White and Black Caribbean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Situation at start of YISP

#### RISK
- **Young person**
  - Aggression at home to mother and siblings
  - Concerns around risk of anti-social behaviour/offending in the community – mixing with older peers
- **Home / family**
  - Issues around contacts with father – erratic. Previous domestic violence
- **School**
  - Confrontational at school – disrespectful to teachers

#### PROTECTIVE
- **Young person**
  - Young person says he wants help to avoid risk of trouble / involvement in football club
- **Home / family**
  - Good support from mother
- **School**
  - Young person likes school – in top groups for most subjects

### Situation at end of YISP

#### RISK
- **Young person**

#### PROTECTIVE
- **Young person**
  - Feeling happier generally
- **Home / family**
  - Behaviour at home has improved – mother feels more in control
- **School**
  - Behaviour improved – school positive about young person’s future

**NO OFFENDING / ASB**
### Profile

**Age:** 12  
**Gender:** male  
**Ethnicity:** White British

### Situation at start of YISP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RISK</strong></th>
<th><strong>PROTECTIVE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young person</strong></td>
<td><strong>Young person</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| - Aggression to other young people in locality  
- Eye condition – low self esteem  
- On Child Protection register – for emotional abuse | - Young person understands the consequences of his actions  
- Young person more settled in the community – new friendships locally  
- Young person more confident and not fighting as much  
- Eye condition inoperable, but young person less concerned about this |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Home / family</strong></th>
<th><strong>Home / family</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Mother (and stepfather) have alcohol abuse problem  
- Threat of eviction from home | - Support from mother – she is seeking help re. alcohol use and attending a parenting class  
- Threat of eviction seems to have lifted |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>School</strong></th>
<th><strong>School</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Aggression – recent assault on a teacher (temporarily excluded) and bullying problems</td>
<td>- Supportive friends at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Situation at end of YISP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RISK</strong></th>
<th><strong>PROTECTIVE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young person</strong></td>
<td><strong>Young person</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| - Still some problems with anger | - Young person more settled in the community – new friendships locally  
- Young person more confident and not fighting as much  
- Eye condition inoperable, but young person less concerned about this |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Home / family</strong></th>
<th><strong>Home / family</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Ongoing alcohol abuse by parents</td>
<td>- Threat of eviction seems to have lifted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>School</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Ongoing difficulties with school – young person still confrontational with teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NO OFFENDING / ASB
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation at start of YISP</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RISK</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young person</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficulties with social skills – mistrusts / misunderstands others – diagnosis of ADHD (on medication) and due assessment for autism – vulnerable / easily led</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home / family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some behaviour problems at home – aggressive and destructive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has assaulted other children and teachers. Biting incident at school – hurt another child – police involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constant supervision during playtimes and not allowed in main school playground – mixing inappropriately with older children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PROTECTIVE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young person</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involved in Positive Activities for Young People – holiday programme of sports and leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home / family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very supportive and stable home – and grandparents nearby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Young person and family have input from CAMHS psychiatrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School providing resources to meet educational needs and integrate into lessons – very bright</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Situation at end of YISP** |  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RISK</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young person</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessed as being on autistic spectrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home / family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New younger sibling in the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Due transition to new secondary or special school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PROTECTIVE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young person</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Young person calmer and less aggressive in reactions to everyday issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home / family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family feel support has helped with homelife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Statement of Educational Needs in process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NO OFFENDING / ASB**
**Profile**

Age: 10      Gender: male      Ethnicity: White British

**Situation at start of YISP**

**RISK**

**Young person**
- Anger and low self esteem. Worried about his weight
- Mixing with older young people in his neighbourhood – drinking and has used cannabis – risk of anti-social behaviour

**Home / family**
- Behaviour problems at home – loses his temper
- Close family member in prison for violent offences

**School**
- Extreme aggression at school – reacts to other young people who wind him up – bullies others.
- Exclusion for drinking alcohol in toilets

**PROTECTIVE**

**Young person**
- Young person playing cricket after school

**Home / family**
- Good support from mother and father

**School**

**Situation at end of YISP**

**RISK**

**Young person**

**Home / family**

**School**

**PROTECTIVE**

**Young person**
- Young person felt more confident – exercising more control – had joined a gym, developing appropriate friendships

**Home / family**
- Positive – father especially supportive

**School**
- Young person’s behaviour and achievements at school improved
- Transition to secondary school went well

**NO OFFENDING / ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR during last six months of seven month intervention**
### Profile

| Age: 11 | Gender: male | Ethnicity: White British |

#### Situation at start of YISP

**RISK**

- **Young person**
  - Behaviour at home – conflict with mother, feels younger brother favoured
  - Anti-social behaviour and petty crime in the community – mixing with older deviant peers

- **Home / family**
  - Sibling rivalry

- **School**
  - Lack of respect to teachers – on report – current exclusion for hitting another pupil – attendance problem

#### PROTECTIVE

- **Young person**
  - Young person keen join army cadets

- **Home / family**
  - Good support at home plus extended family nearby and regular contact with father

- **School**
  - Mother in regular contact with school and attending reviews

#### Situation at end of YISP

**RISK**

- **Young person**
  - Difficult to engage – little evidence of degree to which he had absorbed messages from the work

- **Home / family**

- **School**
  - Still disruptive at school and at risk of exclusion (permanent)

**PROTECTIVE**

- **Young person**
  - Reported that he was now able to walk away from trouble

- **Home / family**
  - Much less conflict at home

- **School**

---

**NO OFFENDING / ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR during last five months of eight month intervention**
Profile

Age: 13      Gender: male   Ethnicity: White British

Situation at start of YISP

**RISK**
- **Young person**
  - ADHD – on medication and receiving psychiatric support
  - Will not leave the house – scared other young people will verbally abuse him
  - Problems with sleeping – suicide attempts
- **Home / family**
  - Severe conflict – sometimes violent (police involvement), especially towards father
- **School**
  - Refusing to go to school – has been bullied (over alleged homosexuality)

**PROTECTIVE**
- **Young person**
  - Feels remorse for upset in his family caused by his behaviour
- **Home / family**
  - Good support and stability from mother and father
- **School**

Situation at end of YISP

**RISK**
- **Young person**
- **Home / family**
- **School**
  - New mainstream school – some difficulties with transition

**PROTECTIVE**
- **Young person**
  - More confident – freed from bullying pressures
  - Successful trips into the community
- **Home / family**
  - More stability and relationships improved – revised medication for ADHD and sleeping
- **School**
  - Settling into new secondary school after successful interim placement in PRU.

NO OFFENDING / ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR during last 10 months of 11 month intervention
### Profile

| Age: 12 | Gender: female | Ethnicity: White British |

### Situation at start of YISP

#### RISK

**Young person**
- Poor social understanding and inappropriate behaviour – very aggressive and abusive (school and community)
- ADHD (medicated) and awaiting assessment for autism

**Home / family**
- Aggressive towards younger sister and mother

**School**
- Not coping in current mainstream school – only attends part time

#### PROTECTIVE

**Young person**
- Involved in Guides – leader understands young person’s needs
- Support from CAMHS psychiatrist

**Home / family**
- Supportive mother and stable domestic situation – regular contact with grandparents

**School**
- Young person had assaulted two young people in separate incidents (police involved in latter when she set fire to another girl’s hair)

### Situation at end of YISP

#### RISK

**Young person**
- Assessed as being on autistic spectrum

**Home / family**
- Continued violence and aggression at home

**School**
- New mainstream school – increasing problems after initial stability

#### PROTECTIVE

**Young person**
- No problems with behaviour in the neighbourhood (but young person not allowed out of the house)
- Positive relationship between young person and kw had helped young person to convey some of her thoughts and feelings

**Home / family**
- Sister receiving support from SSD

**School**
- Statement of Educational Need reviewed and updated
Overall findings on outcomes for risk and protective factors

It will be apparent from brief consideration that a short term, young person-focused intervention is likely to have an impact only on certain areas of a young person’s life. Not unsurprisingly the effects of YISP intervention were located mainly in some key areas of a young person’s ways of thinking:

- less impulsivity / more control
- less aggression and anger
- better problem-solving
- improved social skills
- higher self esteem
- improved empathy
- understanding of responsibility for one’s own actions
- understanding of consequences

this translated into behaviours:

- courteousness and concern for the needs of others
- communication with adults
- retreat from conflict or the potential for conflict
- avoidance of negative/delinquent peers
- engagement with new activities
- application in school

and was manifested in:

- improved relationships at home
- building of new friendships with non-deviant peers
- better performance at school
- integration in positive activities in the community

Overall the net effect – for almost all the young people by the time the YISP work stopped – was diversion away from offending or anti-social behaviour – the principal desired outcome for the project.

If the theories around resilience hold, then the longer term outlook for these young people had improved significantly as a result of the intervention of the YISP – the indications in most cases were that, even where there were significant ongoing difficulties / risk factors, each young person was better equipped to cope and make positive choices in the future.

However, the case sheets also allude to an additional issue – that better knowledge of a young person and her / his family can serve to highlight further problems or improve understanding of the severity of the ones already identified at initial assessment – i.e. to enhance the apparent weight of risks.

In many ways the intervention of a YISP is a lengthy assessment alongside its inputs of direct work. This issue resonates through much of this study and, although it was not a specific focus in the analysis, forms a subtext in the consideration of themes in the following chapter.

We are not in a position to offer an authoritative exploration of this here, but would suggest that this may point to potential problems in the use of ONSET. There is an assumption within ONSET that the intervention can be evaluated against the benchmark of the initial assessment (and the associated scoring):

An intervention may impact upon many areas of the child’s life so it is important to consider the full extent of any changes e.g. an education intervention may improve their school attendance but it may also have improved relationships with their parents who are not getting angry because of non-attendance and may also have introduced the child to a new set of pro-social friends. The changes in ratings, when compared to the original assessment, are a crucial means of evidencing the success of the YISP initiative on both individuals and groups.

[YJB, 2005:26]

Our experience in this study militates against this – to varying degrees new risk (and protective) factors emerged during the course of each intervention and would have made meaningful scoring a difficult and sometimes contradictory process.
Although the ONSET Guidance mentions this difficulty:

*It is, however, important to recognise that a child’s circumstance may change for the worse during the course of an intervention leading to ratings increasing rather than decreasing. Alternatively, simply knowing the child better may alter the scoring. Any change in ratings should be evidenced in the space provided.*

[YJB, 2005:26]

it offers little reassurance that positive changes may not end up being masked by the scoring system and therefore that YISP work across a project may be unfairly judged because ONSET scores are not uniformly moving in the ‘right’ direction.

**Other measures of effectiveness**

In this evaluation we registered multiple perspectives on the impact of the direct work undertaken in each case. As the Data Collection Phases table (p8) shows, the views of the young person her / himself, a parent / carer, the YISP keyworker, the Coordinator and another agency professional all contributed to a comprehensive evaluation of each intervention.

In this section we focus on the views expressed by young people, parents and carers and other professionals. (The perspectives of the keyworkers and Coordinator are reflected in more detail in the next chapter).

It is perhaps important to underline here that all the views expressed by young people and parents were given in interviews where they were promised confidentiality – reassurances were given that their thoughts would not be passed on directly to project staff (or anyone else) and they were invited to put forward opinions – both positive and negative – as honestly as they could. These views then, were not polluted by having been collected by the project itself, nor hampered by being constrained within a ‘closed’ exercise (such as a self-completion questionnaire) – on the contrary they were freely given at times and in circumstances to suit the interviewee. Hopefully this afforded the best possible opportunity to glean the authentic perspectives of those who were on the receiving end of the YISP’s work.

**Views of young people**

We made particular efforts to engage with the young people who were involved in this research.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the young people at least once over the telephone and the majority were interviewed three times including one face-to-face (see table on the next page).

All the young people, without exception, reported that they had been happy seeing their keyworker.

Some could identify ways in which they had benefited:

*It made me understand what I’d been doing.*

[13-year-old]

**Interviews with young people**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research phase / method</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During first month after ISP agreed / telephone</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around six months / face-to-face</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine – twelve months after referral / telephone</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*It helped me not to use my hands and feet when I’m cross*

[Nine-year-old]

The younger children said that they missed their keyworker once the intervention was over, but the majority of teenagers said that they were okay with the length of the intervention:

*I don’t need to see (my keyworker) any more ‘cos I don’t have problems now*

[14-year-old]
All the young people enjoyed the approach taken to the work:

- I felt like I could ask (my keyworker) stuff without being embarrassed
- I just liked speaking to (my keyworker) about what things had been going on and, like, the trips. My favourite was the snowboarding

[14-year-old]

Views of parents / carers

As with the young people, the majority of parents / carers were happy to find time to talk about the YISP work on a number of occasions (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews with parent / carer</th>
<th>Research phase / method</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>During first month after ISP agreed / telephone</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Around six months / face-to-face</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nine – twelve months after referral / telephone</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not dissimilarly to the young people there was an almost unanimous consensus amongst parents and carers that the input from the YISP had been a good thing (the sole exception was one mother who indicated that she felt there was not enough offered to her, but even she could acknowledge the merit of the work with her son).

Many of the parents reported that the way of working was invaluable:

- It just helped Matt that he had someone else to talk other than me. He could tell (keyworker) about things that he couldn’t tell me.

  [Mother of 13-year-old]

- She really had a good relationship with him, y’know what I mean? They really ‘hit it off’ together, ‘cos it’s somebody taking an interest in him, apart from me.

  [Carer of nine-year-old]

By the end of the intervention they could all reflect on positive outcomes for their child:

- At least he’s using his initiative and going to seek help at school, which had got to be an improvement, hasn’t it?

  [Carer of nine-year-old]

- He does realise now that the world doesn’t revolve around him and you do have to talk things through and discuss things … we compromise and he will do what I ask – I’m really pleased about that … It has sunk in – I wouldn’t say 100%, but it has sunk in!

  [Mother of 13-year-old]

- He still has (problems) on the odd occasion – I think it’s a ‘cry for help’, in his own way … I think it’s just attention. But it’s not as bad as what it was.

  [Carer of nine-year-old]

I look at the bigger picture as well, I look at a lot of his friends who have been expelled from his school, a lot of other kids that are in trouble, an awful lot of trouble with the police, being arrested, smoking and drinking and doing drugs and I look at him and I know I moan about him … and I do think to myself I’m lucky … and thank God that he hasn’t been arrested, which I thought he would’ve been by now. I do feel if I hadn’t had the help from YISP he would’ve been in more trouble, I really do … if it wasn’t for them I don’t know where I’d have been – I was literally at the end of my tether, thinking if this carries on, I’m going to get a knock at the door from the police and he’d’ve been arrested for this, that or the other … I will praise YISP anytime, definitely!

[Mother of 13-year-old]
For the first time in four years I do feel optimistic about the future. Before I was in despair – I just did not know what was going to happen to him.

[Mother of 13-year-old]

This was particularly marked among those who had had experience of other agencies:

It was fantastic – even my Mum says now, they were the best out of all the people we’ve met, the YISP were the best

What they done with him, it was brilliant.

[Mother of 14-year-old]

[Mother of 13-year-old]

And one particularly ringing endorsement came from the father of a young person whom the project worked with for nearly a year:

If it wasn’t for (YISP kw and Coordinator) I think we would probably have had to have him out of the house by now - they are a great support team … I mean that – we was talking to another woman and she’s having the same problems but has no support and I passed on (YISP Coordinator) number to her to ask if they can help her – which shows how much I’ve got confidence in them. I wouldn’t have done that if I hadn’t had the confidence like I have.

[Father of 14-year-old]

For the group who participated in this research it would appear that the Solihull YISP is more than adequately meeting the key target:

To achieve high levels of satisfaction for children and parent/carers who have benefited from a YISP intervention

[YJB, 2003:10]

Views of other agency professionals

For all the young people, the keyworker was asked to identify another professional who also worked with the young person and had been party to the YISP input.

Eleven professionals were contacted via a postal, self-completion questionnaire and eight of them replied (including learning mentors, a CAMHS psychiatrist, health professional, teachers who worked in pupil support or inclusion teams, a social worker and a Family Solutions worker).

The questions in the survey included ones to glean the nature of the professional’s contact with and understanding of the YISP. They were then asked:

• What would you say were the outcomes of the YISP’s work with the young person?
• If the young person talked to you about her / his involvement with the YISP please indicate the nature of her / his comments (scale from ‘Always positive’ to ‘Always negative’)
• Can you identify any factors which helped the project to work effectively?
• What do you think could be done to improve this model of working?
• Do you have any other comments?

In relation to this chapter the answers to the first two are the most pertinent.

At the risk of becoming repetitive, there was uniform consensus that the YISP intervention had resulted in positive outcomes. Examples of this were:

Helped individual in tackling situations with a more thoughtful and calm approach.

[Teacher / 11-year-old]

Good ideas of support – time for child to think through issues, problems and practical solutions – e.g. ‘Worry Box’ in class

[Learning Mentor / 10-year-old]

There has been a definite improvement in the child’s self esteem. He has also been introduced to activities and social situations that have encouraged independence and decision-making. The child has been able to talk through reasons for his behaviour and the effect that it has on others. The family have been very well supported and advice given for managing behaviour.

[Learning Mentor / nine-year-old]
Of the six who responded to the question on young people’s comments on the YISP all said that their young person was ‘Always positive’ when talking about involvement with the project.

Interestingly, only three respondents offered suggestions for modifications to the model of work – and the latter two were about extension and re-siting the team rather than amendments to the approach:

- Some aspects of the work are ‘confidential’ but a progress report would be useful.  
  [Inclusion Team Leader / 13-year-old]

- Closer geographical proximity to promote (professional) communication.  
  [CAMHS psychiatrist / 12-year-old]

- This particular child needed more support following his exit review. It would have been better for the child if the keyworker could have continued supporting the family for longer. The exit programme needs to take into account the child’s circumstances and needs. This child had a close bereavement.  
  [Learning Mentor / nine-year-old]

**Summary**

In this chapter we have offered an overview of outcomes for the group of young people who took part in the study. The findings presented here were derived from a variety of sources – the young people themselves, their parents or carers, workers at the YISP and other professionals who were closely involved. As such they offer a comprehensive overview – but perhaps do not allow for the depth that affords proper appreciation of the variety and complexity within the work.

In the next chapter we look at some issues in more detail in a bid to better represent this complexity.
5 Evaluation themes and case studies

Introduction

In this chapter of the report we look in some depth at a number of themes that emerged in our overall analysis of the data from the evaluation.

Through discussion of these themes we convey more of how the project operates, how the young people and their parents find the intervention and how the work raises many issues. For each section we have offered detailed case study data as a ‘live’ illustration of the theme under consideration.

Young people’s behaviour as a manifestation of parental problems

Many young people who come to the attention of the youth justice system will be exhibiting behaviours which have their roots in nurture (or more accurately, lack of nurture) rather than nature.

Where parents have problems of their own a young person is left in an extremely vulnerable position, often lacking appropriate support, supervision and guidance from home.

A number of the young people in our sample were experiencing domestic situations where their principal carer had significant difficulties.

This was amply demonstrated in the case of Karl, a young man who was 13 when he was referred to the YISP by a worker at Sure Start whom his mother had talked to.

She had said that relationships at home were fraught due to Karl’s anger, aggression and disrespect towards her. This also manifested itself at school where he was often in trouble for being rude to teachers and had recently been excluded for assaulting another pupil.

The case is outlined in the frame on the next page – but this does not convey the level of problems within Karl’s family at the time the YISP became involved.

Karl’s mother and father had separated within the last few years, not long after the birth of his younger sister – due to the father’s drug abuse, his criminality, his violence in the home and his unreliability:

*I’d been in a longstanding relationship with Karl’s dad, but he always let me down. He’d been in and out of prison and, basically, in the end he’d been on a prison sentence for two years and came home and asked if he could live with us. I thought, ‘I’ll give him one last chance’, but he was only here for a month (before) I ended the relationship … He said he would come home and be there for me and let me have time for myself – but I just felt I was being taken for granted … I thought the best thing the children need is stability and the thing for me to do is just let go.*

[Karl’s mother]

Not long before the separation Karl’s uncle (mother’s brother) had died suddenly and her parents, who already had health problems, struggled to deal with the situation:

*I basically had to do everything ’cos my parents couldn’t deal with it … they didn’t feel strong enough at the time, I even had to make the arrangements for the funeral.*

[Karl’s mother]
## KARL

### PROFILE

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<td>Regular attender (excluded in the past)</td>
<td>Very willing to work with YISP</td>
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### SITUATION AT REFERRAL

#### Problems
Young person arrested for breaking into a garden shed. Not happy at school – had been excluded for fight with another boy. Mixing with other young people who offend and perpetrate anti-social behaviour in the community. Poor relationship with mother. Bouts of anger, lashes out, destructive in the house. Mother depressed – stretched caring for elderly parents (living nearby) as well as younger sister (pre-school) and young person himself. Erratic contacts with father – heroin user and convicted offender. (Domestic violence in the past when living at home). School attendance problems.

#### Positives
Commitment to school (despite not liking). Stability at home. Plays football. Motivated to change

### ISP
- Social Services input to provide home care as respite for mother’s parents
- YISP kw support to work through issues relating to contact with father.
- YISP kw work on anger and relationship issues in the household (with support from CAMHS psychologist)

### YISP input
- Weekly sessions around ad hoc problems, plus focus on relationship to father, relationship to mother, own self esteem, risks associated with offending, behaviour at school
- Referral and input from On Track family worker
- Joint sessions with CAMHS psychologist (kw in attendance)
- Activities – eg quad biking
- Advice and assistance offered to Mum too (re. caring responsibilities, own mental health)

### Outcomes at end of intervention (closed after eight months)
- Young person still gets angry but feels more in control.
- No offending / asb (despite regular ongoing contacts with same peers).
- No major concerns at school.
- CAMHS sessions ended – but could be re-started if young person wished. On Track sessions short-lived.
- Contact with father as before but young person better able to cope with this.
- Mother more trusting of young person – therefore less conflict in household.

### Longer term outcomes – follow-up (13 months after ISP instigated) (interview with mother)
- Young person able to stop and think – less anger outbursts – and apologise if confrontations in the house
- Level of contact with father worse – young person coping with this ok
- Young person fine at school – positive feedback from teachers in writing – young person has ‘knuckled down’ at school
- No offending / asb
The impact on Karl’s mother of this series of traumatic events, compounded by an increasing burden of caring for her ailing parents as well as her own two children, was the triggering of depression:

“I went through hell then and since then life has just been one thing after another … I felt that I was on the verge of … I was very ill … for 18 months after his death I tried to cope on my own but, you know, it got the better of me.”

[Karl’s mother]

This was all happening as Karl was entering adolescence and moving to secondary school. After the separation, his father was extremely inconsistent with regard to contact – something that upset him a great deal. His mother was having to spend much of the day at his grandparents looking after them, so he was often left to his own devices – and her own mental state made getting on with her difficult even when she was around.

Not unsurprisingly then, tensions grew within the household and at school – and Karl felt more and more isolated and angry. He spent most of his time at home in his room and often flew into a temper when his mother was around. He also hung around the area with a group of friends who were occasionally committing minor offences, including breaking into a shed – for which he was arrested. By the time the YISP became involved Karl’s mother thought their relationship was at ‘breaking point’:

“It’s Karl that is causing the problems … it’s his anger – he’s not showing me any respect. I don’t know if it’s his age … as far as I can make out he’s at an awkward age, 13 … his behaviour at school, everything’s been affected … and here he put one and half doors through and even went for me and I can’t tolerate stuff like that.”

The YISP keyworker initially found Karl to be shy and quiet, but also mature and able to hold a good conversation. He conveyed that he was fed up with his mum not trusting him and that she was always having a go at him.

Through regular one-to-one sessions, it became clear that Karl was able to make sensible decisions himself, that he had a clear view on how to behave properly and that he could be calm, courteous and articulate:

“With Karl it’s more having someone to listen, rather than actually giving him things to do, ‘cos he knows the rights and wrongs of things already.”

[YISP keyworker]

One thing he seemed to crave was a positive relationship with an adult – someone who could act as a role model and would allow him to work through some of his difficult feelings around his father’s apparent lack of interest in him and failure to commit to regular contacts:

“I think he enjoys the attention, the company and the male attention – he can talk to another lad rather than just his mum and baby sister.”

[YISP keyworker]

The keyworker stressed the problem Karl might be storing up for himself at school with his tendency to get into fights and things quickly settled down there. The focus then shifted to the situation at home.

The YISP Coordinator referred Karl to CAMHS and a number of three-way meetings took place (with Karl, the keyworker and a psychologist) where more in-depth discussions were conducted around Karl’s thoughts and feelings about his life.

In addition, it was apparent that Karl’s mother was in need of support. Social services assessed her parents for home care, but they refused to accept the offer, preferring to continue to rely on their daughter’s care. (However, she was able to negotiate a more limited input, using the opportunity to impress upon them that she needed to spend more time with Karl and his sister).

During the ongoing contacts the keyworker made efforts to talk to the young person’s mother about her perception of the situation. It transpired that she was on medication for her depression and that she had had a Community Psychiatric Nurse in the recent past (whom she had stopped seeing because she felt it was not helping). She had also had inputs from a number of other agencies – including Sure Start.

The YISP Coordinator arranged for On Track family support to become involved – to try to offer some extra help with the conflicts at home. However, this was short-lived because mother again decided it was not useful.

It became apparent that Karl’s mother’s disposition towards depression and negativity was having an impact on her ability to accept help when it was offered:
She tends to fly off the handle and worry all the time … there’s a lot of work to be done with mum, but I’m the only agency still involved because she’s pulled out with all the others.

[YISP keyworker]

In addition, her own difficult circumstances and sense of isolation often led her to dwell on the potential for Karl to get into trouble and have problems of his own – perhaps worrying that he might turn out like his father:

She’s coming to all these assumptions without actually getting to the bottom of what’s happened.

[YISP keyworker]

The keyworker found it hard to work with Karl’s mother:

Mum’s pretty key in all this really. … she’s quite a difficult person and it’s ended up just being me who she’s talking to now … to visit her is a struggle and I’m mentally exhausted after talking to her – she’s so caught up and depressed that you get sucked into it at times … None of the statutory services have had any impact on her.”

but the keyworker realised that it was vital to try to improve relationships at home. At the core of much of the conflict was a lack of trust. Karl felt that no matter how honest he was with his mother, especially over how he was spending his time with his mates and what he did when he saw his father, she would never believe him:

Mum always gives him the third degree every time he sees his dad.

[YISP keyworker]

Over time there were improvements with this – the keyworker mediated between Karl and his mother and sometimes advocated for Karl’s view, helping to facilitate better communication between the two of them. But there was a continuing problem with her sense that there was no help for her:

I’ve got nobody. I’ve just had to deal with crisis on top of crisis on top of crisis.

[Young person’s mother]

Although the keyworker was sympathetic to her plight, it was difficult not to eventually conclude that the young person’s mother had a tendency to overreact to things:

“I think it’s the way she’s reacting to Karl’s adolescence that’s started a lot of this … I think Karl’s acting like a normal 14-year-old lad – there are going to be issues there – but because of mum’s frame of mind it’s making it bigger than it actually is.”

Fortunately, due to the keyworker’s tenacity there were positive outcomes from the intervention and signs that Karl had developed strategies to deal with his own anger and his mother’s (and father’s) problems. When Karl reflected on his time with the YISP he said he had taken on board what his keyworker suggested with regard to seeing his father:

(My keyworker) says ‘enjoy it when he’s around and don’t dwell on it when he’s not – just try to chill’, which is what I’m doing now.

[Young person]

And he said that he was happier now:

[Interviewer]

Would you say that life was good, bad or a bit of both at the moment?

[Young person]

Good.

What’s good about it?

Being able to speak to my Mum, being able to get on with my Mum. Sort of, like, I’m not concentrating on my friends, I’m concentrating on my family.

And, despite her own ongoing difficulties, Karl’s mother could recognise the longer term beneficial effects of the keyworker’s efforts, saying five months after the case was closed:

“I feel that Karl has benefited from it – because he stops and thinks about his actions now. Even if I do have a run-in with him he will apologise.”
**Coda**

Overall, then, Karl’s distress as shown in his difficult behaviour was something that he could learn to manage with the support of a YISP keyworker and input from others. By the end of the intervention he had developed appropriate coping strategies to deal with the pressures in his life (which often came from both his parents) and was able to look forward to the future – he had plans to train to be a builder after he had done his GCSEs.

This case shows why very soon into the development of the YISP in Solihull it became necessary to grapple with the issue of parental difficulties as part and parcel of a holistic response to young people’s problems – and why the link to On Track family support was fostered. There was a clear need for there to be a readily available response that could begin to pick up on (often unmet) need amongst the parents or carers of the young people. The instigation of direct work often revealed issues that were well beyond the remit of a keyworker but ones that another independent professional, working to the same goals, might be able to begin to address.

This close coalition between workers ‘representing’ the ‘interests’ of young people (the keyworker) and parents / carers (the On Track worker) has achieved good outcomes in many cases – although in this particular scenario, Karl’s mother’s mental health problems seemed to militate against this approach. Her isolation from support – having had contacts with a variety of agencies including health, Sure Start and the YISP – serves to underline the difficulty of providing appropriate support to adults with chronic but relatively low level mental health problems, problems which may well be having a significant impact on the lives of many young people.

**The need to maintain an independent reputation**

There was ample evidence from the young people and parents / carers that we talked to, perhaps especially those who had had significant involvement from social services before encountering the YISP, that they valued the independence of the project from the statutory sector.

Perhaps the most vivid example of this was in a case where the outcome was not as positive as might have been hoped for due to this independence becoming compromised.

Michael was a 12-year-old who was referred to the YISP by a social worker. He had been persistently caught up in anti-social behaviour in his local community especially fighting with other boys in the neighbourhood. His family were facing the threat of eviction from their home (due to neighbours complaints) and he was also temporarily excluded from school due to bullying and an assault on a teacher.
**MICHAEL**

**PROFILE**

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<td>How well motivated at outset?</td>
<td>Willing to work with YISP</td>
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**SITUATION AT REFERRAL**

**Problems**


**Positives**

Young person has supportive friends at school. Young person understands the consequences of his actions. Support from mother – she is seeking help re. alcohol use and attending a parenting class.

**ISP**

- Introduce young person to positive activities and raise self esteem
- Arrange activities for school holidays
- Clarify the situation re. housing for the family
- Seek information re. eye condition

**YISP input**

- Weekly sessions – one-to-one work to look at anger, bullying, consequences of behaviour and offending and raise self esteem.
- Support in attending positive activities through PAYP and other options
- Liaison with school
- Contacts with housing workers to sort out housing situation

**Outcomes at end of intervention (closed after seven months)**

- Young person more settled in the community – new friendships locally – no asb or offending
- Threat of eviction seems to have lifted
- Young person more confident and not fighting as much – but still some problems with anger
- Ongoing difficulties with school – young person still confrontational with teachers
- Eye condition inoperable, but young person less concerned about this

**Longer term outcomes (10 months after ISP instigated) – brief young person interview only**

- Young person not enjoying school – but doing ok – no exclusions recently.
- More friends and settled in community
- Young person said life was “good” for him.

[n.b. Mother not available for interview – but keyworker reported that he felt not all relevant issues had surfaced during the intervention]
As the case details sheet outlines he was also on the Child Protection Register at the time as was his younger brother (due to emotional abuse, according to the YISP notes) and there were concerns that he had low self esteem due to an eye condition that meant his eyeballs were constantly moving led to teasing from his peers.

An ISP was put in place that focused on Michael’s needs – especially addressed to trying to raise his self esteem through involvement in positive activities, and by finding out whether there was any possibility of medical treatment for his eyes.

However, running in tandem with the agenda around Michael’s problems were a number of difficulties within the household which formed a disturbing backdrop to the case (not unlike the situation for Karl). The YISP were aware of social services involvement, but this was being reduced because Michael was coming off the CP Register. However, it was not clear how many additional issues there had been in the past and there was a lack of information from other agencies.

Underlying Michael’s problems was the overarching issue of his mother and stepfather’s alcohol abuse. As the work intensified it became clear that although his mother had asked for help with this (as well as indicating a willingness to attend parenting classes) it was an ongoing problem. The threat of eviction was because neighbours had petitioned the housing provider to remove the family due to their rowdy behaviour and something of a feud seemed to have developed. Michael’s mother was facing a court appearance, charged with assault against a neighbour and affray:

_They put up a petition against us. We have had the police round, but it’s not been domestic violence, it’s been like verbal, shouting while we were drunk – but we’re sorted now._

[Michael’s mother]

The keyworker made a number of attempts to find out more about the reality of the situation, but found that other agencies were somewhat in the dark about what was happening in the neighbourhood:

_Everything’s a bit of a mystery, to be honest. No one really knows what’s happening in the area._

[YISP keyworker]

After the first few meetings, and before the start of one-to-one sessions, the keyworker was away from work on sick leave for a period of time so the case drifted for a while. However, immediately on returning to work, the keyworker had to report an incident to social services of a dog bite to Michael’s leg (by a dog who the family were looking after temporarily). This led to a call from a social worker, something that the family, and Michael in particular, were not pleased about after their previous intensive involvement due to child protection concerns:

_He does say he doesn’t like social workers – they’re too nosy, they get on his nerves, they ask too many questions._

[YISP keyworker]

The keyworker was not overly worried, but felt obliged to report the incident. It became clear that social services had not dealt with it sympathetically, immediately phoning the house, informing Karl’s mother that the keyworker had made a report and interviewing her – which the keyworker argued had not ultimately helped anyone:

_The social worker I spoke to was quite harsh with me. He said, ‘This needs to be sorted out now’ and was, y’know, quite heavy-handed. And then for it to be ‘No Further Action’, it’s just winding people up, for no reason._

[YISP keyworker]

From this point on the work did progress, with the keyworker addressing issues around anger management, self esteem and assertiveness. It became apparent that Michael was more bully than victim in most of his confrontations at school and some work on consequences of this was also undertaken.

However, after the time when the report was made to social services, the dynamic of the relationship altered. The keyworker felt he was never able to gain Michael’s trust and find out what his underlying problems were, despite repeated attempts with both him and his mother:

_Whenever you mention it it’s always shelved – I guess more so since the dog bite. Before that we were, not getting into any depth, but brushing on (issues like) who disciplines him at home – is it mum or stepdad? … and that kind of thing._

_Michael will tell me what’s going on at school – he’s got into the groove of, whenever he sees me, he’ll tell me exactly what’s p***ing him off, which is really good … but he doesn’t talk about outside of school, what he gets up to or anything._

[YISP keyworker]
The outcome of this was that when the work finished there appeared to be ongoing problems – for both Michael and his family. He continued to get in trouble at school and concerns remained about what was happening at home. The keyworker felt that he had never really ‘got to the bottom of things’ and it remained difficult to predict how Michael might fare in the future – the keyworker was left with a sense of foreboding:

- I think he’s too wound up about something else. I get the impression that (well) … you ask him about things at home – everything’s always fine, there’s never any problems (but) mum still drinks … which I do worry about.
- It’s just a really strange sort of set-up at home really … there’s definitely something there, they’re very guarded

[Interviewer] Do you feel that you can make any sort of prediction about what might happen with Michael in the future?

I’d imagine he could go either way – he’s not getting in trouble in the community, which is a positive – but it just depends on what the issues are, ’cos at the moment I feel it’s kind of just festering.

Coda

This case illustrates a number of pertinent issues all linked to the need to preserve independence from statutory services.

The professional duty to report the dog bite and the lack of a measured response by social services undermined the keyworker’s ability to build and maintain trust with Michael and his family. This shows the delicate line that professionals need to tread when dealing with sensitive issues – and the need to have a shared understanding of roles and an agreed approach, one which can only be achieved through full negotiation (something that appears not to have happened here).

Interestingly, this was amplified further for Michael. He was already ‘hardened’ to the ‘interfering’ of ‘caring’ professionals, as he indicated when asked by the researcher during the first interview if he was getting help from anyone else alongside the YISP:

- I’ve got loads of people but I can’t name them one-by-one – there’s too many

[Michael]

This made the task of creating the best atmosphere for productive engagement even more tricky for the keyworker – but will be a common circumstance for many of the young people referred to the project.

This further underlines the critical importance of the need to maintain a professional distance from other statutory agencies to enable full engagement with young people (and their families) who may be distrustful of other workers. Otherwise, as in Michael’s case, once tainted with the stigma of an overly close association with the ‘wrong’ agencies, the chance to do effective work may be lost.

Education – the importance of the engagement of schools with YISP work

A key and undisputed element in ensuring good long term outcomes for young people is working towards a stable and productive school placement.

The need to ensure that ‘children voluntarily cooperating with an ISP are in full time education’ is also a principal target for all YISPs (YJB, 2003: 10).

Clearly this makes working closely with schools vital for a YISP and discussions related to education echoed across the cases in our sample. Here we highlight how one key issue was often at the heart of success (or otherwise) in achieving this goal – the importance of schools’ understanding and contributing to the YISP intervention.

To illustrate this we refer to the work with two young people, one where the outcome was good and another where things went less well.

Paul was 10 years old when his learning mentor referred him to the YISP. He had been in trouble for aggression and disruptive behaviour at school:

- Somebody only had to look at Paul the wrong way and he’d, y’know, fly off the handle and get into fights … on one occasion I went to pick him up from school and him and some lad had had a fight, a normal playground fight … but Paul took it one step further and more or less attacked this kid in front of three teachers and myself.
Regardless of who was there he just couldn’t control his temper and there have been a few outbursts like that.

[Paul’s mother]

Paul was having problems with his schoolwork, especially with literacy. He had been very upset by a temporary exclusion when he had been caught drinking alcohol in the school toilets.

In addition he was losing his temper frequently at home and his parents were worried about him mixing with older young people in the local community (where they thought he had been using cannabis). Paul was overweight and the keyworker found that he had low self esteem. He could be intimidating and was often reacting to being teased in school by bullying other children. He was not keen to take part in physical activities because he was very ‘body conscious’.

After three months of working with him the keyworker saw small improvements but was concerned about some issues which were uncovered, including his continuing propensity to excessive violence but also obsessive behaviour and an ability to emotionally detach and not see the consequences of his actions.

Paul’s ISP had started when he was just a few months away from finishing Year Six and there were major worries over his transition to secondary school. Over the summer holidays the keyworker encouraged his parents to spend quality time with Paul and give him praise – to try to strengthen his self esteem. The keyworker had also made good contacts with the school he was moving to in order to ensure that they were well-informed as to his needs and could make appropriate plans. The keyworker was gratified when the school made every effort to work with the YISP to integrate Paul successfully:

When he went to secondary school I met up with his Head of House … who straight away said we’ll give him a Time Out card, I’ll make sure I get to know him quite well and we’ll take it from there. And Paul just … was the complete opposite of when he’d been at primary school, really.

[YISP keyworker]

However, it was still a surprise when the move went well:

Paul took to secondary school like a duck to water. He’s settled in really well – he’s so much more calm about things. He’s got a really good relationship with teachers, he’s been in plays … getting involved with stuff and enjoying things.

[YISP keyworker]
PAUL

PROFILE

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<td>Regular attender</td>
<td>How well motivated at outset?</td>
<td>Willing to work with YISP</td>
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SITUATION AT REFERRAL

Problems

Anger and aggression at school – reacts to other young people who wind him up – bullies others. Behaviour problems at home – loses his temper. Close to an uncle who recently received prison sentence for violent offences. Overweight – other young people comment on this. Risk of asb / offending in the community – mixes with older young people – drinking and has used cannabis. Excluded (once) from school for drinking on the premises.

Positives

Good support from mother and father. Young person playing cricket after school

ISP

- Focused work around anger, drug and alcohol education, healthy eating.
- Work on improving young person’s self esteem
- Introduction to out of school activities
- Work on spelling (young person indicated particular concern with this)

YISP input

- Weekly sessions – one-to-one work on temper control, dangers of drug and alcohol use, consequences of behaviour and offending, problems in school.
- Support to parents in agreeing rules and expectations for home.
- Liaison with school / learning mentor around behaviour there.
- Activities in holidays.

Outcomes at end of intervention (closed after seven months)

- Young person’s behaviour and achievements at school improved.
- Young person felt more confident – doing well at school, has joined a gym, developing appropriate friendships.
- Transition to secondary school went well.
- No offending / asb (after first month)

Longer term outcomes

Unclear – neither Mother nor young person available for follow-up interview.
The keyworker credited the dramatic change to two things – the positive input of Paul’s parents and the sympathetic approach of the new school. The school had proved to be receptive to the keyworker’s suggestions as to how to best deal with Paul and were already employing good strategies of their own to deal with potential problems from difficult pupils (e.g. the Time Out card – mentioned above – which allowed Paul to leave a class without having to explain why to a teacher and find the Head of House to discuss things and cool down).

School are very aware of his ‘boiling point’ and they’re making an effort to make the teachers aware of it … he’s making an effort to got to teachers and say, ‘This person’s really annoying me and if you don’t do something I’m going to!’ – whereas in primary school he’d have just hit them.

[YISP keyworker]

Through sharing information and planning together effectively Paul was facilitated in having a positive early experience of his new school – and responded in kind:

“He just seems to have really matured … it was almost, like, he was at primary school and he just felt too old for it. He’s come to secondary school, settled down really well and things have just got better – everything’s great. It’s amazing the difference in him!”

[YISP keyworker]

The keyworker also said that Paul was ready for a move

Having a mixture of teachers has really helped too. Part of the problem with primary school, although for some children it’s much more stabilising because it’s one teacher, for other children … if you’ve started off on a ‘bad foot’ with a teacher it’s quite hard to turn it round – particularly by Year 6, when you’ve got your reputation and that kind of thing. Whereas if you’ve got lots of different teachers it’s only an hour a day you’ve got to get on with that teacher, which I think was better for Paul.

and that the school had capitalised on this by working with the YISP:

School have been absolutely fantastic. They met with us on the last day of term (end of the year before Paul arrived) because of the concerns we had about Paul moving up. Over the holidays they wrote to his mum and told her that they were moving him into a different set so that he didn’t have to move around as much, and they put him in a house with a really good tutor who made masses of effort with Paul …I think they’re going to end up with a really good pupil in him because he’s had such a good start.

She also stated that a shared sense of purpose with the Head of House had helped in achieving a positive transition:

Now if we’ve got children moving up to secondary school I think we’d ask for them to be in his house because he was so good … he’s really committed to helping the children achieve their potential in whatever way is necessary.

Overall, then, the importance of a school engaging well with the intervention for the benefit of the young person was clearly demonstrated in Paul’s case.

This positive outcome was in stark contrast to the situation with another young person. Josh was an 11-year-old who was disruptive at school and had been getting into trouble for general anti-social behaviour in his neighbourhood (eventually being reprimanded by the police) when his mother contacted the YISP. At home he often fell out with his mother and there were regular arguments.

Josh was on report at school due to his attitude towards teachers and conflicts with other pupils. At the time the YISP became involved he was temporarily excluded for a fight with a classmate:

In the last couple of months his attendance has gone from bad to worse. He’s late most days and he often doesn’t go at all. He’s been suspended four times in the last couple of months.

[Josh’s mother]
**JOSH**

**PROFILE**

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<td>How well motivated at outset?</td>
<td>Willing to work with YISP</td>
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**SITUATION AT REFERRAL**

**Problems**


**Positives**

Good support at home, extended family nearby and regular contacts with father. Mother in regular contact with school and attending reviews. Plan to become involved in army cadets outside school.

**ISP**

- Develop sports programme to engage in positive activities – also work on strategies to deal with peer pressure in the community.
- Agree an Acceptable Behaviour Contract with young person regarding behaviour in the community and in school.
- Solution focused work around communication between young person and mother – involvement of family workers.

**YISP input**

- Weekly sessions focusing on making the right choices, consequences of actions, potential outcomes of offending, issues with mother and brother.
- Introductions and support to attend local sports programme and to football team in the area.
- Activities in holidays.
- Support to mother – feeling isolated and unable to control young person’s behaviour – attempts to link-in to local groups, etc.
- Discussions around referral to On Track family support.

**Outcomes at end of intervention (closed after eight months)**

- Improved relationships at home
- No offending or asb during last five months
- Young person still disruptive at school and at risk of exclusion (permanent).
- Young person difficult to engage – KW unsure of the degree to which he had absorbed the messages – although he claimed now able to walk away from trouble.
- (ABC not used. Young person referred on to YOT for further focused work)

**Longer term outcomes**

Unclear – neither Mother nor young person available for follow-up interview.
The keyworker initially found him engaging, bright and chatty – but over time discovered that he was difficult to work with because he refused to accept consequences and would constantly use any tactic to deny his responsibility for his behaviour.

Attempts to move Josh on – through exercises to improve his behaviour at home and at school – were thwarted by his mother’s inconsistent parenting (it subsequently transpired that she had problems with depression) and through his school’s failure to cooperate with the YISP input.

Despite repeated attempts, Josh’s keyworker was unable to maintain effective contact with the school – who, the keyworker felt, were not appropriately organised in managing Josh (with the result that he often took advantage and would truant regularly). The clearest example of this was when Josh was moved down a set due to his behaviour in lessons. Unfortunately the school failed to register this in their timetabling (they had a computerised system) which meant that for one period of planned involvement the keyworker was making appointments to see Josh then arriving at school to discover that they did not know where he was – resulting in many aborted visits and much wasted time.

The school, I find are really difficult to work with … and he was truanting whenever he could get away with it – so it became impossible to see him in school. I used to spend quite a lot of time just chasing him.

[YISP keyworker]

Josh’s mother expressed similar problems in her dealings with the school – she felt they did not communicate effectively with her. For example, on one occasion when he was temporarily excluded and the school sent a letter home with Josh:

Why can’t the school phone me? That’s no good to me – he’s not going to give me the letter, is he? I only caught him out when he went in again on the Monday, but unbeknown to me he’s not gone in but he’s come home ten minutes early and covered in mud from head to foot – so I called his bluff and said that the school had phoned me, and caught him out.

[Josh’s mother]

The YISP keyworker felt that because the school did not enter into a cooperative relationship to work together to improve things for Josh, this contributed to his feeling that he was not obliged to opt into the work:

Josh very much sees this programme as, ‘Oh, as and when – I’ll do what I want to do when I want to do it’, and he isn’t that bothered. He’s fine to see me but it’s no skin off his nose if he doesn’t.

[YISP keyworker]

The outcome of the case was although there were no official indications that Josh was offending, and although he reported that he was getting on better with his mother (a very late development):

I’ve stopped arguing with my Mum since I’ve been with (YISP worker) … I just gradually stopped.

[Josh]

the keyworker was extremely concerned that the situation could deteriorate, given the risks that Josh said (or implied) he was taking:

I know that the police haven’t been to his door – but I don’t know what he’s been up to that he hasn’t been caught doing … and he’s insinuated that he has been doing things that he could be caught for and just hasn’t been telling his mum.

[YISP keyworker]

We will discuss Josh’s situation again in the next section, because this case highlighted another interesting issue for the YISP model.

Coda

In contrast to the issue discussed earlier of parental problems complicating the YISP intervention – where the input can be augmented with On Track parental support – difficulties in communicating and working with a school are less easily remedied.

Paul and Josh’s cases highlight the central importance of good working relationships between YISP keyworkers and school staff – as the keyworker reflected in Paul’s case:

I think the main thing was this multi-agency working, because if he hadn’t’ve been involved with us he wouldn’t’ve got all the support he got when he went to secondary school and I think it could’ve been a different story! … and
supporting the parents, picking up on things they may not’ve understood and then talking through that with them so they changed the way they spoke to him. I think that may have helped. But actually supporting them through his transition to secondary school and getting him the support he needed when he got there, I think that was something that really helped and wouldn’t have happened if we hadn’t been involved.”

Young people’s volition to work with the YISP

We have already looked at a number of potential factors that can make work with young people on the YISP programme more difficult. However, in a minority of cases, a further ‘complication’ can be the level of motivation of a young person to engage with the intervention.

The YISP is a voluntary intervention, for both young people and their parents – built around the theory that informed consent is key in achieving sustainable change. At the outset of a young person’s involvement, when a case goes to panel, a consent form is signed – and the ISP also has to be signed by both a parent / carer and the young person her / himself.

However, there is an implicit assumption that the young person will maintain a level of ongoing motivation to work productively throughout the course of the ISP – or at least that the keyworker will be able to keep them sufficiently motivated to make progress.

The issue of ‘informed consent’ and how useful this is as a predictor of full engagement is one that has concerned the YISP workers. However, positive change in the majority of cases has silenced most doubts:

*I’m not always sure that they completely understand. It has concerned me but we’ve never had a bad outcome. We’ve had one young person who refused to sign the consent to go into panel – but we actually ended-up holding onto that young person for much longer than we should’ve done because of issues at school … but he did sign his ISP.*

[YISP worker]

In our research, however, there were indications that initial consent was not always a sign that a young person would work well with the YISP. Josh’s case – as outlined in the previous section – provided a clear example of this. Although there were a number of contributory factors in limiting effective progress with the work (as already discussed) at the core of the problem was Josh’s own reticence to fully engage in changing his behaviour.

He expressed this in different ways – truanting from school (partly to avoid YISP sessions), making himself absent from home if he knew the keyworker was due to call, and in using avoidance and denial whenever he did discuss his behaviour with the keyworker:

*Even with the happy-slapping incident … I think he’d, kind of, pushed a girl and someone filmed it. There were three lads and they took it in turns pushing this girl on their way to a class and someone filmed it on their mobile. But considering how contentious an issue it is, he was just like, ‘I wasn’t doing anything, just go and ask the girl’. And he just totally denied it to start with, even though they had film evidence and four other people had come and said he’d done it and he knew that – he knew that that was the case, and he still was just like, ‘No, I didn’t do anything’. That’s the kind of mentality he works on – he wasn’t there and it wasn’t him, and even if it was, it’s ok, because he’ll move schools anyway!*  

[YISP keyworker]

The keyworker had come to realise, despite showing tenacity in continuing to try to work with Josh, that the input was having little effect:

*He’s a child who I’ve found it really difficult with – at times I really just didn’t know what to do with him. There are so many things I could try with him, but I don’t believe they’d make a difference because he has to make that choice in his own head that he wants to make that change. I’ve come to realise that nothing I do is going to make him change his mind, I don’t think. And that’s partly because he’s a clever boy and he’s got his own mind and has his own opinions about things, but partly because he really just couldn’t be bothered … he feels he has that amount of choice in it and he has that amount of, ‘Oh I can just do it when I want and it’s just a bit of a laugh’.*

The keyworker felt that Josh was relatively exceptional in this – because most of the young people did not have this level of resistance to the work and sooner or later would cooperate:
Almost all the other children that I’ve worked with, they recognise at some point that they’re not happy with the way things are … and the amount of trouble Josh has at school you would have thought that even just to have an easier life he would want things to be different at school, but he just doesn’t care. Whereas other children they don’t like being into trouble and they do care … they may have this massive ‘front’ on them, but ultimately they know it’s not the best feeling and that they could feel better … Josh, on the other hand just doesn’t seem to care about it enough for it to bother him. He’s having a much better time in his eyes behaving badly and doing what he wants – ‘it’s not fun being good, so why should he be good?’

For the keyworker the main problem with this was that although Josh had a degree of conscious control of his actions (which most other young people did not have) his easy-going approach might mean that he inadvertently got into serious trouble:

He’s one of the few children who made a choice about what trouble to get into and makes a choice about not getting into trouble. I think other children, there’s an element of control which they don’t have, and they make choices to hang around with certain children, but that’s a product of the way they feel about themselves or what’s going on at home or how they feel about school, or whatever. Josh is bright, he’s chatty, people like him, he’s got reasonably high self esteem – in fact he’s got very good self esteem … so it comes very much down to him making that choice, I think.

There is a danger for him to get really into trouble with the police, but if he does it’s not a malicious intent, it’s not deliberately, ‘let’s go and do criminal things’, kind of thing. It’s just because he does stupid things, with his friends and he just isn’t bothered enough about the consequences of that in order to stop.

Josh’s mother had tried to emphasise the potential consequences of his behaviour just prior to his involvement with the YISP, but to no avail:

They’d gone to the police station and his mum said … ‘Put him in a cell and keep him there for a few hours so he really understands’ – but his dad had gone and got him out before they’d done it.

[YISP keyworker]

The final outcome from the work was that the keyworker concluded that the only option to try to divert Josh away from offending was to expose him to a more structured, authoritarian approach via a YOT prevention programme where he would be obliged to attend appointments:

I’ve come to a point where I just feel, I can’t think of anything more to do with him that is going to help him. The only thing I can think of doing is referring him into the YOT … the YOT is something more formal and will, hopefully, make him sit up …

Coda

The approach to YISP at Solihull seems to have had much success in working with ‘hard to reach’ young people. However, as the keyworker finally had to admit in Josh’s case:

The YISP requires you to want to change things, because if you don’t, you’re not going to get anywhere.

The prevalence of young people with learning needs among the YISP client group and the additional issues this brings

It would seem apparent from this sample of young people and from discussions with the team that there are a significant and possibly growing number of young people with learning needs who are referred to the YISP – especially those deemed to be at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour.

Often these needs are either not recognised or fully understood when the referral is made – and some young people have been labelled as being ‘stubborn’ or ‘naughty’.

Six out of the eleven young people who took part in the evaluation had some form of learning need identified at the point of referral (although one was re-assessed during the work and an earlier diagnosis of ADHD was removed). These varied significantly but three of the young people were receiving medication for ADHD, as well as psychiatric support and two of these were subsequently assessed as being on the autistic spectrum.

Solihull YISP – An Evaluation
It is no exaggeration to say that a whole report could be written based on the data collected in relation to these particular cases and the issues that they raised. Here we will restrict ourselves to a consideration of two broad themes as illustrated in two cases.

**‘Outcomes’ for young people with complex learning needs**

The burgeoning caseload of young people with learning needs was not anticipated by workers within the YISP. To some degree, then, keyworkers had to ‘come to terms’ with the complexity of working with these cases. In addition they were obliged to acquire new knowledge and skills for the work since neither had specialist training in this field. One part of this process was accepting that it was hard to predict the amount of change which it might be reasonable to work towards for each individual.

> I recognise – in some senses – how little impact the one-to-one work has with these young people – you know it’s something that’s going to have to go on throughout the rest of their lives.

[YISP keyworker]

This was shown clearly in the work undertaken with Kathryn. Kathryn was 12 when she was referred to the YISP by her speech therapist. She had been having problems with inappropriate behaviour at school and in the local community – her lack of social understanding causing her to be verbally abusive and aggressive:

> I’d say probably the last two years has been our most kind of ‘rollercoasterish’ as Kath has got older. Her temperament isn’t very good, especially since she started senior school.

[Kathryn’s mother]
**KATHRYN**

**PROFILE**

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<td>Regular attender (but only part time)</td>
<td>Willing to work with YISP</td>
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**SITUATION AT REFERRAL**

**Problems**

Poor social understanding and inappropriate behaviour. Very aggressive and abusive (school and community). Not coping in current mainstream school – only attends part time. ADHD (medicated) and awaiting assessment for autism. Aggressive towards younger sister and mother.

**Positives**

Supportive mother and stable domestic situation – regular contact with grandparents. Involved in Guides – leader understands young person’s needs. Support from CAMHS psychiatrist

**ISP**

- Work on socialisation problems
- One-to-one work on behaviour and consequences with young person
- Help Mother to develop strategies for dealing with young person’s behaviour
- Make efforts to resolve difficulties with schooling

**YISP input**

- Sessions – looking at anger, consequences of behaviour, risks (eg of running away), self esteem.
- Trips out and visits
- Support to Mother including advice over strategies for dealing with young person, information-giving and attendance at meetings with other agencies

**Outcomes at end of intervention (closed after nine months)**

- No problems with behaviour in the neighbourhood (but young person not allowed out of the house)
- Young person and family supported through transition to new secondary school and through assessment for autism
- Statement of Educational Need reviewed and updated
- Positive relationship between young person and kw has helped young person to convey some of her thoughts and feelings
- Increasing problems at school
- Young person continued to be aggressive and abusive at home (sister receiving support from SSD worker to help with this)
- Young person had assaulted two young people in separate incidents (police involved in latter when young person set fire to another girl’s hair)

**Longer term outcomes (10 months after ISP instigated) – young person and parent interviews**

Life at home still erratic – young person sometimes violent and abusive to mother, sister and dog

Detentions at school and temporary exclusions increasing in frequency (recent five-day exclusion)

Mother felt specialist residential placement now the only viable option to prevent young person significantly harming her sister.
Kathryn had begun to struggle significantly at school – and by the time of the intervention was only attending part time. The situation had become so difficult for her mother at home that she had felt it necessary to stop Kathryn going outside the house unless accompanied by her – partly due to complaints from a neighbour about her behaviour in the street.

The ISP indicated that keywork sessions on anger, consequences of behaviour, self esteem and risk might help to improve the situation. In addition, Kathryn’s mother was to be offered support in building strategies to deal with her behaviour and help in trying to advocate for a change of school (into specialist provision).

The one-to-one work duly took place, with the keyworker putting much effort into making the time spent with Kathryn productive and appropriate to her needs. Sessions often took place in a nearby church hall so that Kathryn was away from the house and could do activities including cooking, as well as having more focused time for issue-based exercises.

The education authority agreed to move Kathryn to a new school, but to another mainstream school (contrary to her mother’s wishes) – with assurances that there would be additional input there. The keyworker was able to support her through the transition, which went relatively well – but soon Kathryn began to have similar problems to her previous placement and was being punished with detentions (which she refused to do) and exclusions.

At the same time the situation at home was deteriorating rapidly – with Kathryn being increasingly abusive to her sister. This led to her mother approaching social services to obtain support and counselling for her (through the Family Focus service).

Overall, despite the keyworker’s good relationship with both Kathryn (and her mother) and a large investment of time and energy in working on the pre-defined issues for the ISP, there was little improvement in Kathryn’s behaviour.

I’ve gone over stuff again and again and again … we’ve looked at school rules, why it’s important to follow rules generally, work on what makes a good friend, how you to relate to your friends, why she’s not as aggressive to her friends but she is to her mum and her sister, and things like that … about alcohol and smoking, and drugs – a lot of what comes up because of what her friends talk about, and going over incidents at home and incidents in school … all sorts of things.

[YISP keyworker]

From the basic list of outcomes from the work, it might appear that things had got worse, especially at home – and Kathryn’s risk of offending had not abated.

However, in a number of broad and more subtle ways, the intervention had been successful. The keyworker had been able to offer assistance to Kathryn’s mother in coping with the huge demands of living with and advocating for Kathryn during a difficult period. The keyworker approached things from a neutral perspective and really listened and understood:

(The keyworker) understood what I was talking about. Sometimes you deal with people and they can be a bit, sort of, arrogant – they go by the book – but (keyworker) was, ‘You tell me about your child – I’m interested in your child, not what the guidelines are for ADHD’, and I thought that was really nice.

[Kathryn’s mother]

In addition the keyworker offered a fresh angle on the situation, which was useful and much appreciated:

I just live with her, if you know what I mean! I’ve lived with it for nearly 14 years and it’s nice when someone comes in with something different and they can pick up on things that you probably wouldn’t notice that much or wouldn’t take that much notice of, ‘cos I’m used to seeing it all the time. So that was good.

[Kathryn’s mother]

Overall the input from the YISP had been a significant and positive experience for both her and her daughter. Perhaps the most significant outcome – and something that would not register on straightforward outcome measures – was that the keyworker had managed to have a close relationship with Kathryn, despite all her difficulties:

(Keyworker) was absolutely fantastic – I still miss her now … (The keyworker)’s the only adult outside of the family that Kathryn ever really bonded with – they got on really well … Even though she didn’t understand the reason why (keyworker) was there … because of her autism she couldn’t, Kathryn really enjoyed seeing (the keyworker) and going out. It was really positive for her, She sort of made a friend, which was lovely.

[Kathryn’s mother]
The value of the YISP intervention for parents

As was alluded to in the discussion of Kathryn’s case, it seemed that often where a young person had complex needs their parent(s) / carer(s) found the work of the YISP particularly beneficial.

In order to illustrate this we will draw further on interviews with Kathryn’s mother and on those conducted with the mother of another young person, Liam, who was referred to the project when he was eight.

Liam had been having particular problems with anger and aggression at school – “he shouts, screams, stomps – he has hit teachers as well” – as his mother explained. In one incident he had bitten another child and the police had become involved. Liam was banned from the main playground and subject to constant supervision at playtime when he came to the YISP. There were also some difficulties with his behaviour at home where he would often lose his temper and be violent and destructive on occasion.

Interestingly, as with Kathryn, Liam had very ‘capable’ parents – in the sense that he was already involved with a number of local agencies who could offer support (Connexions, CAMHS, PAYP) due to his mother and father’s assertiveness and dedication in exploring the opportunities and negotiating with professionals:

*He was actually diagnosed when he was four-and-a-half – which is really, really young. I knew, probably from when he was about two-and-a-half, that something wasn’t quite right. And then when he started nursery they wanted to chuck him out. And then he went to school … and within three weeks of him starting school, we had a letter from the head saying they were going to exclude him, permanently, because of his aggressive behaviour. So we referred him at that point. And, at four-and-a-half, he was diagnosed with ADHD, and autistic tendencies, but not enough to put him on the spectrum. But as he’s grown the autism is more prominent in him. I’ve said this from day one, and it’s took from the time when he’s been four-and-a-half to now for somebody to say that he’s definitely on the autistic spectrum and put it in writing!*  

[Liam’s mother]

As in Kathryn’s case, the keyworker had been able to offer support in meetings and a different but informed perspective on the situation, things which Liam’s parents found helpful:

* (The keyworker)’s even come to meetings with his doctors as well – with his psychiatrist or the autism doctor … (the keyworker) will attend with us – which is brilliant, because it means … (the keyworker) is an ‘outsider’, helping Liam – (who) doesn’t work for the school, doesn’t work for me, doesn’t work for any organisation, somebody who’s … got a view and a (different) ‘take’ on everything.

Apparently he’s suffered from anxiety at school which is something (keyworker) picked up on … because we didn’t have the input from YISP beforehand it was never particularly shown, d’you know what I mean? Nobody ever said to me, ‘Your son’s suffering from anxiety’ – I would have said he suffered from anger and an aggressive nature … but it might well be over something that he’s worried about

[Liam’s mother]
LIAM

PROFILE

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<td>Male</td>
<td>Lives with mother, father and older sister (baby due as well)</td>
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SITUATION AT REFERRAL

Problems


Positives

Very supportive and stable home – and grandparents nearby. Young person and family have input from CAMHS psychiatrist. School providing resources to meet educational needs and integrate into lessons. Very bright. Involved in Positive Activities for Young People – holiday programme of sports and leisure.

ISP

- Work with young person on issues around his behaviour
- Close liaison with school on strategies to cope with young person’s behaviour and ensure they have information on autism
- Support family in dealing with young person’s behaviour
- Encourage and support positive activities

YISP input

- Sessions – looking at anger, consequences of behaviour, self esteem.
- Social Story work – using stories to look at issues such as sharing, waiting for your turn, etc
- Visits and activities
- Close work with school around strategies with young person
- Support for family – information provision, planning strategies for difficult behaviour and attending meetings with other agencies

Outcomes at end of intervention (closed after nine months)

- Young person calmer and less aggressive in reactions to everyday issues
- Tending to socialise with age-appropriate peers at school
- School better informed regarding strategies to cope with young person
- Assessed as being on autistic spectrum
- Statement of Educational Needs in process
- Family feel support has helped with homelife
- No offending or asb
Through patiently building a good relationship with Liam, the keyworker had been able to work in an innovative way with him – for example, incorporating social stories (stories which look at issues, such as sharing, taking turns, etc where the young person her / himself is included in the narrative) – which had ultimately led to an improvement in his behaviour:

*He stopped hitting and kicking people – (the keyworker) spoke to him at length about ways and means of calming down, y’know, controlling your temper. And ever since, probably six months ago, he doesn’t really hit and kick anymore.*

[Liam’s mother]

But alongside this the keyworker had worked hard with the family:

*(The keyworker) was fabulous with the family as well … even came round and spoke to (older sister) – there was no need for that, but (the keyworker) did. (The keyworker) used to come round and sit with us – especially during (a bad period) I saw quite a lot of (the keyworker) … when I was going to pull him out of education – that’s how upset I was getting!*

[Liam’s mother]

and had been supportive in particular ways which they had found invaluable.

Being able to advocate for Liam from a ‘neutral perspective’ offered a legitimacy to views that a parent might convey but were disregarded by ‘the authorities’ due to their personal relationship with the child:

*(The keyworker) supports Liam and speaks up for Liam, which is great. The last ‘round the table’ meeting (where all the professionals attend) wasn’t long after Liam was quite aggressive to his teacher and his teacher was going on and on and on and, y’know, sometimes you feel that everyone is getting at you. And (keyworker) was there and so was (YISP Coordinator) … and (keyworker) said to them, ‘Well I saw Liam on Monday and he was suffering from (anxiety)’… – and I felt that (the keyworker) was there to support Liam – I just thought it was brilliant! As much as you (I) would sit there and say Liam this and Liam that, people are gonna look at you and think, ‘Yeah, but you’re his mum! – you’re gonna defend him’. Whereas somebody from outside, not necessarily defending him all the time – believe me (the keyworker) doesn’t and has been very very honest with it and said sometimes Liam plays on things – but nobody can look at (the keyworker) and think, ‘You’re his mum’. (The keyworker)’s view is thought of highly – whereas people look at you and think – ‘its because you love him’.*

[Liam’s mother]

This was echoed by Kathryn’s mother, who felt that the keyworker had the authority to back-up her opinion when necessary:

*Its really useful, because, three years ago when I first started this the LEA said to me, ‘It’s just Education – we haven’t got anything outside or any other bodies or anyone who can verify what you’re saying’ – and of course YISP is one of them. That’s the most postivie thing YISP has given me, sort of a professional, outside body that can say, ‘Well, yes, she has got problems’.

Its another voice and unfortunately the way that these loopholes and all these things you have to jump through – you need lots of voices around you.*

[Kathryn’s mother]

And the YISP offered non-judgemental support:

*I find that when you’ve got a child with special needs there’s plenty of people that judge you – and the first one usually is, ‘Oh, single mum, that’s it’. Most people would love to put you on a course first, because you’re a single parent – you feel that, even now and it was nice to have someone coming to the house who didn’t judge you for what you were, they were just there to help.*

[Kathryn’s mother]

The overall impact of this was that parents felt empowered to pursue what was best for their child:

*When you have struggled for as long as I have with the LEA and all sorts of different authorities it made me feel there was someone else on my side.*

[Kathryn’s mother]
Coda

The reality of struggling to evidence significant outcomes from the direct work with young people with learning needs had led to keyworkers developing a pragmatic view of the effectiveness of their input. Reflecting on the situation with Kathryn, the keyworker said:

_I don’t feel frustrated ‘cos I kind of knew from the beginning … I did feel from when I first met her that she is a really difficult girl … but it’s helped her by allowing her to have a different type of relationship where she talk through things which she couldn’t talk about before. She hasn’t really got that with any of the other professionals._

Similarly with Liam:

_For Liam, I don’t know how much impact its had, but I would hazard a guess that, along with many of our autistic children, the impact will be kind of slight, rather than major – but the fact that it’s another adult who he has been able to build up a relationship with is important in the sense that he does find it difficult and he needs to learn to do that in order to be able to express himself._

However, there was less pragmatism over the question of how parents might manage without the YISP once the case closed. Kathryn’s keyworker expressed a fear that withdrawal from the family could leave her mother with little ongoing support:

_I feel more frustrated for (Mother) because I can’t see where the support’s going to come from … it feels like it’s just been stuck in a rut for a while and I don’t know how to help her move it forward. That’s what’s been really frustrating rather than not really being able to make an impact on Kathryn’s behaviour._

Although this was perhaps less of a specific problem for Liam’s family, there was still a feeling that unless they retained their strength and tenacity in pressing for his best interests there might be a possibility that he could end up in the criminal justice system further down the line.

To what degree these issues are indicative of a wider problem for the education and youth justice systems is open to debate, but it would seem from the young people in our sample that the presence of the YISP is highlighting two current problems in the Solihull area:

- a lack of understanding of the issues around needs such as ADHD and autism among professionals

_So few people really understand where they’re coming from – that its not just naughty behaviour – you do worry what’s going to happen to them. A lot of them will end up in the criminal justice system – not because they aren’t willing to try, or whatever, but because people around them – the teachers, the police, really have no understanding of their needs and that makes things really difficult for them through no fault of their own._

[YISP keyworker]

- gaps in specialist provision to assess and address these needs – both within and beyond the mainstream education sector

_This is the problem – part of the problem with Solihull is there is so little for children with autism … none of the schools specialise in autism – that I know about, anyway._

[YISP keyworker]

The ongoing difficulties that these problems present to both young people with complex learning needs and their parents was summed-up by Liam’s mother:

_My son will always, always have issues that he deals with in different ways to other people. I can never sit back and think, ‘Oh great, y know, peace’ – because the peace never stays for any period of time. I suppose I have to learn to deal with it, or me and (husband) have to learn the fact that our son is always going to keep us on our toes and until he can learn to conform to society that’s the way it’s going to be – and he might never conform._

_This is the problem with ASD – they have to change for society and not the other way round – which is why they find it so difficult._
Timescale for intervention – when is the right time to exit?

A provisional indication of the anticipated length for an ISP was offered in the YISP Management Guidance, although there was some room for flexibility:

*It is expected that the average length of an ISP will be between 3 and 6 months, but it is accepted that the length of an ISP will depend upon individual needs and the child’s exposure to risk factors.*

[YJB, 2003: 37]

The actual time from date of the ISP to case closure for our group of young people is detailed in the table below. As is clear, for these young people the average length of intervention was greater than the intended (at least by the YJB) average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time between ISP date and case closure</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workers at the Solihull YISP would argue that this has been dictated by the presenting needs (and identified risk factors) of the young people who are using the service (see pp12-13).

In order to illustrate some of the issues, we will consider the case of David, who had the longest ISP of our group.

David was 13 when the SNAP project referred him to the YISP. He came to the project with a difficult set of problems. He was suffering from depression (and had attempted suicide), had refused to attend school for the last three months (although he had been doing well there), was having trouble sleeping at night and had experienced bullying in the local neighbourhood resulting in him attacking another young person with a knife.

David had a diagnosis of ADHD for which he was receiving medication and psychiatric support. Although his home was stable and both his parents were very supportive, he was often in violent conflict with his father and the police had been called to the house in the past. At the time of the referral, David’s mother had had to give up her job because she felt she needed to be at home to intervene when he clashed with his father (who could not work due to an arthritic condition).

Much of the early input from the keyworker focused on mediating and negotiating between David and his father – in an attempt to agree ground rules and create more harmony in the household, where they were spending nearly every day together.

This proved to be a long process with a gradual introduction of different ways for David to begin to respect the needs of others at home (by developing a better routine at night, not playing his music loudly, coming down to breakfast at a regular time, etc).

*It was like two cars meeting head-on – but now one will move aside and let the other pass and vice-versa … so it’s quite different. It’s quite refreshing to see that, actually that they’re actually having a conversation now!*  

[YISP keyworker]

The keyworker also planned to try to re-build a social network for David, since he had become very reclusive due to his fear of other young people in the neighbourhood.

However early efforts to take David on trips outside his house were frustrated. During one initial attempt David was involved in a fight with another young person – right in front of the keyworker who had to intervene to prevent him seriously injuring the other boy. When he was asked about it David said that this was one of the boys who had spread a malicious rumour about his sexuality around the school and the neighbourhood. (Although the keyworker was concerned that the assault might lead to further problems with the police, fortunately nothing happened).
In addition a plan to obtain a place on a programme to help young people deal with bullying (REACT run by the NSPCC) had to be shelved because there was a six-month waiting list for places. (The programme subsequently stopped altogether).

The keyworker learned that he had to approach things with David in a particular way – not forewarning him of plans because he would then become anxious in advance and make excuses to avoid any ‘challenging’ situations:

_The thing with David is if you tell him he’s going to do something in a couple of weeks it’s going to be quite difficult. He’ll agree with it and then, when the time comes, he’ll talk himself into, ‘no, I’m not going because …’ and he’ll give you a list of reasons. And if you reason with the reason he’s giving you, he’ll give you another reason not to go … so to catch him out, you have to say, ‘Right, today you’re doing whatever’ – and it works!_

Although David was intelligent and happy to talk about some issues he was also often immature and keen to debate everything in intricate detail. The keyworker felt “drained” after the first three months of the work and was already predicting that the input could be lengthy:

_‘I don’t think six months will be enough for David. Really, it could go on forever – at least until he’s an adult!’_

However, one positive development was that David had started to attend a local PRU – after some delays in arranging a place, as his mother explained at the start of the YISP work:
DAVID

PROFILE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Domestic context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lives with mother, father, younger brother and older sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>How well motivated at outset?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusing to attend school</td>
<td></td>
<td>Willing to work with YISP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SITUATION AT REFERRAL

Problems

Statement of ADHD – receiving drug treatment and psychiatric support. Refusing to go to school – frightened of being bullied (over alleged homosexuality). Will not leave the house – has been violent to other children in the community before in response to verbal abuse. Conflicts at home, sometimes violent, especially with father (police have been involved). Has attempted suicide. Problems with sleeping.

Positives

Stability and support from mother and father. Feels remorse for upset caused by his behaviour.

ISP

- Find appropriate educational placement for young person (out of school for six weeks).
- Work on mental health issues inc support for parents
- Refer for place on anti-bullying programme
- Introduce to positive activities

YISP input

- Weekly sessions – one-to-one work to look at consequences of behaviour and offending and raise self esteem.
- Mediation and conflict resolution with young person and father to resolve issues at home.
- Work on bullying (in lieu of place on local programme – not available at the time)
- Liaison with Education to arrange educational provision
- Support for young person and family in meetings
- Taking young person out get him out of the house plus activities – egs DJing, cinema.

Outcomes at end of intervention (closed after eleven months)

- Young person settling into new mainstream school – after interim placement in a special school.
- Young person more confident – not experiencing bullying.
- Stability at home – medication for ADHD sorted and parents feeling in control.
- Successful trips out into local community.
- No offending / asb (one exception early in YISP involvement)

Longer term outcomes (12 months after ISP instigated) – young person and parent

Young person still having problems at home. Angry and aggressive towards parents – especially after a school day – and not sleeping well.

One month after transition to new school beginning to have some problems. Not keen to get up to go. Doing ok at school, but has recently started to miss days.

Reverted to refusing to go out alone locally – will only go further afield with family.

Problems with medication – especially around sleeping.

Parents anxious about delays in obtaining replacement CAMHS psychiatrist after departure of previous specialist (waiting for three months).
David is under a Warwickshire school and they were passing the buck to Solihull and they were passing it back to Warwickshire… and he kept saying he wanted to go to another school. We went for a meeting about four weeks ago and somebody from Solihull Education Welfare came as well and she got the report from our psychiatrist and she is referring him to a school which will help him for the time being ‘til he goes back to mainstream school – like a special school that can help him more.

His new placement began just before the summer holidays, but when he returned in September he settled in well – to the extent that the keyworker became concerned that he would be increasingly reticent to move back into mainstream provision:

It’s going really well. David is really well settled there, getting on with the work and he’s actually comfortable there, feels ‘at home’, y’know. Which is a good thing and a bad thing – because it’s only an interim place. He’s only supposed to be there temporarily.

[YISP keyworker]

Through the summer and into the autumn the situation at home improved and David was involved in a number of activities – including DJing sessions, which he particularly enjoyed. His confidence improved to the extent that he was catching a bus to the PRU and back home.

This positive change led to discussions about when and how to arrange David’s move to a new school. Taking into account his propensity to become anxious about new situations a careful process was instituted to smooth the transition. This relied on all the professionals involved and the family working together to ensure that every step was undertaken in a ‘David-friendly’ way.

The keyworker offered support by talking through David’s feelings about a move and going with him (and his family) to all the meetings and advocating for David as necessary. As the day neared for the move he helped him plan strategies for dealing with things that might happen at school – for instance advising him to avoid mentioning why he had moved to the school and where from (working out a ‘story’ that David could use to protect himself in his early days at the school).

For the YISP keyworker there was a need for patience because he had to slowly hand over responsibility for addressing David’s problems to the support teachers in his new school. He had to negotiate a situation where his role changed from being the primary worker for David to one where he was offering back-up assistance if needed:

It’s become more of an ‘overseeing’ role … talking to David, getting his views across, then passing them on to the support unit so they know what he’s thinking and feeling.

[YISP keyworker]

By the time the move was imminent the keyworker was not planning to be directly involved and had entrusted this to the school:

He’ll be pretty much well looked after – at least for the first week … and I have made myself available and said, y’know, if there’s any problems give me a call, ‘cos I can actually go in and speak to him … I think I’ll have one session in school to find out how he’s finding it.

Between the move (in January) and case closure (March) the keyworker began a two stage plan to exit David from the programme.

When he’s in the thick of it at his new school I need to leave it about a month – see how he is and keep seeing him to check he’s mixing with the right peer groups and making friends and that kind of thing, because they really need to monitor him carefully – exiting him now would be a bad idea.

After an initial phase of meetings at school, the keyworker retreated to offering telephone support, although it was mostly David’s father who made use of this.

Although David’s case was formally closed in March – and a number of positive outcomes could be listed (see the case sheet – p65) there are clear indications that the situation remained problematic. The keyworker was earnest in trying to ensure the best approach was taken – but David’s father (interviewed at the end of March) said that his behaviour deteriorated again soon after he began to attend his new school with the ‘tantrums’ starting again at home:

He’s doing alright at school – he’s just coming home and taking it out on us, ‘cos he’s kind of held it at school and he’s got to let it out when he gets home … we take the flak.
David had begun to miss odd days at school and getting him up in the mornings was proving to be a struggle. His agoraphobic tendencies had re-emerged:

*He’s not going out – the only way he’ll go out is if we go with him but he won’t go out around here at all, he just locks himself in the house.*

[David’s father]

and he was becoming aggressive towards his parents – wanting to retrench and isolate himself:

*If we tell anybody about his problems it’s, Why have you told f***ing them about my problems?! I don’t want them to know’.*

Unfortunately for the family David’s psychiatrist had moved some months before the change in school and there had been delays in finding a replacement. When the new psychiatrist was available, David refused to keep appointments with her. He reverted to having problems with sleeping and would often not sleep in his own room.

Around the time of formal case closure, the YISP continued to offer input – with telephone contacts and the offer of occasional visits to talk to David - but David was not responsive to this. It is possible that the YISP were not aware how bad things had become at home towards the end of the intervention. His father admitted that if David was playing-up when a visit was due by the keyworker he would cancel:

*(Keyworker) was going to come out last week and talk to David, but I had to phone him back and tell him not to come because he was kicking off. I don’t think it’s fair for (keyworker) to be here if he kicks off. And he was going to come this Friday, but David don’t want to see him so I’ll have to phone him and tell him not to come. So they are still there and they are still willing to work with David.*

[David’s father]

Overall the family were extremely grateful for the support of the YISP – but seemed to have got to a point where they felt there was little anyone could do to maintain the positive gains that had been made:

*We can’t get through to him at the moment … we’re just living from minute to minute, taking it step-by-step … We’re just praying that this is, y’know, just him settling-in to school, sorting himself out and getting things the way he wants it and then he settles down again.*

[David’s father]

And a degree of desperation had begun to enter the situation:

*We’ve even said – and I know it sounds horrible – ‘If it continues, Dave, we’ve got to think of getting you out of the house’, I said, ’cos you’re a danger to me and your mum and you’re a danger to your brother and sister. We don’t want that to happen … but if he won’t get up and go to school, in the end we won’t have a say in it’. He just shrugged his shoulders.*

[David’s father]

Interestingly, the keyworker was aware that his work might not prove to be effective in the longer term – but was hamstrung by the need to close the case (after nearly a year):

*I think that you can only solve problems with David while he’s having the problem – I’m not convinced that he’ll relate what we’ve talked about to this new school. It will be like him starting afresh and everything will be new … I don’t think he’ll transfer the strategies across – I think that the work needs to be started again, really.*

**Coda**

David’s case highlights some specific problems. There had been much change in his circumstances during a long intervention – especially moves into two new educational establishments (a PRU and a mainstream secondary school) and the loss of two professionals whom he was close to (the psychiatrist with whom the whole family had developed trust and then the YISP keyworker). The equilibrium he had achieved earlier on during the ISP proved to be too fragile to survive all the changes.

More generally it highlights (again) the difficulty of how to provide continuing input to young people with complex needs (similiarly to Liam and Kathryn above).

But the issue it underlines most clearly is the tension in the work of the YISP over the timescale for an intervention.
As the primary worker who has built a trusting relationship with a young person – and often come to know in more detail than any other professional the level of problems in their and their family’s life – the YISP keyworker is sometimes in an invidious position.

The problem is two-fold. The keyworker may be aware that the young person has ongoing needs and be attempting to find ways of meeting them after the input from the project:

> I think we have to be very careful when we exit somebody to make sure that the support is there when they’ve finished. I don’t feel that I could stop working with someone until I know that’s there, because otherwise the whole six months that I’ve worked with them’s pointless – if it’s just going to crash within the next couple of months anyway.

In addition the young person may have developed a degree of dependency on the keyworker (and sometimes vice-versa):

> When (keyworker) first stopped working with him, when our time had elapsed, he was a bit uptight about that. It did have an effect on him, because Jamie gets very attached, d’you know what I mean? – when people give him attention he gets very attached to them. We just couldn’t have done with that little bit longer at the time, but unfortunately our time was up and it’s not feasible for us to have extra help.

> They love their keyworker to bits … it’s difficult because of the time constraints on the work – they really don’t want to lose their keyworker.

> I’m sure I get too attached to them really, ‘cos you see them for such an intensive time and they do share a lot with you.

They love their keyworker to bits … it’s difficult because of the time constraints on the work – they really don’t want to lose their keyworker.

This is not surprising given the vulnerability of many of the young people whom the project works with:

> I know that all the children lack self esteem and they lack people giving them time and attention and so, even if they don’t like what we’re talking about, the fact they’re having one-to-one with someone who is interested in them makes them feel special.

> What worries me is that families get dependent on us … I often feel that once we are exiting, it’s like, ‘They have to do it on their own and is he (young person) going to slide again? That’s one of my biggest worries – when we exit are they really self-sufficient?

However, the issue of dependency is one that the project had developed strategies to deal with – even if there were ongoing concerns around it:

The YISP aims to reduce the number of children who are involved or at risk of becoming involved in offending and anti-social behaviour by ensuring that they and their families receive mainstream services and other complimentary (sic) interventions from other organisations at the earliest opportunity.

> The YISP aims to reduce the number of children who are involved or at risk of becoming involved in offending and anti-social behaviour by ensuring that they and their families receive mainstream services and other complimentary (sic) interventions from other organisations at the earliest opportunity.

> Although this was the main aim for all YISPs, in Solihull it would seem that there were not always the appropriate mainstream or complementary services to meet the identified needs of the young people who were due to end their ISP.

For some this had meant that their case had lasted longer than the originally-prescribed six months – and for a proportion of this subgroup it transpired that ultimately there was not a completely satisfactory resolution to all the issues.
6 Reflections from members of the multi-agency panel

Introduction and method

The main focus for this evaluation was the direct work undertaken with young people in Solihull. However, to solely focus on this would be to neglect a key element in the overall operation of any YISP – the multi-agency panel.

Therefore an additional strand was incorporated towards the end of the study which sought to elicit panel members’ views on the functioning of the panel and also on the overall work of the YISP.

12 representatives of the panel were involved in semi-structured telephone interviews during May 2006 – this included a member of the Children’s Fund Steering Group (who did not actually sit on the panel) but for the sake of simplicity we will refer to all the interviewees as ‘panel members’ in this chapter. The majority of interviewees had relatively long experience of the workings of the YISP, ten having sat on the panel for over six months. (The views of the workers in the project who also attended the panel were solicited during other contacts for the research and are included here too).

The panel members were asked to reflect on how well things have gone with the YISP and on anything that might need changing or improving.

When arrangements were made for the interviews, some potential respondents expressed concern around reporting of their views. Hence, although the interviews were recorded, a decision was made to report themes, issues and ideas anonymously and without direct quotations so that individual panel members could not be identified (interviewees were given this assurance prior to interview).

The Solihull multi-agency panel

When initial information-gathering for the evaluation was undertaken in December 2004 the panel’s membership consisted of representatives from the following agencies:

- education welfare
- positive activities for young people (PAYP) – part of Connexions
- Connexions
- Anti-social behaviour Coordinator (local authority crime reduction team)
- police
- CAMHS
- local schools (varying representation)
- Youth Offending Team
- Education and Children’s Services (ex-SSD)
- Multi Agency Support Team (MAST – part of the Behaviour Improvement Programme in schools in the north of the borough)
- YISP keyworkers
- On Track family support workers

The panel was chaired by the YISP Coordinator.

It was noted by the researcher that there were no community representatives (YJB, 2003:26) – but it was suggested that although some thought had been given to this, it had been difficult to decide who to approach.

The panel held monthly meetings primarily to construct ISPs for those young people who had been assessed for the programme. Sometimes referrers of individual young people would attend for their ‘slot’ during the meeting.

It was also noted that young people and their parents / carers were not invited to the panel. The Coordinator conveyed that this had been deliberated but that it was felt that the situation would be too intimidating and that young people and parents / carers would not feel comfortable to participate in proceedings.

The panel also had annual training events when a whole day was dedicated to learning new skills, acquiring better knowledge and team-building.
Aims of the panel

Panel members noted a range of aims – which included the specific tasks for panel meetings alongside the broader goals for the project. Their reflections on how well the project was performing in relation to these aims is described below.

- **Panel meeting role and tasks**
  
  To take a multi-agency approach; to screen referrals; to pool information; to have a wide-ranging discussion; to look at the broad needs of the young person; to make decisions on the best way forward; to draw up a plan; to offer services.

There was a broad consensus that the panel meetings were satisfying the aims for that meeting.

The interviewees were united in their view that communication was good within the panel. Despite their different backgrounds, panel members felt that they respected each other’s views, worked well as a team and used differing concerns in a positive rather than obstructive way. The atmosphere of the panel meetings was felt to be fairly relaxed so that everyone could communicate freely and honestly. Communication outside of the panel was not often necessary, but where it had been required no problems had been experienced. Although new faces had come in over the course of the project, panel membership was considered to be relatively stable. Panel members said that this continuity had been a factor in the panel getting to know one another and working well as a team. Newer members valued the training days as an opportunity to get to know one another better.

Panel members perceived no reticence on any agency’s part in the sharing of information. There were occasions when information was missing, for example if a panel member had not brought in the relevant information or if representatives standing-in for a panel member, perhaps during a holiday period, could not key-in to the level of input required through lack of panel experience. When this did happen it was said to be frustrating because, although that information can be given to the Coordinator at a later date, it will not be heard by the panel. However, occasions of missing information were felt to be relatively rare. Panel was usually well attended and members were committed to thoroughly researching and contributing fully to proceedings. The person making a referral and other individuals specific to a particular case, a young person’s mentor for example, are invited to attend the panel meetings and panel members said they value the quick and vivid overview that these people can often provide. Panel members also said that they find the details the Coordinator gathers during her visit to the family very useful. Thus, information is gathered from a variety of sources (i.e. the agencies, the referrer, other individuals specific to the case and the Coordinator), a wide range of perspectives are heard and a broad, thorough discussion of a young person’s needs can and does take place.

There was felt to be a good shared understanding of role, which the training days had helped to create.

The interviewees concurred that administration of the process was good. They said that although the atmosphere of the meetings was fairly relaxed, the Coordinator keeps to the timetable. She also makes herself available for contact and gives referral forms to members in plenty of time for them to look up information and bring it to the panel. The fact that the agencies have a co-terminus geographical boundary was also said to be helpful.

- **Support**
  
  To support and meet the needs of the young person; to support the young person’s family

Through their overall reflections on the efficient working of the panel, the interviewees suggested that the group itself was performing its role in relation to support aims.

In particular, panel members commented that no agency is reticent in offering resources and services and that commitment and willingness is evident. Having a wide range of agencies represented on the panel means that a similarly wide range of services can be offered. Sometimes young people gain help more quickly than they otherwise might because a panel member can provide a link into a service and the young person does not have to join a long waiting list for that service.

In addition a ‘bonus’ of the multi-agency approach was that some complex cases which had become ‘stuck’, either because they fell between different agencies’ priorities or because one agency had found that the situation proved intractable, had moved on due to the YISP involvement and a multi-agency approach.

- **Young people’s behaviour**
  
  To prevent or reduce the young people’s involvement in anti-social behaviour and offending; to divert the young people from criminal behaviour using positive activities; to engage or reengage the young people with education.
Within the set of aims focussed on young people’s behaviour, the main discussion centred on the aim of preventing or reducing a young person’s involvement in anti-social behaviour and offending.

Panel members said that they did not have the statistics or feedback to be able to comment on whether this aim is being met or not. Moreover, some panel members queried whether it is in fact possible to determine whether the aim is being met, for two reasons. Firstly, the aim is a long-term one and so begs the question as to quite when it could be deemed to have been met. Secondly, if a young person does not offend, it is difficult to determine whether this is due to the intervention, some other factor or because the young person was never going to offend anyway.

Strengths of the approach taken in the direct work

Although some panel members felt unable to comment on the direct project work most were happy to reflect on the elements that they felt had been most effective.

The YISP was said to be perceived by families as being independent and separate from Social Services, although families know there is a link into Social Services. It was suggested that with YISP involvement, families tend not to feel they are being marked out as a problem family, whereas it was said that families do tend to feel stigmatised by involvement with Social Services. A panel member noted that the element of voluntary participation, i.e. that the families are asked whether or not they want YISP involvement, may play a part in this positive perception. When given this choice, very few families turn down the offer of YISP help.

Panel members spoke positively about the project’s focus on the young person’s needs and the intention to meet them in the broadest sense, not just concentrating on offending behaviour. Panel members felt that tailoring the intervention around the service user rather than designing something the user must fit in with was beneficial. Going into the school or community in order to engage with the young person was also considered helpful.

The use of a keyworker and a one-to-one approach was said to be invaluable in building positive relationships with young people and in facilitating engagement with education and other services. Having an activity-based intervention which can get young people engaged in positive activities was thought to work well.

The particular attributes of the project team were also highlighted. The Coordinator, keyworkers and family workers were praised for their skills, commitment, persistence and openness to new ideas. The team were also commended for their ability to retain a clear remit but at the same time show a deep understanding of the broad range of factors that leave young people at risk of offending.

Aspects of the project that could be improved

Not unsurprisingly there were differing views expressed in relation to how various elements of the overall project might be amended to improve operation and outcomes. The issues debated and the arguments put forward are outlined in this section.

Panel members often noted that the points they were raising had been discussed at panel meetings or on training days and that some issues were already being addressed.

Panel issues

One suggestion was around the inclusion of young people and their parents / carers the service users should be invited to panel meetings. Arguments put forward in favour of this were:

• panel members felt uncomfortable discussing people in their absence
• a feeling that service users were entitled to be present and involved in decision-making
• service users might be able to provide helpful information and / or identify any inaccurate details given about them or their circumstances

However, other interviewees argued that:

• such a large meeting might be intimidating for the service users
• there might be issues of confidentiality with some panel members feeling inhibited in fully contributing to discussions
• meetings are already long and full and it could prove difficult logistically
Clearly this issue will be an ongoing debate for the panel. In other areas where YISPs operate smaller forums are convened separately to the main panel in order that young people and parents / carers can properly participate in the process (e.g. Easton in Bristol).

Another suggestion to facilitate service user input to the panel was to incorporate an ex-user group, comprised of young people who are keen to make an ongoing positive contribution to the community.

In relation to the process of panel meetings it was suggested that restricting the number of cases per meeting to three or four might be a good idea. Also, although the panel members were happy for the Coordinator to chair the meeting, some said there were concerns around the dual role of the Coordinator in having to both chair and present information on cases as part of the proceedings. Regarding the range of agencies on the panel, it was suggested that including a representative from the school nursing service might be helpful.

A number of interviewees highlighted a need for improved funding for out of area services. Gaps in local service provision – for services which panel members felt would be useful in augmenting work with particular cases (e.g. assessments for ADHD and Asperger Syndrome) – had meant that the panel had already experienced struggles in trying to secure funding for out of area services.

It was argued that a benefit might be gained from promoting more specific aims, actions and responsibilities within ISPs at the meetings. Problems had been encountered with panel members undertaking to provide resources for a case but avoiding specifically stating what they are going to do. Likewise, the keyworker’s role may not be made explicit – that is, the panel will know that a keyworker is involved but may not know whether the worker will be befriending the young person, mentoring them, doing specific sessions around antisocial behaviour and so on. Whilst sometimes it may be impossible to specify precise actions during the meeting, a general lack of specificity leaves the potential for work to be missed or repeated, especially when several agencies are working on a case.

A number of respondents stated that there was a dearth of police referrals to the YISP. It was argued that this was because the police are still learning to think about who might best be able to deal with an issue and the possibility of referring externally. It was suggested that further training might help remedy this situation.

An ongoing problem with incorrect referrals was identified by some panel members. Although changes in the screening of referrals (see below) mean that this now happens only occasionally, it was suggested that sometimes people might be making a referral in order to get access to certain services more quickly, not because the case is suitable for YISP. While such referrals are usually weeded out, time is taken in doing this. The danger of services referring to YISP in order to save their own time and money was also highlighted.

Some panel members noted particular options that they felt could be useful were being neglected by the project. Firstly, although criminogenic needs are now included in the Coordinator’s report, this topic is rarely followed through into the panel discussion. Secondly, it was suggested that better use could be made of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.

Finally a number of panel members said that they would find out about (lack of) progress with difficult cases at panel meetings but not about those that ran smoothly. Members not involved in the project work could feel particularly deprived of feedback. While a need for more feedback on current and completed cases was highlighted, the panel members recognised that drawing up feedback would take valuable time and wondered whether there was room for it in the already full panel meeting agenda.

- Direct work issues

There was concern that the keyworkers had been put under pressure to increase caseloads. Specifying a number of cases for a keyworker to carry was said to be unhelpful because some cases can be very involved, with a few making up a week’s work, and others can require much less time. There was also the suggestion that the work was exhausting and that recruiting additional keyworkers might give the current workers some time for their own development and a chance to recharge and reflect.

A number of panel members alluded to the problem with the formal intervention time limit. This needs to be flexible, because some young people and their families may still need help after the six month cut-off point arrives. In addition various respondents discussed the difficulties in exiting young people from the programme and moving them and their families on to appropriate services. Given that the interventions are time-limited, it is important to have an ‘exit strategy’ in each case. However, formulating appropriate exit strategies can be challenging, particularly where ‘high
level need’ families are concerned, because of gaps in local services. (Full discussions of these issues in relation to specific young people who took part in the research are offered in Chapter 5 of the report).

Learning from operating a panel

It is worth stating here that the YISP had shown itself to be open to critical self-reflection prior to this evaluation. A number of changes had already been instituted in relation to practices and processes employed in a bid to make the operation of the project more efficient and effective.

These were discussed during the interviews with panel members and they highlighted the following positive changes.

The interviewees talked about an initial settling in and learning period during which the panel members were getting to know each other, learning to function as a group, coming to understand the process, becoming more realistic, learning what resources were available locally and learning which things to target for change in the young person, i.e. what could potentially be changed and what could not. Clearly this experience will be common to all YISPs during an initial stage of development and it was one which the majority of our interviewees had been through together after the ‘birth’ of the project – hence it informed their views on how things could or should change.

Panel members conveyed that changes had been made to the referral process. Initially referrals went directly to the Coordinator but it was felt that referrers were having difficulty in identifying the correct service to refer a particular case to (given that there was a choice between YISP, MAST and On Track). Now all the referrals go to a joint referral meeting between the three agencies and this meeting decides which referrals should go to which service.

Another change was that in more comprehensive assessment by the Coordinator during the initial home visit because she has gained a good understanding of the type of things the panel members will want to know about the young person. In particular, a consideration of criminogenic needs now takes place and is included on the assessment.

Also, a need to work with the family, not just the young person was identified during the early stages of the project, and so family work was introduced after around six months of the project operating.

Reputation and profile of the YISP with other local agencies

Most panel members suggested that the YISP had a very positive profile with other local agencies. Their views were based on ad hoc feedback and due to the fact that referrals keep coming in from a variety of referrers – so people must have heard of the YISP and think it useful. (The only negative comment in relation to this was that the police may view the YISP as a ‘soft option’ as already mentioned above).

Interviewees suggested that a number of factors had helped build a positive reputation and profile. The project is helpful and useful. For example, referrers find that they receive help and assistance and families tend to find the support useful. Service users and referrers find the service reliable and efficient – what is said will be done is actually done, things happen quickly, service users are not kept waiting and they are kept informed and advised at every stage. In addition the relaxed panel meetings mean that referrers feel comfortable in attending.

A major contributory factor in building and enhancing the YISP’s profile has been the quality of the team. The Coordinator is good at partnership working and building relationships while the work done by the keyworkers and family workers is known to be of a high quality. The visibility of the team across the borough is also important. Keyworkers are often out and about talking to people as well as undertaking visits for work sessions with young people and the Coordinator also goes into schools so is widely known.

By its very nature the multi-agency panel spreads the message across all appropriate partnership organisations and this is facilitated by the clarity of the YISP remit.

Panel members proposed two issues that had been problematic in extending and augmenting the reputation of the YISP in Solihull. Firstly, they felt that perhaps insufficient marketing of the service had taken place, particularly ongoing marketing to maintain awareness among local professionals (especially where staff turnover was a factor). Secondly, they argued that a lack of evidenced results from the programme had sometimes made the task of ‘selling’ the service more difficult.
Summary

Panel members, without exception, spoke positively about the YISP and their involvement with it. They made various suggestions as to how the project might be further improved. However, it should be noted that some of the suggested changes have the potential to clash with things which are perceived as going well at the present time – for example, restricting the number of cases per meeting may mean a waiting list would be created, whereas currently people value the fact that service users are not kept waiting.

This highlights the fact that a major challenge in taking the YISP forward will be to address suggestions for change without upsetting those aspects of the project which are currently working well and giving the YISP a positive reputation and profile.
7 Conclusion

In this chapter we present a summary of the main findings from the evaluation followed by a concluding discussion around some of the implications of the study.

It is important to note that we have only offered a brief outline here. The findings from the study in relation to the key issues from the work are detailed elsewhere in the report – primarily in Chapter 5.

In addition, a full explanation of the practice model employed by the Solihull YISP is offered in Chapter 2. An appreciation of how the YJB Guidance on YISP work has been interpreted by the project will assist the reader in gaining a full understanding of how the outcomes were achieved.

Summary of main findings

- The Solihull YISP had considerable success in achieving positive change for the young people who took part in the evaluation in relation to the key targets of
  - reducing risk and increasing protective factors
  - ensuring voluntary cooperation with the ISP
  - participating in full time education
  - achieving high levels of satisfaction with the YISP

  [summary of YJB, 2003: 10]

- In terms of overall outcomes for risk and protective factors, there were identifiable impacts across the work which could be summarised as follows.

  The main initial effects of the YISP intervention were located in key areas of the young people’s cognitive skills:
  - less impulsivity / more control
  - less aggression and anger
  - better problem-solving
  - improved social skills
  - higher self esteem
  - improved empathy
  - understanding of responsibility for one’s own actions
  - understanding of consequences

  over time, this translated into behaviours:
  - courteousness and concern for the needs of others
  - communication with adults
  - retreat from conflict or the potential for conflict
  - avoidance of negative/delinquent peers
  - engagement with new activities
  - application in school

  and was manifested in:
  - improved relationships at home
  - building of new friendships with non-deviant peers
  - better performance at school
  - integration in positive activities in the community

  Overall the net effect – for almost all the young people by the time the YISP work stopped – was diversion away from offending or anti-social behaviour – the principal desired outcome for the project.

  If current theories around ‘resilience’ are correct, then the longer term outlook for these young people had improved significantly as a result of the intervention of the YISP – the indications in most cases were that, even where there were significant ongoing difficulties / risk factors, each young person was better equipped to cope and make positive choices in the future.
The Solihull YISP had adopted a particular methodology for direct work with the young people who were accepted into the YISP. This was built around an intensive, child-centred, keyworking system – felt to be the most appropriate way to work towards meeting the key targets as outlined above, perhaps especially in ensuring the ongoing, motivated participation of the young people in the intervention.

Independence from the statutory sector – the critical importance of maintaining a professional distance from more ‘stigmatised’ services to enable full engagement with young people and their families – and flexibility of approach were also highlighted as being important factors in contributing to effective working.

Early experiences of direct working showed that to achieve lasting change for young people it was necessary to engage well with parents or carers. This led to the fostering of a close link with and use of the On Track family support service (also part of the local Children’s Fund) – a development that proved successful in working with parents / carers.

(For a detailed explanation of the model please see Chapter 2 of the report).

Given the formal assessment of being at risk of offending, the Solihull YISP had success in preventing offending / anti-social behaviour for the majority of the group of young people who were included in the evaluation. However, regarding this as the main yardstick against which to measure was problematic. A more contextualised and holistic understanding of outcomes allowed for a better appreciation of positive changes for all the young people, including those who continued to offend or be at risk of offending after the intervention ceased.

Young people and their parents / carers were unanimous in endorsing the value of the YISP’s intervention. This consensus was generated within a forum where there was no pressure to comment positively – where respondents were assured of anonymity and where questions were asked of every participant about what might not have gone well during the input.

If it wasn’t for (YISP kw and Coordinator) I think we would probably have had to have him out of the house by now - they are a great support team … I mean that – we was talking to another woman and she’s having the same problems but has no support and I passed on (YISP Coordinator) number to her to ask if they can help her – which shows how much I’ve got confidence in them. I wouldn’t have done that if I hadn’t had the confidence like I have.

[Father of 14-year-old]

Other agency professionals who worked with the young people in our sample were similarly positive about the work done by the YISP.

There has been a definite improvement in the child’s self esteem. He has also been introduced to activities and social situations that have encouraged independence and decision-making. The child has been able to talk through reasons for his behaviour and the effect that it has on others. The family have been very well supported and advice given for managing behaviour

[Learning Mentor / nine-year-old – response to self-completion survey question]

The referral of a burgeoning number of young people with individual learning needs, especially Autistic Spectrum Disorders, was adding to the challenge of appropriate and purposeful intervention. The Solihull YISP had been successful in engaging well with this group of young people and their families within the evaluation and had achieved considerable positive change in difficult circumstances.

Project workers had become stoical about their ability to achieve significant and ‘measurable’ outcomes for these young people:

I don’t feel frustrated ‘cos I kind of knew from the beginning … I did feel from when I first met her that she is a really difficult girl … but it’s helped her by allowing her to have a different type of relationship where she can talk through things which she couldn’t talk about before. She hasn’t really got that with any of the other professionals.

However, the pressure on parents, carers and other family members was a concern – underlined by the knowledge that there was a lack of wider professional understanding of the needs of these young people and a dearth of provision of specialised services locally.

Young people who came to the YISP commonly presented a complex set of risk and protective factors.
ISPs served as a platform for the direct work, but were not viewed as a full and final assessment of need. In essence, the whole intervention comprised ongoing assessment alongside ad hoc and more long term attempts to address the needs that a young person (and her / his family) presented. It was felt that only by continually adapting the input could the keyworker appropriately engage with the young person in order to make significant progress towards the overall aims for the intervention.

The issue of timescale for a YISP intervention was highlighted across the group of young people. Just one of the young people had their case closed within the prescribed six-month period. The evidence from the evaluation supported the project’s view that an unquestioning adherence to an arbitrary time frame for the intervention would have significantly undermined beneficial outcomes:

*I think we have to be very careful when we exit somebody to make sure that the support is there when they’ve finished. I don’t feel that I could stop working with someone until I know that’s there, because otherwise the whole six months that I’ve been working with them’s pointless – it it’s just going to crash within the next couple of months.*

However the six-month period, if viewed as a guideline, was useful in preventing drift within cases.

Two problems were noted in relation to case closure. Some young people developed a dependency on their key worker (something that the project could respond to and build-in strategies to deal with). However, the second problem, that of gaps in local service provision to respond to identified ongoing need, meant that either the case lasted longer than was planned, or that ultimately not all the issues could be satisfactorily resolved.

Although YISPs were envisaged partially as a gateway to mainstream services for those who had slipped the net, for the young people involved in this evaluation this did not prove to be the case. For this sample those with extensive needs already had other agency inputs at the time they were referred and often this was a long term situation which remained constant throughout and after the intervention of the YISP. For those who were not involved with other agencies at the outset in most cases the provision of temporary intervention by the YISP sufficed in ensuring beneficial outcomes.

Hence the operation of the YISP reduced the potential future burden on mainstream services. (However, as suggested below, this may also be partly due to the lack of ‘appropriate’ services to refer on to).

The panel had proved to be effective in meeting its aims of implementing a multi-agency approach, screening referrals, pooling information, considering the broad needs of the young people referred to the project and providing services and resources. Panel members were keen to have more evidence on the outcomes of the work in relation to prevention of offending.

Panel members felt that the approach that had been developed to direct work was effective in engaging with young people and their families and that this was in part a testament to the attributes of a committed project team. Some members felt that targets for processing higher numbers of referrals might put pressure on the project to change a successful model of working.

The panel felt that the YISP had generated a good reputation in the locality and this was evidenced by an ongoing flow of referrals from different agencies. However, a lack of referrals from the police was highlighted.

The project has operated reflectively and had implemented several changes to the model during the life of the evaluation. The key developments were:

- flexibility around the duration of involvement – an overt move away from the original recommendation of three month timescale for intervention. (Most cases now active for six months but extension of this available in exceptional cases)
- setting-up of a Three Month Review system – with each young person and involved agencies to evaluate progress against the initial ISP and refocus if necessary for the following three month period
- an increased focus around education as this has proved to be a key issue for the YISP cohort - including an identified need to recruit a new representative from the local education department for case work around young people with special needs and those who are hard to place
**Discussion**

We shouldn’t be categorising and therefore potentially stigmatising these young people as criminals – they are actually children in need.

They’re children who’ve been failed by the adults around them – either through their home, their education or their communities – who should have been there to guide and support them and who haven’t been.

That has been borne out in every case – with all the young people that we’ve had – and actually, when you sit with them and you look at their situations they’re managing in extremely difficult situations and they’re manifesting their frustration and disappointment and hurt and anger in ways that are classed as anti social behaviour or crime.

That’s not to downplay the need for society to be able to say what is acceptable behaviour and what is not acceptable behaviour and to be able to sanction things like theft or assault … but having some balance. The idea of YISP is before these children get into the criminal justice system to work out why their behaviour is anti social … and to try to work with them to address that.

This quote sums up most of the overarching findings of this evaluation.

All the young people who took part in the study had been ‘failed’ in some way by the adults around them – often by parents who had been unable to provide sufficiently good care, but also by communities, schools and other agencies who were not equipped to deal appropriately with the behaviours which they presented.

There may be a difficulty in locating ‘failure’ (and thereby fault) with parents in that some of them were facing their own problems – and in this situation the YISP attempted to support them too, where possible. However, the failure of adults beyond a young person’s immediate family was clearly something the YISP was trying to address – alongside directly working on the young person’s issues.

One way in which failure manifested itself in wider community responses was linked to the burgeoning issue of complex learning needs among the young people who were referred to the YISP. By coincidence new medical research was published (in the Lancet) at the time this evaluation report was being written. The study into prevalence of disorders on the autism spectrum was conducted by Gillian Baird and colleagues at Guy’s and St Thomas’s hospitals. It found that autism spectrum disorders are 25 times more common than was previously thought – that around 1% of the childhood population will have an ASD.

This work may have a profound effect on how society views young people who struggle with social interaction and exhibit difficult behaviours and, as Professor Baird said (quoted in The Times):

> Services in health, education and social care will need to recognise the needs of children with some form of ASD.

However, it offers succour only to those whose behaviour can be linked to a medical condition.

As the evaluation of the YISP work in Solihull has shown, the behaviour of other young people usually has causes beyond their control. Their situation was met by the project with a variety of responses that were sympathetic to the context rather than punitive to the behaviour. By adopting a child-centred approach the Solihull YISP was able to secure positive outcomes for all the young people – even where the context at the context at the point of referral, or sometimes during the intervention, was not particularly promising.

Perhaps in the longer term preventative work like YISPs – and the evaluation and research around it – will be able to offer evidence to help shift views on all young people who behave in a criminal or anti-social way.

In this report we have discussed the complexity of outcome measurement for young people in complex situations. As we have already argued, by ‘positive outcomes’ we do not mean uniform success in stopping young people offending – some of the young people in this study continued to be at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour and some committed offences.

Using offending as the benchmark measure for preventative work is problematic. The prediction of risk of offending and the measuring of efficacy of preventative interventions is far from an exact science. The use of detailed monitoring and evaluation systems like ONSET attempts to avoid some of the problems with this, but may still hamper a more subtle reading of outcomes across dimensions of risk and protection partly due to the requirement to amalgamate and score at different points in time during the intervention. In addition the likelihood that increased involvement with a young person and her / his family during a preventative intervention will lead to the identification of new risk factors, or the amplification of those already known about, further muddies the water around impact measurement – particularly for a time-limited input like YISP.
All these points relate to the problem of using the term ‘outcome’. It implies an ending to a process – whereas an intervention like YISP may have many small or interim outcomes from week to week and aspires to steering a young person’s life onto a new trajectory, one which should continue to produce beneficial ongoing ‘outcomes’ into adulthood.

This evaluation attempted to register some of these small, incremental outcomes over the course of the YISP’s direct work – and to acknowledge the merit of positive change in relation to unpromising starting points, even in the most challenging and complex cases. This might have equated to a vast array of ‘outcomes’ from engaging well and forming a good relationship with a keyworker to affording much-needed respite and fresh strategies for dealing with the challenging behaviour of a young person with an ASD to parents / carers or teachers.

As has already been stated above, the YISP intervention essentially became an ongoing, child-centred assessment process – incorporating ad hoc and longer term inputs to deal with ad hoc or longer term needs. In some cases this provided a bridge to a new positive path for a young person which they could follow themselves – in others it underlined that ongoing support was needed and that the risk of negative incidents would continue.

Overall the evaluation showed that within its remit the Solihull YISP had many small and large successes. It was able to meet the disparate needs of a group of young people who presented a wide variety of circumstances, personalities and problems. And it achieved these successes by operating in a child-centred way and by holding to the principle that every child had the potential to flourish.

I know that all the children lack self esteem and they lack people giving them time and attention and so, even if they don’t like what we’re talking about, the fact they’re having one-to-one with someone who is interested in them makes them feel special – and that’s part of giving them confidence.

[YISP keyworker]
References


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