SECTION 2

THE WORK OF THE PROJECTS

YOUTH LINK, BIRMINGHAM

History

In response to The Children's Society’s crisis initiative for Young People under Pressure (see page 5), it was decided to open a project offering a range of services to 13-19 year olds on the seven through detached work and a drop-in centre. The project officially opened in February 1984.

Mission

The project currently works with young people in direct cerebral ways.

1. Drop-in centre

Project workers do detached work in pairs or areas at and around Birmingham city centre where young people are known to spend time. These are done in the afternoon and evening, and Friday lunchtime, and Sunday afternoons. Without regular support and information to young people and also gives them cards with the contact details of their drop-in centre. The project works with a range of young people, and in particular young people who are providing for money. An important part of the project's work is to produce crisis support products to young people in the centre, and a regular drop-in centre to this young people works with the project and is important in the detached work.

2. Drop-in service

The drop-in service is open five days a week, and during the day in summer. It also has open working between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. during the week, and 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturdays. The service is important in the detached work.
CHAPTER 7

Models of Service Provision

This chapter contains a brief description of the direct services offered to young people by each of the four streetwork projects involved in the research project.

YOUTH LINK, BIRMINGHAM

History

In response to The Children’s Society’s central initiative for ‘Young People under Pressure’ (see page 5), it was decided to open a project offering a range of services to young people on the streets, through detached work and a drop-in centre. The project officially opened in February 1988.

Methods of work

The project currently works with young people in three connected ways:

(1) Detached streetwork

Project workers do detached work in pairs in areas in and around Birmingham city centre where young people are known to spend time. This is done in the afternoons and evenings, on average four times a week. Workers offer support and information to young people and also give them cards with information about the drop-in service (see below). The project works with a range of young people, but one particular target group has been young people who are providing sex for money. An important part of the project’s work is to promote safer sexual practices amongst young people on the streets, and a worker employed by a local health authority works with the project and is involved in the detached work.

(2) Drop-in service

The drop-in service is open five days a week. It does not operate an open-door policy, but is for young people to use when they have a
specific issue or need. The service has practical facilities including a washing machine, showers and toilets, and access to a telephone. There is also a wide range of information on issues relevant to young people. The majority of the young people who use the drop-in have originally had contact with the project workers through the detached work.

(3) Advocacy

Linked to the drop-in service, the project offers an advocacy service to young people. Advocacy work attempts to promote the views and interests of the young people, working at their own pace. It also includes encouraging young people to advocate for themselves. The project employs an advocacy specialist who works directly with young people and supports other staff who are doing advocacy work.

Conclusion

The project views the drop-in service and detached work as complementing one another. The detached work is the main initial contact point and the way in which the project workers build up credibility and trust with young people. Its success is therefore vital to the drop-in service. The staff team believe that it would be much more difficult for the drop-in service on its own to establish its credibility and be accessible to young people who spend a lot of time on the streets.

SAFE IN THE CITY, MANCHESTER

History

In response to the ‘Young People under Pressure’ initiative, the regional manager for the north west of England examined the efficacy of different models of work in the Manchester region. He became aware of the existence of young people aged under 17 on the streets of Manchester and decided to combine an outreach, streetwork model with the development of a small group of foster carers, later known as ‘refuge carers’. (Such carers must be approved by The Children’s Society as foster carers and by the Department of Health under Section 51 of the Children Act, 1989.)

In 1989, following this initial development work, a project leader was appointed, who began to recruit a team and establish a team base.
Methods of work

The project has adopted three methods of work:

(1) Streetwork

The project workers work in pairs on the streets both at predeter-
mined advertised times at fixed venues (known as ‘core times’) and
also at other times which vary. It is on the street that initial contact
is made with young people. These contacts can be ‘one-off’ con-
tacts with young people, or ongoing contacts. The streetworkers
carry a ‘street bag’ which contains practical items such as chocolate,
clean underwear and contraceptives. The streetworkers provide
practical help, a listening ear and crisis intervention with young peo-
ple on the street. Between January 1993 and June 1994, the project
made contact with 186 young people aged 17 and younger on the
streets.

(2) Advocacy

Where the project has established ongoing contact with young peo-
ple, it offers an advocacy service for young people who request this.
This service is ‘young person-centred’: it helps give the young per-
son a voice, helps explore their possible options, and represents their
viewpoint to relevant agencies or their family. (The ‘young person-
centred’ approach, which is adopted by all projects, is discussed fur-
ther on pages 109-112.)

(3) Refuge

The original plan for the project to offer refuge with approved foster
carers for young people in crisis has proved to be problematic, for
reasons internal to and external to The Children’s Society. The
refuge carers system is therefore non-operational at the time of writ-
ing. Between April 1990 and November 1993, young people were
offered overnight accommodation within the project on eight occa-
sions.

In addition the project undertakes other activities including:

Networking

The project forms part of a network of projects working with young
people in Manchester. This enables the project to share its skills and
experiences with other agencies and to learn from and develop in response to other agencies.

Campaigning

As the project has developed, it has increased its campaigning activities in order to try to improve provision for young people.

Links with social services and the police

The project has developed a protocol which has been shared with the local social services department and the police. This states that:

"Safe in the City will reach and work with young people aged 17 years and under who are estranged and adrift in the city of Manchester. The project can offer support and advice, mediation and negotiation in the process of reuniting the young people to caring, responsible adult support. Where a young person is at risk of harm the project can provide a safe refuge as provided in the regulations for Section 51: Refuge for young people at risk: the 1989 Children Act."

Conclusion

Safe in the City has developed a radical new approach to streetwork with a high emphasis on detached streetwork, which utilises a combination of youth work and social work approaches. It places a high value on its 'young person-centred' approach and attempts to ensure that all policies are consistent with this central philosophy.

Safe in the City is currently considering the future direction of the project. The fact that the project has so far managed without refuge carers has raised the possibility that it can continue to survive without any or with only a small number of refuge carers. Many project workers are also keen to develop the campaigning work they undertake.

LEEDS SAFE HOUSE

History

In response to the streetwork initiative, the north east region of The Children's Society carried out two pieces of research — in Leeds and Newcastle — to examine the needs of young people who run away and to explore responses to their needs. The outcome of this
research was the decision to set up a residential refuge in Leeds targeted at young people who had run away or been forced to leave where they live.

A project leader was appointed in 1989. Premises were found, and the rest of the staff team appointed in 1990. The refuge opened to young people in February 1991.

Methods of work

(1) 24-hour telephone contact and referral

Due to the confidential location of the refuge, initial contact for young people or agencies is by telephone, staffed 24 hours a day. At this stage a project worker will offer a listening ear to the young person and establish whether her/his situation fits the basic criteria for refuge as follows:

- young people under 16 who have:
  - left their usual or last place of residence without permission and are unwilling to return, or
  - been forced to leave against their will, and
  - made a positive decision to be at the Safe House.

In special circumstances Leeds Safe House will also work with 16- and 17-year-olds who fit these criteria if they are seeking refuge from a person(s) who is likely to cause them significant harm.

If these criteria are met, the worker will usually arrange to meet the young person and discuss the situation further. This is usually followed by the young person being brought into refuge. If a bed space is not available the worker will offer support to the young person and information about other agencies who may be able to offer help. The refuge is registered as a children's home.

(2) Refuge

The refuge is staffed by a minimum of two workers, 24 hours a day, and can accommodate six young people at any one time. Practical facilities such as food, pocket money, washing facilities and a change of clothes are available. Work in the refuge is done in a highly structured way. Young people are encouraged to explore their options,
and this is often followed by telephone contact or meetings with parents or social services.

The refuge operates according to the regulations set down in Section 51 of the Children Act 1989, which means that it can accommodate a young person for up to 14 days in the first instance, and for a total of no more than 21 days in any three-month period.

(3) Follow-up work

The philosophy of the project is one of short-term crisis intervention. Thus extended follow-up work is not undertaken with young people after they leave the refuge. Young people are offered one visit or meeting, and may also continue to have telephone contact with the project.

In addition to these areas of direct work with individual young people, the project has an ongoing programme of research and evaluation, and also aims to undertake campaigning work on issues affecting the young people with whom it works.

Links with social services and the police

The project is currently negotiating protocol agreements with the local social services department and the police. In addition, due to its refuge service, it has close links with the Social Services Inspectorate.

Conclusion

Having been in operation for over three years as a refuge service, the project is currently evaluating its work in order to learn from its experience and explore potential new initiatives for working with young people in its target group. This may include doing more preventative work with young people in relation to running away.

As with the other projects, Leeds Safe House sees its 'young person-centred' approach as being a fundamental aspect of its work.

THE PORTH PROJECT, GWENT

History

The Porth Project is the most recent addition to the streetwork programme. Its establishment followed research in Wales, carried out
for The Children's Society by Swansea University, which indicated a significant incidence of young people running away in a number of parts of the country. It was decided to set up the project in a town where there is a perceived lack of a range of services for young people. At this stage there were already two residential-style refuges in operation in England, so it was decided to explore the more community-based response of refuge carers, similar to that originally planned by Safe in the City. It was also intended that an information service for young people should be opened. Due to the shortage of available resources, however, the development of this service was subsequently postponed and is currently on hold.

The Porth refuge carers became the first in England and Wales to be granted a certificate under Section 51 of the Children Act. The first certificate was issued by the Welsh Office in April 1993.

The project started working with young people in refuge in July 1993.

**Methods of work**

**(1) 24-hour telephone contact and referral**

As with Leeds Safe House, the project is accessible by telephone 24 hours a day. On receiving a referral, workers will offer the young person support and, if there is a bed space available and the young person fits the referral criteria, arrange to meet them.

The project will only accept referrals where the following conditions are met:

- A referral being made on behalf of a young person has the active support of the young person in question.

- A young person is aged 15 and under and has currently run away from, or is refusing to return to, the family home/responsible person.

- The young person is aged 17 years and under and is in the care of a local authority, from where s/he has currently run away, or is refusing to return.

- A young person must appear to be at risk of harm and would continue to be at risk of harm if refuge is not provided.

At the meeting between the young person and the project worker,
the young person’s situation is discussed further and, as far as is prac-
tical, s/he is offered a choice of refuge carers.

(2) Refuge carers

The project has six refuge carers/families at confidential locations, who have been approved as foster carers by The Children’s Society and certificated as refuges by the Welsh Office. The refuge carers accommodate the young people at evenings and overnight, and all day at weekends, and offer practical and emotional support to young people. One of the main roles of the deputy project leader is to support refuge carers through the approval and certification processes (which can take up to a year) and when they have young people in refuge.

(3) The office base

The project’s office base is also certificated as a refuge. During the daytime on weekdays young people are brought from the refuge carers to the office, where project workers support them in exploring their situation and the options that are open to them. This will often be followed by advocacy, mediation or negotiation work.

(4) Follow-up support

As with Leeds Safe House, the project sees itself as offering short-
term intervention and only provides limited follow-up support to young people after they leave the refuge.

Research and evaluation

In addition to the direct work with young people, the project employed a research worker on a fixed-term contract to carry out a study of homelessness and running away amongst young black people in Newport (Patel, 1994).

The project also has an evaluation programme in conjunction with Lancaster University.

Links with other agencies

The project has protocol agreements with the local social services department and the police, and has a working relationship with the
Conclusion

At the time of writing, the refuge service has been running for 12 months. It is therefore too early to draw conclusions about the service. Early indications are that, whilst the service provision differs, the young people and issues with which the project works are similar to those at Leeds Safe House.

Table 2. A comparison of the characteristics of the young people who attend the projects...
Conclusion

The project has no young carers. Adults of considerable longevity, often requiring personal care assistance, are often too frail to care for young carers. The project therefore focuses on building the resilience of young carers and on developing their own independence and capacity to care for themselves. It involves working closely with young carers and with other agencies that support and advise them.

4: The office base

The project office base is also a centre for a variety of activities throughout the week, for young people and for older people. The office is located in a community centre and is accessible to young people and to older people. It is open from 9am to 5pm.

5: Follow-up support

At each level, the project has a follow-up support service for young people after they leave the project.

Research and evaluation

In addition to the direct work with young people, the project employs a research worker on a fixed-term contract to carry out a study of young carers and to support young people in Newport (Rice, 1999).

The project has an evaluation programme in collaboration with local agencies.

Links with other agencies

The project has close links with the local youth service department and the police and has a strong relationship with the
CHAPTER 8
Comparison of the Young People in Contact with the Projects

COMPARISON OF CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES

From the questionnaire data and project statistics it was possible to make comparisons between the young people who use all four of the projects. Some of the main characteristics and experiences are summarised in the table below. (Where indicated by a * the data was gathered from project statistics; in the other cases the questionnaire data is used.)

Table 8.1 A comparison of the characteristics of the young people with whom the projects work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leeds Safe House</th>
<th>Porth Project</th>
<th>Safe in the City</th>
<th>Youth Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost all (95%) under 16</td>
<td>Mostly (80%) under 16*</td>
<td>Wide range of ages, 12 to 17 and over</td>
<td>Wide range of ages, 13 to 17 and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More females (68%) than males</td>
<td>More females (69%) than males*</td>
<td>Slightly more females (57%) than males</td>
<td>More males (63%) than females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly white – some evidence of use by young people from ethnic minorities</td>
<td>Mostly white – some evidence of use by young people from ethnic minorities</td>
<td>Mostly white – some evidence of use by young people of mixed origin</td>
<td>Mostly white – some evidence, from project statistics, of use by young people from ethnic minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexuality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate data</td>
<td>Inadequate data</td>
<td>Inadequate data</td>
<td>Some evidence of use by gay young men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current situation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All had either run away (80%) or had been forced to leave where they lived (14%)</td>
<td>All had either run away (94%) or had been forced to leave where they lived (6%)*</td>
<td>Almost half (48%) currently had somewhere to live</td>
<td>Two-fifths (39%) currently had somewhere to live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current or most recent accommodation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most family (71%)</td>
<td>Slightly more family (56%) than substitute care (44%)*</td>
<td>Mostly in residential care</td>
<td>Wide range but relatively small proportion in residential care (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Care experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around half of sample (55%), many for short periods</td>
<td>Around half of sample*</td>
<td>89%, often for long periods of time</td>
<td>Around three-quarters of sample (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involvement in prostitution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate data</td>
<td>Inadequate data</td>
<td>Inadequate data</td>
<td>Over a quarter of the sample (mainly male)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Work of the Projects

Clearly, there are significant differences between the young people with whom the projects work and, in particular, between the refuge-based services and street-based services.

The refuges in Leeds and South Wales work with a more tightly defined group of young people in terms of age and current situation. This is due to the tight referral criteria and 'gate-keeping' aspect of the projects' working models. The differences between the two street-based projects in terms of young people's ethnic origin, sexuality and care experience may reflect differences in the local situations in the two cities rather than differences that can be attributed to their different models of service provision.

COMPARISON OF RUNNING AWAY EXPERIENCES

We can go on to compare running away experiences amongst the young people in contact with three of the different projects using the sub-groupings identified in Chapter 6 (pages 56 - 61). The breakdown of the interview and questionnaire samples was as follows:

Table 8.2 The running away experience of young people using the projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Leeds Safe House</th>
<th>Safe in the City</th>
<th>Youth Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>Run away nine times or less, no extended periods away</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>Run away more than ten times, no extended periods away</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group C</td>
<td>Had spent a period of a month or more away from family or care</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group D</td>
<td>Little or no running away, homelessness just before or after 16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Leeds Safe House</th>
<th>Safe in the City</th>
<th>Youth Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Run away three times or less, no extended periods away</td>
<td>(34%)</td>
<td>(5%)</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Run away four to nine times, no extended periods away</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Run away more than ten times, no extended periods away</td>
<td>(24%)</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>Had spent a period of a month or more away from family or care</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>Little or no running away, homelessness just before or after 16</td>
<td>(29%)</td>
<td>(29%)</td>
<td>(29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(7%)</td>
<td>(38%)</td>
<td>(62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5%)</td>
<td>(19%)</td>
<td>(24%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures in table (b) do not tally with those on Table 6.1 because they exclude young people in contact with the Porth Project.
Again, there are strong differences between the refuge in Leeds and the two street-based projects: 58% of the Leeds questionnaire sample were in groups 1a and 1b, compared with 15% in both of the street-based projects. This would indicate that Leeds Safe House works with much larger proportions of young people earlier on in the running away 'pathways' identified in Chapter 6 (see page 63). The differences between Safe in the City and Youth Link in terms of groups 2 and 3 appear to be significant from the questionnaire sample, but should not be regarded as such in view of the tentative nature of the categorisation.

Interestingly, however, the differences in overall running away experiences between Leeds and the other two projects are not as large as might have been expected from the above comparison. For example, we found no evidence of a statistical difference in terms of such indicators as sleeping rough and travelling outside the local area whilst running away, nor amongst most of the indicators of positive and negative experiences described in Chapter 4 (pages 42 - 43).

This lack of evidence of differences in experiences is partly attributable to the size of the questionnaire sample, which makes detection of statistically significant differences less likely. The main statistical difference we did find, however, was in the number of times young people had run away: the young people in the Leeds Safe House sample had run away fewer times on average, although it should also be noted that the average age in this sample was 14.4 years old, compared with over 16 years old in the samples of both the street-based projects.

Nevertheless, even in the Leeds sample, the majority of young people (57%) had run away four times or more. In comparison, the recent Children's Society's survey of a representative sample of young people throughout the city (Rees, 1993), showed that 16% of those who had run away had done so four times or more. Therefore, even though Leeds Safe House is working with more young people who are earlier on in the running away 'pathways' than the street-based projects, it too is predominantly focused on young people who are already regularly running away.

We return to the subject of differences between the projects' groups of service users and their relative accessibility in Chapter 11 and discuss the policy implications of the findings in Chapter 13.
CHAPTER 9
Outcomes of the Projects’ Work

This section does not offer a comprehensive evaluation of the projects’ work, but rather an exploration of the potential of each of the models currently in operation, and an outline of some of the key issues that have arisen through the work of the projects.

We concentrate, in this chapter, on the concept of outcomes which has been a central part of the research methodology outlined in the introduction to the report. Broadly speaking, an outcome is defined as a result of a project’s work which the project sets out to achieve, and for which it can plausibly be held accountable.

An analysis of the outcomes models drawn up for the projects suggests four main categories of general outcomes of direct work with young people, which all the projects were working on in one form or another:

1. Catering for young people’s immediate needs.
2. Establishing a positive relationship with young people.
3. Facilitating change in young people’s situations.
4. Attending to young people’s long-term needs.

Thus the research methodology focused on assessing the impact of the projects’ work in these four broad areas. The discussion below is based on information from young people contacted through three of the projects (Youth Link, Safe in the City, and Leeds Safe House), and from staff and professionals in other agencies connected with all four projects. In view of the relatively small number of young people interviewed at the two refuge-based projects, we have also made some limited use of project records as supplementary information.

CATERING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE’S IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Catering for young people’s needs while they are away from family or substitute care or on the streets can broadly be broken down into the following specific outcomes:
The Work of the Projects

- Catering for material needs (e.g. a place to sleep or hide, food, clothes, hygiene, health needs, information).
- Catering for emotional needs (e.g. someone to talk to, to feel safe).

Whilst all the projects aimed to meet at least some of these needs, there were differences in emphasis, particularly concerning the issue of young people's safety.

Refuge-based projects

There is no significant difference in the range of immediate needs that the Porth Project and Leeds Safe House aim to meet, and so we have considered them together here. Both projects aim to meet all of the needs outlined above.

The projects provide for the material needs of the young people they accept into refuge as a matter of course, offering them a place to sleep, food and clothes. They therefore achieve the outcomes set out with these young people and are clearly providing a valuable service for the young people they work with. However, in both projects the demand for refuge bed spaces has often been greater than the supply. As a result, the projects are unable to meet the needs of all the young people who contact them, within their existing resources. There is also a question as to whether the young people are always in need of these services, and in particular a place to sleep (see pages 88 - 89).

Seven of the eight young people interviewed at Leeds Safe House made positive comments in relation to their immediate needs being met, particularly emphasising their feelings of safety at the refuge and the short-term emotional support they received:

"They took me in. They've looked after me. They cared about me. They worried about me. They won't let me take my tablets when I want to overdose. They stop me doing stupid things."

The immediate care and protection that the refuges can provide were seen as important aspects of the service by staff in both the projects, and this was backed up by a number of comments from professionals in other agencies who welcomed the services the refuges were providing:

"It's been helpful because she would be genuinely at risk [of being involved in prostitution] if Porth wasn't there."
"It's a haven, somewhere they can feel safe for a period of time, and look at solutions .... I feel relieved that there is something like the Safe House."

"Children are being taken off the streets. It's something that the bobbies on the ground have seen the need for."

**Drop-in service**

The research at Youth Link focused on young people who used the drop-in service. This service offers a range of practical facilities which are designed to meet young people's immediate needs, together with the opportunity to have a break from the streets and to talk. The staff saw the provision of washing facilities, in particular, as a way of enabling young people on the streets to maintain their self-esteem. The drop-in centre also has a wide range of information which is accessible to young people.

Four of the young people interviewed made specific mention of valuing the practical services provided and the opportunity to talk to someone whom they could trust, whilst there were also examples of how the drop-in's regular accessibility was helpful to young people in a crisis situation. One young person had found the immediate support offered by the drop-in helpful when he had taken an overdose, and in another case a young person of 14 who had been thrown out of home contacted the drop-in and was found accommodation for that night.

"They sit down and listen to you ... give you advice and say you don't have to take it."

"I'm glad I found out about Youth Link so I could contact my parents."

**Street-based services**

Both Safe in the City and Youth Link aim to cater for young people's material needs whilst on the street (e.g. food, health needs, information) and offer a point of contact for young people. A number of young people in both projects commented that they had valued the help the project workers had given them on the streets, and the opportunity to talk. However, some needs are clearly difficult to meet on the streets (e.g. facilities to wash).

"The children never have anywhere to go ... there should be more people like Safe in the City."
"They are good to talk to."

The projects also aim, through their detached work, to promote the safety of young people in their current environment. There is some evidence from the research that the projects are able to do this through the presence of workers on the street, and by working with young people to develop strategies for safety (e.g. safe sex for those involved in prostitution):

"I would just like to say that Safe in the City saved my neck many a time, they've given me advice on all my problems, and I would like to say thanks."

There may be limits, however, to the level of safety that can be achieved on the streets. Amongst the questionnaire sample in Manchester and Birmingham, 37% had been frightened while on the streets, 30% had been physically assaulted, and 13% had been sexually assaulted. Thus clearly there are significant risks involved in spending time on the streets. Most of the young people in the interview sample had adopted survival strategies such as begging, stealing or prostitution to survive on the streets. In the questionnaire sample, 64% of young people in Manchester and Birmingham had stolen or shoplifted while on the streets and 21% had been involved in prostitution. Finally, the majority of the interview samples in Manchester and Birmingham had sometimes or usually needed a place to stay while on the streets, and had often slept rough.

Discussion

All the projects appeared to achieve the outcomes aimed for in catering for young people's immediate needs. However, the range of needs catered for varied, reflecting a difference in emphasis between the projects with regard to offering young people accommodation, refuge, and safety. This is an important area for debate when considering the development of services.

The interviews offered evidence of a significant need for accommodation and physical safety amongst the young people in contact with all the projects. The issue remains of how this may suitably be provided. The highly structured refuge service offered by Leeds Safe House and the Porth Project can be effective in this respect but also has other effects (see pages 99-101) and may not always be attractive to young people who spend a lot of time on the streets. On the other hand, the presence of street-based workers may not always be
sufficient in itself to ensure young people's safety and there will be times when young people on the streets need some means of respite. The possibility of emergency accommodation facilities (linked with a 24-hour telephone contact point) or night-time drop-in services could be explored.

The ability of the projects to cater for the immediate needs of young people was welcomed by many professionals in statutory agencies.

ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

All the projects saw the establishment of a positive relationship with young people as a necessary prerequisite to the other work they aimed to do with them. This outcome forms a crucial aspect of the 'young person-centred' approach we discuss in Chapter 10.

The young people in the interview sample were asked to complete a grid outlining how they saw their relationship with the project staff, which included the five statements also covered for social workers (see page 30). There were no significant differences between projects and the large majority of young people evaluated the project staff positively on the issues covered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The workers take what I say seriously.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The workers do things behind your back.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The workers ignore what I tell them.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If I have a problem I feel I can talk to a worker about it.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The workers let me make my own decisions.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The project is on young people's side.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The project is there when you need it.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The workers understand young people.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We were able to compare the responses of 16 people to statements one to five above with their responses to the same five questions relating to their social workers. Of course, this comparison needs to be put into context. First, project workers have none of the statutory duties or powers that social workers have which,
for instance, may not allow social workers to let young people make their own decisions about certain matters; nor do they have the care and control role with which field and residential social workers are identified. Second, the project has a range of workers available to young people, whereas the young person will only have one social worker. Third, the interview sample was inherently biased in that all the young people were contacted through the streetwork projects, and most had had a lengthy relationship with the projects. There may be other young people who were not so positive about the projects and had therefore only contacted them once or twice.

It is perhaps not surprising then that a statistical test indicates that young people had a significantly more positive attitude to project workers than to social workers on all five scales. Nevertheless, it is a significant achievement by the projects that they were all able to establish such positive relationships with young people who are often marginalised and do not have a positive relationship with other adults (as shown in Chapter 3).

A selection of comments from young people illustrate this achievement:

"They just don't pressure you like social workers do. That's why I like them." (young person in Manchester)

"You can say what you like. You know it won't go beyond the walls." (young person in Birmingham)

"You get to know them. You get close to the workers. You learn to trust them and they trust you." (young person in Leeds)

The issue of trust is apparent in two of the above quotes and was a recurring theme of young people's comments about all the projects. A vital component of this trust appears to be the projects’ confidentiality and open records policies. We discuss the issue of confidentiality in more detail in Chapter 11.

**FACILITATING CHANGE IN YOUNG PEOPLE’S SITUATIONS**

The outcome of facilitating change in the young person's situation is central to the functioning of all the streetwork projects. In order to understand this issue in more depth we have subdivided 'change' into the following categories:
**Systems intervention:** As we have already established, two-thirds of the young people in the interview sample were currently in contact with a parent, but most of these relationships were poor and/or infrequent. Young people sometimes ask projects to re-establish contact with parents or to negotiate on their behalf in relation to an issue or problem which has arisen. We have also established that most of the interview sample had experience of living in substitute care. Again the quality of young people’s relationships with both care staff and field staff is reported by young people to be poor. Project staff are therefore often drawn into negotiations with care and field staff aimed at planning a return to placement or a new placement for a young person. Project staff also negotiate with other systems, including the criminal justice, housing, social security and health systems.

**Supporting personal change and growth:** Project workers play a key role in supporting change by the young person. In keeping with the ‘young person-centred’ approach this work is only undertaken when the young person wishes the change to take place. The levels and nature of this change vary considerably, but examples include behavioural change including safe sex, and skill development including self-advocacy skills.

**Supporting informed-decision making:** All projects aim to provide young people with information that enables the young person to reach an informed decision. This process involves the young person/worker identifying the issue; the worker providing — or encouraging the young person to gather — the relevant information; the young person/worker exploring the various options; the young person reaching a decision supported and facilitated by the project worker.

We again deal with each type of service provision in turn:

**Refuge-based services**

The two refuge-based services work intensively with young people over a short period of time (up to 14 days). This fits into a model of short-term crisis intervention and allows the potential for considerable change to be made in key areas of young people’s lives. Six of the eight young people interviewed at Leeds Safe House felt that the project had helped them to achieve changes that they wanted. These changes related predominantly to systems intervention with
the social services department, but there was also evidence of perceived personal change, and of reconciliations with family:

"They built my self-confidence so that I could say what I wanted to say."

"I just want to write that we all know that life isn't easy even for parents, but we young people do go through a lot and most of the time people don't listen to us, but now the Safe House is open a lot of young people have sorted their lives out and some are still with their natural parents because of the fact the Safe House listens and understands and helps us. They also love and care for us and they show it."

All six young people had had meetings with social services supported by project workers whilst at the refuge. In four cases the young people had run from residential care and the meetings addressed issues of bullying and treatment in residential care. In the other two cases the young people had run from family, and the meetings involved engaging the young person with social services and exploring accommodation options. Although the outcomes of these meetings appear to have been mixed, the young people valued the support they got from project workers and the opportunity to have their views heard.

Comments from external professionals in Leeds and South Wales indicate that the ability of the refuge-based projects to facilitate positive change in young people's lives is recognised by outside agencies:

"I think workers do good work with them. I know they did some very good work with her on her feelings which she found useful."

"They made us do something about her situation. We knew [Children's Home] wasn't a good place to be, but because she changed her story and it was difficult to find her a place she was left there longer than she should have been. Porth caused us to do something .... It gave her somewhere to go when she felt she had no control of her life."

"One young person couldn't cope. [The streetwork project] helped him move on in a way that the social services department couldn't have. It was a decision of life and death and I honestly think he would have gone off and killed himself. He's now got a flat."

As only a small number of young people contributing to this section were from the refuge-based projects, we supplemented the above
information with an analysis of a sample of recent stays at Leeds Safe House. (We believe that the potential outcomes at the two refuge-based projects are broadly similar, although the services differ in other ways.) A 25% sample of stays during January to June 1994 were looked at: 34 stays in total. Thirteen of these stays ended with the young person choosing to leave the refuge within the first two days (often young people who had used the refuge a number of times). These included four young people who had spent extended periods on the streets away from family or substitute care. In these cases there was little evidence of major change, although the stay had allowed young people temporary respite from their situation and the opportunity to talk. The remaining 21 stays all provided evidence of work on change.

Eight of these young people had run from residential care, of whom six returned to their placement after phone calls or meetings which appeared to have resolved at least some of the issues which had led them to run away. The remaining two were found foster carers and a family placement respectively, after meetings with social services.

Eleven young people had run from parents. In five cases the young people returned home after phone calls and meetings to negotiate with the family. Four young people were found alternative placements (foster care, relative, friend, and hostel) after exploration of accommodation options with the young person, social services and relatives. One young person left without informing the staff, and one had to leave the refuge due to a breach of rules.

Finally, one young person who had been living on the streets was found a residential care placement, and one young person who had run from relatives other than parents and was about to reach 16 years of age was found a place in a hostel.

This analysis of stays indicates the potential of refuge-based projects to work intensively with young people to find solutions to their situations. In some cases this means a negotiated return to family or substitute care after having resolved some of the issues that led to the young person leaving. In other cases this means finding an alternative place to live (e.g. substitute care, relatives, hostels) which the young person is happy with.

In addition to work on move-on options, work had been done with five young people on school issues (including meetings with school staff and education welfare officers), with two young people on health issues (including accompanying to hospital), and with two young people on legal issues (including attending court with a young person).
The Work of the Projects

Drop-in service

The drop-in service at Youth Link enables workers to spend focused time with young people working on issues that are concerning them, with access to a wide range of information and the ability to contact other agencies by telephone or to support the young person in doing this themselves. The presence of an advocacy specialist at Youth Link was seen by staff as a vital resource in enabling the project to facilitate change in young people’s lives. The advocacy specialist works directly with some young people, and in other cases acts as a source of information and advice for other staff working with young people.

Twelve of the 14 young people interviewed identified ways in which they felt Youth Link had helped them. The range of issues worked with was wide, and most people mentioned more than one issue. These included:

- benefits (seven people): including informing young people of their entitlements, contacting the Department of Social Security, and encouraging self-advocacy;
- accommodation (six people): five of whom the project had helped to find somewhere to live;
- contact and meetings with social services (four people): including attending reviews and case conferences in support of the young person;
- legal issues (four people): including enabling young people to learn about their rights, and supporting young people in court;
- contact with parents (four people): usually enabling young people to regain contact with their parents (see also next section);
- health (two people): setting up appointments and accompanying people to them.

A quote from a young person illustrates the way in which the drop-in service works:

“They’ve helped with benefits and entitlements, it’s impossible for me to know social security inside out. They’ve helped to give me the confidence to do something about legal options. I knew I was doing some-
Outcomes of the Projects’ Work

thing legally. They’ve helped to make a lot of decisions ..., explain the good and bad points ..., never push me.”

Little information relevant to the areas being discussed was gathered from other professionals in Birmingham.

Street-based work

The fact that project staff are on the street enables them to work with young people to facilitate change on territory that is familiar to the young person, and at a pace that is dictated by the young person. These are important positives to the street-based approach, but it also seems that the work on facilitating change which workers are able to achieve on the streets may be more limited than in the two other service settings described above. There are practical reasons for this: street-based work is often done in the evenings when most other agencies are not available; the amount of information which workers can carry with them on rights and entitlements is limited; and the environment itself is not always conducive to structured work with young people.

There were therefore few examples from the young people interviewed in Manchester and Birmingham of major changes (of the kind outlined in the previous sections) being achieved on the streets, although young people did value the opportunity to discuss their problems with workers and often felt that this had enabled them to come to decisions. Safe in the City does, however, engage in advocacy work and systems intervention in addition to its street-based work, and there were several examples of the potential of this aspect of the project’s work to facilitate change: for example, negotiating with the Department of Social Security and helping a young person with a solicitor.

“They helped me to see a solicitor and see about a private tutor.”

ATTENDING TO YOUNG PEOPLE’S LONG-TERM NEEDS

All the projects, and indeed the legal framework of Section 51 of the 1989 Children Act, are established to ensure that the projects address immediate or short-term needs. This style of work fits functionally with the idea of crisis ‘streetwork’ or short-term ‘refuge’. Long-term work is therefore structurally more difficult for the project to achieve. (This is reflected in the logistical problems the research
team had in contacting young people for second stage interviews.) Additionally, there was an ongoing debate in the projects about the extent to which they should become involved with young people on a long-term basis, given their focus on crisis intervention. The projects therefore most often aimed to establish other networks to meet young people's longer-term needs, rather than attempting to meet these needs themselves.

The projects saw one of the possible outcomes of their work as acting as a bridge or link in order to re-establish contact between the young people and their families or other agencies. This is an important area of their work and the projects hold that the 'young person-centred' or 'advocacy' approach they adopt is an essential part of it. This approach can also be difficult, however, as some other agencies hold hostile conceptions of the projects (partly due to this approach, as discussed in Chapter 11) and are sometimes reluctant to work constructively with them.

The data gathered indicates that the projects involved in refuge-based or drop-in services were often able to provide an essential link between a young person and other more long-term support networks. This is illustrated in a number of examples in the above sections, where refuge-based projects were able to help young people re-establish contact with carers (either family or substitute care). Four of the 14 young people who had used the drop-in service at Youth Link said that the project had helped them to regain links with their parents. Additionally there was some evidence of all the projects encouraging young people to establish links with other agencies, although this was sometimes met with reluctance by the young person:

"They suggested [a counselling project] but going to a place like that means you've got a problem. You don't know what people will be like and it's difficult to go in for the first time. There's not much chance of support from my social worker. So I'll probably ring up the Safe House."

This quote illustrates that, whilst the projects have been highly successful in establishing trusting relationships with young people, the young people are still reluctant to put their trust in other organisations. Perhaps partly for this reason, all the projects become involved with some young people on a long-term basis. This involvement manifests itself in different ways according to the service setting.

The refuge-based projects offer limited follow-on support to young people after they have left the refuge. However, young peo-
ple often return on more than one occasion. Seven of the eight young people interviewed at Leeds Safe House had stayed at the refuge more than once, some more than ten times over a period of several years. Project statistics indicate that over half the young people who stay at the refuge return for a second stay. In addition, many young people contact the project by telephone for support in between stays. Although the Porth Project has not been established for as long as Leeds Safe House, it has already worked with several young people on more than one occasion.

The drop-in and street-based projects have a more open-ended relationship with young people. Four of the ten young people interviewed at Manchester had had contact with Safe in the City for more than two years, and the remaining six had all had contact regularly for at least three months. In Birmingham, seven of the 14 young people interviewed had been in contact sporadically or regularly with Youth Link for more than two years, and a further five for at least three months. Two were interviewed during their first contact with the project. In addition, both projects have visited young people they have had contact with when they have been in other settings (e.g. children’s homes, secure accommodation, hospital), and this aspect of the work is particularly valued by the young people concerned:

“I still see them a lot. They came to see me in hospital ... they got in contact with me through my social worker. I rang them up to tell them about the baby. [Project worker] brought me some baby clothes and [another project worker] helped too.”

Thus it is apparent that all four of the projects have become involved on a longer-term basis with some of the young people they work with. This involvement is often highly valued by the young people:

“Without the support and help I received from Youth Link, from a hot cup of tea and a shower to someone to talk to, I wouldn’t have been able to sort out the problems I’ve had. I feel that the ongoing help and support I’ve received from Youth Link has helped me gain the settled secure life I now lead.”

However, it is not consistent with a short-term crisis intervention approach. It was evident from interviews with project staff that this issue has been recognised by all the projects and has been the subject of much debate.
SUMMARY

There is evidence that all four projects have had significant success in achieving their stated outcomes in direct work with young people. In terms of the first category of stated outcomes — catering for young people's immediate needs — all the projects appear to be meeting their objectives. There is a difference in emphasis, with the refuge-based services aiming to offer an alternative to being on the streets, whilst the street-based projects aim to support young people in their current situation on the streets.

The projects have been conspicuously successful in the second category of outcomes: establishing a positive relationship with young people. This is a significant achievement, considering many of the young people's detachment from, and distrust of, adults in general.

All the projects have been able to facilitate positive change in young people's lives, while working to young people's agendas: the third category of outcomes. There are again differences between the projects, with the refuge-based services able to achieve major life changes through their short-term intensive work with young people. The drop-in service was also able to assist in significant changes for young people through the range of facilities it offers.

The findings for the fourth category of outcomes — relating to young people's longer-term needs — were more complex. The projects have had some success in establishing links between young people and families or agencies, thus ensuring that young people's longer-term needs are met. However, there seem to be at least two barriers to this process in many cases: young people's distrust of other organisations; and conflict between some organisations and the streetwork projects. There are indications therefore that all the projects are developing long-term relationships with young people, which may not always be in keeping with the original philosophies of the projects.
CHAPTER 10
Effects of the Projects’ Work

The work of the projects may have unintended or unanticipated effects on the young people, on project staff and on others external to the project. The evidence for these effects, which may be either positive or negative, is based predominantly on the interviews with project staff and external professionals.

EFFECTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

There are some issues which were common to more than one project, but we deal first with effects specific to each particular service model.

Residential refuge-based work

Some staff identified possible positive effects. For example:

- enabling young people to make peer group friendships with others who have been through similar experiences, which provide a young person with support during their stay and after leaving;

- giving young people a positive experience of adults;

- introducing young people to different cultures and ways of being.

There were several commonly-held concerns amongst project staff about potential negative effects on young people specifically related to the residential model. These were:

- young people from different backgrounds coming together, leading to some young people being introduced to offending, drug and substance use by other young people whilst at the refuge;

- the negatives of being in crisis with other young people in crisis;
The Work of the Projects

- the rules necessary to run a residential establishment leading to young people being barred from access to the refuge due to breaking the rules. This was also a concern of some professionals in other agencies in Leeds:

"The residential setting presents a problem for some, if not all, young people. They come in with certain things they want to change, being in a refuge situation detracts from what they came in for. Individual needs tend to take on less importance than what's going on in the house. Interactions can be detrimental."

Dispersed refuge-based work

The dispersed refuge model operated by the Porth Project avoids the above negative effects by providing individual accommodation for young people and thus also limiting the extent to which young people in refuge mix with each other. The staff and refuge carers felt that a potential positive effect of this model is for young people to experience good parenting (possibly for the first time) when in refuge.

A potential negative effect of the model arose during a number of the interviews with staff and refuge carers. This was the possibility that young people in crisis would form a strong relationship with refuge carers in a short period of time, which gave them difficulties or led to them feeling rejected when they left the refuge.

Refuge-based work (general)

Some potential effects are relevant to both types of refuge-based work.

The intensive nature of short-term refuge work can have a beneficial effect in various ways; for example, giving young people an experience of belonging, and enhancing their self-esteem.

This intense relationship can also have drawbacks, however:

- Staff expressed concerns about how young people might feel when they had to leave the refuge after 14 days and were offered only limited follow-up support:

"I think it's very hard for young people to let go of the project; being concentrated on short-term crisis intervention, young people can feel abandoned at the end of their stay here."

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There were also some worries about potential effects for young people when they returned to the place they had run away from. Some staff feared, for example, that Asian young people may have suffered repercussions on returning home, due to the fact that they had stayed at a refuge. Staff also expressed concern about young people who had run from an abusive situation and had to return there after being in refuge.

A common concern amongst external professionals in social services was the possibility that stays in refuge by young people in substitute care might have disrupted long-term care plans for them, such as a return home from care, or an introduction to a new foster home.

**Drop-in service**

A potential side-effect of this model noted by staff was that of dependency of the young people. Staff felt that it was sometimes possible that the level of support offered by the drop-in could discourage young people from developing other networks of support in the community.

**Street-based work**

One concern expressed by staff involved in street-based work was the possibility that their support made it easier for young people to remain in risky situations on the street, rather than seeking a way out.

**Effects relevant to more than one model**

*Effects of a disclosure of abuse*

Staff in several of the projects voiced concern about the possible effects resulting from dealing with a disclosure of abuse by a young person. The positive effects for the young person can be to unburden something that has been troubling them for some time, and to escape from further abuse. However, staff felt some misgivings about the outcomes of a disclosure for a young person once the information resulted in child protection procedures being instigated. These misgivings were in relation either to the young person experiencing rejection by their family, or disbelief from statutory agencies, or simply being swept along by a process over which they had no control:
The Work of the Projects

“If young people make a disclosure we may need to start child protection proceedings. We offer to be there with them, but the system takes over and we get lost during the process. I’m not sure if it’s negative but it feels like we’ve broken a promise.”

Facilitating running away?

A concern raised both by staff within the projects and a number of other professionals was the possibility that the projects may facilitate or even encourage young people running away or being on the streets. There was a belief amongst the staff at Leeds Safe House and amongst social workers and residential care staff, that a minority of young people, especially those living in residential care, may run to the refuge, rather than away from where they were living.

For example, some young people were going to the refuge because they preferred the regime there to that in their children’s home. Whilst it is true that a young person doing this is making a positive choice, it was seen by staff and other professionals as being a ‘misuse’ of refuge and as taking up a bed space that might have been needed by another young person at risk. To a limited extent, the same issue appears to have come up in the Porth Project, although again we must note that the project is at an early stage of its development.

Similar issues came up in the two street-based projects. Street-based staff were concerned that their presence could encourage young people to be on the streets. This was also a concern of an external professional:

“Young people have been leaving a specific children’s home, encouraged to return to the city centre for freebies. A safe, friendly, reliable face in the city centre encourages them to run.”

Some grounds for this concern were also provided by two young people who said that they came in to Manchester city centre to maintain contact with Safe in the City.

EFFECTS ON PROJECT STAFF

The innovative nature of the projects, and the extreme situations of many of the young people with whom the projects work, have considerable effects on staff. Most of the staff, and the refuge carers in South Wales, were willing to comment on how the work had affected them as individuals.
Positive aspects

There had been a number of positive aspects of the experience of working in the projects for staff and carers. For example:

• The development of new skills:

“It has given me the opportunity to change my ways of communicating with young people by giving them control of the way they go forward. It’s been very important to me.”

• A greater understanding of young people and the issues that affect them, and elements of personal growth:

“It’s opened my eyes. I was shocked at first. It’s made me a lot more tolerant about various groups.”

• A feeling of value and worth in the work that is achieved:

“Elated if a young person is speaking out in a meeting. It means I’m filled with hope.”

Negative aspects

However, there were several common negative themes amongst people’s comments:

• Anger at the injustices young people face and frustration at the small amount of change that is often achieved:

“It’s made me realise more how unfairly young people are treated as a whole. Sometimes I feel despairing that there is nothing to effect real change, or meet the long-term needs of young people.”

• The emotionally draining nature of the work:

“I know that the work drains my physical and emotional energy and saps my self-confidence. Sometimes when I come home I feel like a zombie.”

“It’s painful to walk away from young people on the streets. It’s difficult to live with some of the decisions they make.”
The Work of the Projects

- High stress levels in all the projects, stemming from different factors according to the setting. The stresses for street-based workers include working in situations in which they are vulnerable to threats of violence, the unhealthy environment, and the difficulty of getting immediate back-up support:

"There are dangers to staff and young people. We live with the risks that young people experience.... Staff are open to physical threats, guns, etc..... It's cold and wet."

For refuge-based staff the stresses arise from the 24-hour nature of the service and from the pressure of working intensively for short periods of time with a rapid turnover of young people:

"The 24-hour service model is too intrusive into people's lives — the pressures on staff and the physical demands. It feels like the job is risky."

and (for Leeds Safe House) from the need to exercise some control when young people are living in a residential setting:

"I'm not sure it's right for us to have to expect to be battered [emotionally] by young people, and I think that's what they do."

Whilst most 'social work' jobs entail some or all of the above stresses, it does seem that the streetwork projects are involved in a particularly high-risk area of work, which can take its toll on the staff employed within them. The above comments are not just applicable to project workers and refuge carers involved in the direct day-to-day work with young people, but also to managers, administrative workers and other support staff who work in the same environment.

EFFECTS ON OTHER PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS

The projects' work may have unanticipated effects on other people or organisations.

Positive effects on practice

Some professionals in other agencies identified positive effects of the projects' work on their own practice. For example:
"For the child in crisis they are very warm, caring people who give the child a listening ear. They had the ability to see where the child is coming from, probably more so than I was able to. I found that helpful to me."

"They set up meetings to help them [young people] express their views. I think that's good because it's not just talking. We can all get together and look at the problems."

**Effects on parents**

However, some external professionals expressed concerns about perceived effects of the projects' work. Three social workers felt that the work of refuge-based services could have unproductive effects on parents:

"It can 'depower' parents. It can have a long-term effect on working on parenting skills."

"It can make parents feel extremely disempowered. They were not allowed to know where their daughter was or what was happening. In the mother's mind they harboured her daughter for a fortnight and then put her back on the streets."

**Effects on the relationship between young people and professionals**

There were also possible effects on the relationship between young people and key professionals:

"It doesn't help a relationship if you know workers in an agency have a negative view of social workers. I don't think it helped her, and it didn't help our work with her."

**SUMMARY**

As has already been discussed in Chapter 9, the projects' work with young people may lead to a number of positive outcomes for the young people themselves, for the project and its staff, and for the other adults and networks with whom the young people and the projects have contact. Nevertheless, as in any area of work which is focused on one-to-one contact with, and advocacy for, individuals — and particularly with those who are young, vulnerable and at a time of crisis — the work of the projects is inherently 'risky' and there are a number of potential side-effects.
The Work of the Projects

For young people, these effects may be very positive — such as friendships with others going through similar experiences. However, they may also, potentially, be negative — such as being introduced to negative forms of behaviour by peers, or developing an over-dependency on the support offered by the projects.

Staff may enjoy the feeling of value and worth which their work can offer, but also become emotionally and physically drained by the stress that the work involves.

Professionals in other agencies and parents may welcome the intervention of the projects as a means of helping them to begin rebuilding their relationship with a young person, or at least of offering them the relative comfort of knowing that the young person has support from responsible and caring professionals. On the other hand, some may resent that same intervention, seeing it as an unwelcome intrusion into their relationship or work with a young person.

In the next chapter we examine in more detail some of the other issues raised by the work of the projects. We note also the implications and effects these have on the projects themselves, on the young people and the agencies they work with, and on the future development of this area of expertise.
CHAPTER 11
Other Issues Regarding the Projects’ Work

ACCESSIBILITY TO YOUNG PEOPLE

As has already been described, each project offers an individual range of services which are targeted at particular groups of young people. The two street-based projects focus their work primarily on the city centre, whereas the two refuge-based projects accept referrals from a wider geographical area. The first approach is thus focused on working intensively with a specific group of young people, whilst the second offers a more limited opportunity of access to a wider group of young people. There are therefore differences in the way various young people experience the accessibility of each of the projects.

It would seem from the comparison of young people in contact with the projects presented in Chapter 8, that refuge-based projects are used by a wider range of young people, including young people who have not run away many times and young people who have never spent extended periods of time on the streets. To a lesser extent, a drop-in service will also be accessible to these young people.

On the other hand, the street-based projects are directly accessible to young people face to face. This may be an advantage compared to the refuge-based projects, where the first point of contact is the telephone which may be a barrier to some young people (see below).

The other key difference between the projects is their accessibility at different times of the day. The two refuge-based services are accessible to young people by telephone 24 hours a day, whereas the two street-based projects are only accessible for parts of the day and evening on certain days of the week.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY ISSUES

All projects strive to provide an anti-discriminatory service to young people in their area. There is evidence that Youth Link has been successful in engaging with young gay men, and that Leeds Safe House, Safe in the City and the Porth Project are working with young people from ethnic minority populations (Chapter 8).
The Work of the Projects

There are, however, concerns that the projects may not be equally accessible to all groups of young people due to a variety of factors. In terms of ethnic minority populations, these considerations are closely linked with the need to understand the issue of being away from home from a range of cultural perspectives. Previous research (Abrahams and Mungall, 1992; Rees, 1993) has found a significantly higher incidence of running away amongst young people of African-Caribbean origin than amongst white young people. However, these studies were not able to compare the significance of running away or the running away experiences of these two groups of young people. Little is therefore currently known about how (if at all) the needs of African-Caribbean young people who run away may differ from those of white young people. For example, some groups of black young people may not go to the city centre when they run away, and thus a city centre-based project would tend not to work with them. Similarly, a refuge may be perceived by black young people as not being geared towards their needs.

As noted earlier (page 101), one particular concern of staff at Leeds Safe House has been the potential effects on Asian young women of a stay in refuge. There was a feeling that since running away can be a particularly difficult thing for them to do, it may be better to offer them the option of receiving support from staff outside the refuge.

A research study carried out by The Children's Society into homelessness and running away amongst young black people in Newport has indicated the need to approach this issue without preconceptions or stereotypes:

"Many workers assumed that the research was about young Asian women escaping from arranged marriages and domineering males. For some young Asian women that might be the reality. But again, workers should not presume, as many in the sample have done, that all Asian young women will be running to avoid arranged marriages. There were wider cultural issues for these young women to consider but none of the young women who were interviewed were fleeing arranged marriages. Like many other young women in general, the young black women interviewed were running because of physical violence, emotional and sexual abuse and other family conflicts." (Patel, 1994; page 35).

Leeds Safe House has also come to recognise the need to develop better community links with ethnic minority communities in order to promote understanding of the project's work. Staff at all the projects have also commented about the need to consider the issue of disability and how this may have a bearing both
on running away and on the projects' accessibility. For example, it may be that many young people with limited mobility are living in abusive situations but are unable to express their unhappiness by leaving. Similarly, the fact that the refuge-based projects are only able to be contacted by telephone may be a barrier to deaf young people referring themselves.

Finally, staff were concerned that organisational policy means that they are unable to offer young people the option of refuge with lesbian and gay foster carers.

A 'YOUNG PERSON-CENTRED' APPROACH

All projects are committed to the concept of working with young people in a 'young person-centred' way. This involves, for example, listening to young people and taking what they say seriously, involving them in all decision-making processes, operating a system of open records, and actively promoting the views of the young person. This approach allows project workers to engage young people, including the most marginalised (see Chapter 9), and provides a coherent frame of reference for practice and policy.

However, this approach differs from that taken by many statutory agencies and was often mentioned by professionals in other agencies as a source of conflict between them and the projects. It is also an issue which came up regularly in the interviews with project staff, both as a perceived strength in the way the projects worked, and as something which many felt needed further clarification:

"A young person-centred approach is good for listening and working out something to do for young people. But I think it’s an ideal .... I’d like somebody to tell me what it means, to define it. I see it as that the young person is the focus of what you do, which is fine. But if it means doing everything the young person wanted or said, I don’t think you can do it. I think we tried that at the start and it knackered everybody and damaged our relationship with other agencies." (project worker)

This highlights some key questions: Does a 'young person-centred' approach mean maintaining that young people have an absolute right to self-determination, and that workers have to support them in that? Do workers have any responsibilities to protect young people? Two quotes from different workers in the same project illustrate the dilemma:
"[There are] real instances where you want to lead it and take it away from the young person, as an adult, but we have to work at the young person's pace and let them make mistakes."

"Young people's rights are taken too far sometimes and we have failed to protect them ... drugs, prostitution ... we haven't changed their lives. Do they have that right to press the self-destruct button?"

Confidentiality and open records

Policy regarding confidentiality inevitably has a direct bearing on the work of the projects and has been a subject of considerable debate among project staff. As the following quotes illustrate, the issues are complex and there is no unified view:

"The confidentiality policy has meant that it has worked against some young people who have either left or not come in. These young people had also felt closed down by statutory child protection agencies. I've shifted my position. I think a project like this should be brave enough to offer 100% confidentiality."

"I've always held that to promise kids total confidentiality is a mistake ... I don't think you can turn a blind eye if a young person is going back to an abusive situation. You shouldn't promise something you can't deliver."

Another issue of debate in a 'young-person centred' approach is the question of how much use should be made of other people's opinions about a young person: are other adults' views on young people always 'value judgements'; or are they useful to working with a young person?

It should be pointed out that the projects do not refuse information from other professionals. However, the projects' policy that all information is open to young people can mean that in some cases staff from other agencies are unwilling to provide information. In addition, a number felt that work could have been achieved more quickly with more exchange of information.

Advocacy roles

Another aspect of a 'young person-centred' approach is the advocacy role which the projects adopt. Again, this was the subject of much debate within the projects:
"Social services see us as a rather unprofessional organisation, that we collude with young people, that we work from misconceptions, and therefore that we work against the interests of young people. It might happen, but we are advocates, we speak on their behalf."

"Advocacy is certainly something we should be doing. However, successful advocacy is not simply making statutory agencies as uncomfortable as possible and presenting young people's wishes irrespective of 'achievability' or 'rightness'. You can't advocate without a clear sense of your own and your organisation's values or if you don't respect other agencies."

Amongst professionals in other agencies, the issue of advocacy styles elicited even more comments than the issue of confidentiality and appeared in some cases to be a major source of conflict. Some professionals (especially social workers) felt personally attacked by project staff undertaking advocacy, which had inevitably damaged relationships between the project and agencies. Some also felt that the advocacy style had damaged relationships with parents.

"We felt rubbish by the project staff. They were listening totally to the young person whereas we have to be more balanced. I'm not against this approach but it's bound to create strain."

There were also a number of comments about the projects raising young people's expectations, giving them the impression that they have "idealistic rights which legally they don't have". For example:

"[They] encouraged her to ask for the right to live independently when she was pregnant, 14 and on a care order. She was expecting to get rights that she wasn't going to get. I don't mind expectations being raised if they can be achieved, but not if we, and foster carers, have to pick up the pieces after." (social worker)

This issue is also recognised by project staff as a source of potential difficulty:

"It's a dilemma arguing for something the young person has identified which you don't think is achievable. You might disagree, but you are there to work with them. The outcome is not the only thing, it's about being heard."

Finally, there is a fundamental issue about whether the outcomes young people want are necessarily in their best interests:
"There are young people who are dying to go into care, and the project fights for their rights to go into care. They go in, then a couple of months later it's horrible and then they refer to the project again and again .... Some young people, all they want at first is to leave home, then later all they want is to go back .... Is fighting for a place in care the right thing to do?"

The above discussion has, of necessity, only briefly covered some of the main areas of debate about the projects' processes of working with young people. These areas are part of a much wider debate about young people's rights and responsibilities at various ages; about professionally defined needs and the status of professionals' perceptions; and about young people's role in society.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Given the material of the previous section, which highlighted a fundamental difference of perspectives and an element of conflict between the projects and statutory agencies, it is not surprising that the projects' relationships with other agencies have been mixed.

Relationships with social services departments, for example, have been problematic. Even where projects have had a positive relationship at a senior management level, there seems to have been a fair amount of conflict at a practice level.

On the other hand, the projects' relationships with the police have generally been good. In fact, from interviews with key personnel in the local police forces, the two refuge-based projects appear to have built up excellent relationships with the police, who recognise the need for refuge for some young people and have been significant supporters of the projects. Any difficulties which have arisen seem to have been overcome by discussion and co-operation.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

In an area of innovative work, it is inevitable that there will be many debates about its future development. A general theme across all four projects is a wish to develop advocacy work. Other major issues were reflected in interviews with staff and illustrate some of the ways in which each project is attempting to ensure that it can best meet the needs of its own target group of young people.
Safe in the City

In Safe in the City a major issue is whether the project should now persist in its original plan of providing refuge through refuge carers. There seems to be a general feeling amongst the staff team that there are too many drawbacks and that, in any case, most of the young people with whom the project had contact were very resourceful in finding somewhere to stay themselves:

"Refuge as in Section 51 is constrained by regulation, it's become institutionalised .... It would distort us. You have to compromise to get a certificate .... It also has high resource demands within a finite pot and takes away from other areas."

There is also a debate about whether the project should have a base where young people can come.

Youth Link

Youth Link is debating whether there is a need for a refuge service in Birmingham and whether this would be the best use of resources. Another issue for staff is the balance between the drop-in and street-based elements of the service. These are generally seen as complementing each other, but some people expressed concern that when resources are stretched, it is more likely that the street-based work is reduced:

"If you provide drop-in at certain times, you have to keep it going, detached work gets dropped, but young people expect that to happen and if you don't do it for a few weeks it's very hard to go back into it, you lose continuity."

Leeds Safe House

In Leeds there are concerns about whether the young people who use the refuge always needed it and whether the project is reaching the people at whom it is aimed. There is also a recognition that provision of refuge can be extremely labour-intensive and that the requirements of Section 51 certification are making the provision more bureaucratic.

Whilst there is a general commitment to the continued provision of refuge in one form or another, there is a large majority feeling that the project should distinguish between the services it offers:
The Work of the Projects

"I think it is difficult to combine our advocacy/‘move-on’ role with our residential provision. I think lots of confusion/clashes stem from the attempted co-existence of these two quite disparate needs."

The Porth Project

Porth is at a much earlier stage of its development. However, some of the debates in Leeds are reflected in the project, particularly whether young people always need refuge, and whether it may be possible to separate provision of refuge from advocacy:

"An advice and information service would open up the service to many more young people. They might need a worker to support them in a change of placement, but might be OK where they are. At the moment you get refuge and advocacy — you can’t have the one without the other."

SUMMARY

The work of the projects reflects many of the issues and dilemmas faced by anyone offering a direct service to young people: whether the service is accessible to all those who need it; how best to ensure that the service provided caters for the needs of all young people, whatever their race, culture, gender, sexuality, or disability; and the working policies and practices that need to be developed in order to work most effectively and most fairly with young people.
The research has indicated the diverse nature of young people who may be described as "at risk" and the diverse needs these young people have. In Section 2 we presented a model of working with young people derived from the data of Figure 6.3, page 6.2. Consideration of information about young people in contact with each of the projects within The Children's Society's afterwork programme (Chapter 8) suggested that all the projects work predominantly with young people who are already some way along these pathways. The projects offer a model of intervention specifically focused on a small but highly vulnerable group of young people who have not frequently taken their full share of their career opportunities. Some have become detached from family life.

Has the intensity of the running away "pathway" influenced the model we have presented? In order to answer the question, the projects were asked what they did. For example, in a number of cases, the projects were providing "house" for young people and were getting into the habit of doing so. The projects were focusing on the most disadvantaged group of young people who run away. While today-based nơi we are more likely that street-based workers to work with young people in this group, it remains the case that relatively few of these young people use refuge services. It is possible therefore that these young people have much which we do not fully know by the running away model of the streetwork programme. It also seems that the projects have very limited contact with young people before they start running away and do not officiate on preventative work with young people until that stage. Using the concepts of primary, secondary and tertiary intervention, these practical interventions are important pathways.
The Work of the Project

"I think it is difficult to maintain our advocacy, particularly if we are not involved in current issues. I think the question is whether we can ensure the support and involvement of those who are more detached people."

The Poetic Project

Poetry is at a very early stage of its development. However, some of the ideas that have been reflected in the project, particularly with regard to young people's involvement, may be reflected in a possible approach to the issue of advocacy.

"The white and educated people need to open up thenette to other young people. They need to understand the issues of education, but need to be more open about their own roles. At the moment, we are more open and accurate reporting, but have the one address the other."

SUMMARY

The work of the project reflects some of the issues and dilemmas that are reflected by anyone offering a youth service to young people. Whether we are involved in current issues or not, we need to ensure that the issues are reflected correctly. The home of all young people, whether in the community or in the house, in policies and practices that need to be developed in order to work most effectively and most openly with young people.
CHAPTER 12
A Model of Intervention

The research has indicated the diverse nature of young people who may be described as ‘running away’ and the diverse needs these young people have. In Section 1 we presented a model of running away ‘pathways’ derived from the data (Figure 6.3, page 63). Comparison of information about young people in contact with each of the projects within The Children’s Society’s streetwork programme (Chapter 8) suggested that all the projects work predominantly with young people who are already some way along these pathways. The projects offer a model of intervention specifically focused on a small but highly vulnerable group of young people who have run frequently from their families and from substitute care. Some have become detached from family and care.

Yet the diversity of the running away ‘pathways’ outlined in the model suggests that a range of interventions are required in order to meet the needs of all young people who run away from where they live. For example, ‘pathway 1’ — running away once or twice and then ceasing to run away — is by far the numerically largest subgroup of young people who run away. Whilst refuge-based services are more likely than street-based services to work with young people in this group, it remains the case that relatively few of these young people use refuge services. It is possible therefore that these young people have needs which are not fully met by the existing models in the streetwork programme. It also seems that the projects have very limited contact with young people before they start running away, and do not generally do preventative work with young people who may run away. Using the concepts of primary, secondary and tertiary intervention, some practical initiatives are suggested overleaf.
PRIMARY INTERVENTION

Primary intervention focuses on preventative work with all young people and their families within the community. This could take the form, for example, of education projects such as the consideration of issues around running away as part of the personal and social education carried out in schools, and the promotion of the education for citizenship cross-curricular theme within schools. ‘The family’ is central to the process of becoming an adult in our society, in terms of preparation and support. Preparation for becoming a parent is therefore another important element of primary intervention.¹

In addition, primary intervention needs to address family policy in general: policy that encourages families to make children their central concern and that allows the voice of the child to be listened to

¹ The Children's Society publishes resource packs and other material aimed at teachers and others working with young people addressing these particular topics, e.g. Education for Citizenship (1991) and Education for Parenthood (1994).
and valued, may result in making the family a more ‘child-centred’ environment.

SECONDARY INTERVENTION

Secondary intervention should focus on support to young people who have run away once or twice, usually from their families (Pathway 1 above), and also on young people who are at the early stages of running away from care settings (Pathway 2). These are clearly young people in need.

Interventions would have to engage young people in settings other than their home environments, such as schools or youth clubs, in order to reach those who have run away or who are considering running away again. Such work could offer young people opportunities to discuss alternative solutions and support in working towards the resolution of problems. A telephone helpline specifically targeted at those who are thinking about running away may be one form of service that could be integrated into other existing service models.

A ‘mediation service’ could be provided, which would help negotiate the return of a young person to the family home and would offer assistance to the family in addressing some of the issues that precipitated the running away episode. Part III Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to offer services to children in need, and this service could be facilitated through joint working strategies between the police, local authorities and voluntary organisations. Such a service could be a valuable addition to current service provision and contribute to young people not following the pathways to detachment.

Further secondary intervention should be focused on the provision of substitute care. Just as attempts to improve the quality of life in families could contribute to the prevention of running away, so improving the quality of life in substitute care may prevent young people running away again and for longer. Strategies to improve resourcing, service delivery and staff training would have a general impact; more targeted programmes addressing the reintegration of runaways into substitute care settings could have a similarly beneficial effect. These issues are discussed further, in terms of social policy, on pages 122-123.

TERTIARY INTERVENTION

As discussed above, various models of tertiary intervention are already in operation as part of The Children’s Society’s programme
Implications of the Research Findings

of streetwork. These interventions aim to provide contact, refuge, advocacy and, if possible, to negotiate a return to substitute care or family settings.

The information we have collected suggests that careful research is required in the development of tertiary intervention models. Whilst a city centre street-based detached model has proved to be appropriate for large cities such as Birmingham and Manchester, it is dependent on the existence of an identifiable area where young people congregate on the streets. Information gathered in Leeds, for example, suggests that there is no ‘street culture’ of young people in the city centre there, and this may also be true of other smaller cities and towns. It is possible, therefore, that a more dispersed detached model would be more appropriate in some areas, or that a completely different model of service provision would be required. Thus, whilst general models of primary and secondary intervention are likely to be appropriate for most areas, a tertiary intervention model needs to be developed with a particular attention to local circumstances.

The Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs), which exist in every local authority area, are in an excellent strategic position to co-ordinate creative agency responses to young people on the streets. The ACPCs include representation from social services, education, housing, health, police and, sometimes, voluntary organisations, all of which are crucial to providing services for young people on the streets. The ACPC, therefore, is potentially a forum which could co-ordinate services to young people who, as has we have already shown, are often estranged from the provision of basic services.
CHAPTER 13
Social Policy Issues

Our research has highlighted a number of broader social policy issues relevant to the young people with whom the streetwork projects work.

THE POSITION OF YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 16 LIVING AWAY FROM BOTH FAMILY AND SUBSTITUTE CARE

In both our questionnaire and interview samples we found young people under 16 living away from both their families and any form of substitute care; some of them had already been doing so for more than six months. In strict legal terms this should not be possible: any young person under 16 should either be living with someone who has parental responsibility or be provided with accommodation by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Any young person considered to be 'in need' should also be in receipt of services under Part III of the Children Act.

The young people in our samples, therefore, found themselves in a service 'vacuum': they had nowhere to live; they had no obvious source of income; they were not attending school; and often lacked any link into state services or the adult world. We can see such people as 'marginalised' or 'detached' from the adult world. They are 'non-citizens', living independently but unable to claim the rights or exercise the responsibilities which most adults take for granted.

Many of the young people will have presented a major challenge to their families and the care system and will have been seen as unco-operative or uncontrollable. Many will have brought disadvantage with them, and then have continued to accumulate disadvantage during their years of detachment. This study could not track the long-term outcomes for such young people, but it seems certain that they would find re-integration into social institutions difficult.

The young people we spoke to often only had one link into the adult world: the streetwork projects. The work of the projects in this
Implications of the Research Findings

area then is invaluable. It also raises the question, however, of how young people in areas of the country not covered by similar projects are able to make any links into the adult world at all.

THE CRIMINALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION

The issue of young people providing sex for money as a means of survival came across powerfully in the information we gathered from young people and professionals. This is an issue of particular concern, as many young people will have experienced the abuse of power within their birth families and are then exposed to the abuse of adult male power on the streets in order to survive.

Young people who are sexually abused by adults in family settings may well be subject to a child protection investigation under Section 47 of the Children Act. Yet some young people in the research samples who were aged under 16 had been cautioned by the police following involvement in prostitution. They have thus been criminalised. This situation appears highly unjust: young people abused in family settings are seen as victims, whereas those of the same age who are involved in street activities are labelled as criminals.

THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN SUBSTITUTE CARE

As we have seen, many of the young people reported negative experiences of their lives in both residential and foster care. Some young people identified these negative experiences as a reason for them running away or being forced to leave. In our model of running away pathways we have identified, as a form of secondary intervention, measures to improve the quality of life for young people in substitute care. Such interventions could be based on:

(a) Recognising the importance of residential care for older young people. Despite the overall increase in the use of foster care, residential care remains a crucial resource, particularly for older young people (Biehal et al., 1992).

(b) The adoption of a strategic approach to family support, residential and foster care. Substitute care needs to be seen as a positive service with a clear location within the continuum of child and family services.
(c) Carers need to develop clear strategies for working with young people who have run away. Factors which facilitate the successful reintegration of the young person into the care setting need to be identified and developed.

(d) The young people we interviewed often spoke of physical intimidation from other young people in residential care settings and identified this as a factor precipitating their running away. Addressing this issue presents a major challenge for the residential care system.

**THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT PROVIDED TO YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE**

Previous research specifically examining leaving-care issues (Stein and Carey, 1985; Biehal et al., 1992) has identified a problem of young people leaving local authority accommodation being offered variable levels of support — both emotional and material.

In both our interview and questionnaire samples we found young people over 16 who qualify for 'advice and assistance' under Section 24 of the Children Act but reported having little contact with social workers and having received no practical assistance. Such young people seem to have accumulated disadvantage, first through their early family experiences and subsequently through their in-care experience. This is then in danger of being replicated in the post-16 phase. Local authorities need urgently to address the issue of support to such care leavers, particularly those who may have been challenging during their care careers and later become detached from the care system.

**THE IMPACT OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN ON YOUNG PEOPLE**

As we have seen, many young people in the sample had experienced family breakdown, separation from one or both parents and had lived in reconstituted families. This often led to difficult relationships with their birth parents or parents' new partners. The most negative of these experiences included extreme forms of violence and abuse.

This evidence should not be used to suggest that it is impossible to reconstitute families successfully. The young people in contact with the projects are those who have had negative experiences and are not necessarily representative of the population as a whole, although earlier research (Rees, 1993) found that the rate of running away was
Implications of the Research Findings

significantly higher amongst young people living with a parent and step-parent than amongst young people living with both birth parents or with a lone parent.

As increasing numbers of young people experience family breakdown (National Children’s Bureau, 1993) this raises a serious issue of the impact this process has on them. How can we ensure that young people’s needs are met when adults are in conflict? How can we make sure that the voices of young people are heard? Conciliation and mediation services, for example, offer parents who are experiencing marital breakdown counselling and advice on how to work together to put their children’s interests first. They have achieved considerable success in reducing levels of conflict and stress. Extension of these services to all separating couples who require them would help protect the welfare of children and young people.

THE POTENTIAL LINKS BETWEEN RUNNING AWAY AND HOMELESSNESS

The majority of young people over 16 in the interview sample had experienced periods of homelessness since the age of 16. This fact in itself does not constitute proof of a link between running away and homelessness. However, in view of the detachment and marginalisation that many of the young people have experienced before the age of 16, it would not be surprising if such a link does exist. Research carried out in the USA found a link between regular running away under 16 and later youth homelessness (Simons and Whitbeck, 1991).

It is notable that the young people we interviewed often expressed reluctance to use hostels and night shelters for homeless people as an intermediate step on the road to permanent housing, mainly because of the rules that these services operated. On the other hand, they often felt that they would need support in establishing themselves in independent accommodation. This therefore presents a challenge for housing agencies: to offer a route which is acceptable to young people who have become ‘detached’ by which they can gain access to permanent housing.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

The data presented in Section 1 of this report revealed that few of the young people were still engaged in the education system, and that some young people had become permanently detached from it at as young as 13 years old. Young people often felt that there was
little point in their re-entering the education system after a period of detachment. The relationship between running away and educational detachment is reinforced by other research which found a link between young people running away and regular truancy from school (Rees, 1993).

There is evidence therefore that young people who run away regularly are in danger of accumulating educational disadvantage in addition to other disadvantages. It is ironic that young people for whom the local authority often has parental responsibility are marginalised from the educational services provided by that authority. It appears that here again there is a need to create routes through which young people who have become 'detached' can be re-integrated into the educational system.

THE NEED TO DEVELOP A CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE

Currently, young people who run away are often returned to the place they ran from as a matter of course. It is evident from the data presented in this report that many young people have strong motivations for leaving home or substitute care. One way of addressing this and ensuring the welfare of the young person would be to develop a series of local services which are immediately available to these young people, and which give them the opportunity to discuss the issues that have led them to run away and to explore possible alternative solutions to their situation. Such services would have to be demonstrably independent of the statutory services whilst working in partnership with them. There is a need to pilot and evaluate services of this kind.

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Currently, young people who run away are often returned to the
place they ran from as a matter of course. It is evident from the data
presented in this report that many young people have strong motiva-
tions for leaving home or substitute care. One way of addressing this
and ensuring the welfare of the young person would be to develop a
series of local services which are immediately available to these
young people, and which give them the opportunity to discuss the
issues that have led them to run away and to explore possible alterna-
tive solutions to their situation. Such services would have to be
demonstrably independent of the statutory services whilst working
in partnership with them. There is a need to pilot and evaluate ser-
dices of this kind.
THE NEED TO DEVELOP A CO-ORDINATED REMEDIAL AND SENSITIVITY PROGRAMME FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

MENTAL HANDICAP

Children suffering from mental handicap often need special education to help them develop to their potential. A number of experimental studies have been undertaken in the United Kingdom and the United States to assess the potential of mentally handicapped children to learn skills, and the results have shown that they can benefit from special education. However, the success of special education depends on the ability of teachers to adapt their teaching to the needs of the children. Teachers need to be trained in the techniques of teaching children with special needs.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

The data presented at Section I of this report indicate that few of the young people were still engaged in education. Most of the young people had no interest in education and had dropped out of school. The reasons for this were not clear, but it is likely that the lack of support and guidance from the education system contributed to this. The lack of support from the education system can be attributed to the lack of understanding of the special needs of young people with disabilities. The education system needs to be more inclusive and provide support to young people with disabilities.

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CHAPTER 14

Concluding Remarks

The streetwork projects outlined and evaluated by this research are working with a small but highly vulnerable group of young people. They are a group who run away regularly from their families and from substitute care. Some have become completely detached from their family or care.

The average age for young men to leave the parental home is about 22, whilst for young women it is about 20 (Jones, 1987). And yet the streetwork projects are working with under-16-year-olds, some of whom have already lived for more than six months detached from their families. In their short lives they have experienced high levels of disruption, including family breakdown, conflict and abuse. Most have also spent periods in substitute care. But they have rarely achieved the stability previously lacking in their lives and some of these young people run regularly from care. Perhaps not surprisingly, few of these young people attend school regularly or are able to trust or depend upon adults.

‘Running away’ can be viewed as a positive act: getting out of an abusive family situation rather than, in extremis, taking one’s own life or persistent self-harm. Or it could be seen as an act of assertion in what is perceived to be a situation in which a young person has no power over their lives: “nobody cares about me, nobody gives a damn”. Most young people run from somebody or something rather than to something or somebody else, and most young people do not feel that running away resolved their initial problems. In their experience of running away, young people are often both ‘victim’ and ‘villain’: fear, loneliness and being assaulted combine with stealing, begging or sex for money in order to survive ‘on the streets’. Perhaps only by linking these two dimensions will we recognise the heavy demands placed on streetwork and related projects, and the complexity of child protection issues.

The main purpose of the streetwork programme is to assist these young people: the refuge-based projects intervening in the earlier stages of young people running from family and substitute care, and the street-based projects mainly working with ‘detached’ young people. The projects commonly achieve positive outcomes in relation to meeting young people’s immediate needs, establishing positive rela-
tionships with marginalised young people, and facilitating change in young people's lives.

In terms of the future development of the projects, the research has highlighted differences between their accessibility to white and to black young people, and to able-bodied and disabled young people. There are also differences in accessibility between refuge-based and street-based projects. The 'young person-centred' approach adopted by all the projects raised a number of issues, including confidentiality and open records, and the role of advocacy work.

A number of key areas have been identified for consideration by agencies working with young people. These include the current provision of residential care, educational support, and the need for a co-ordinated response to working with young people.

The key social policy issues include the position of young people under 16 living away from family and substitute care, the criminalisation of young people involved in prostitution, the quality of life for young people in substitute care, and the impact of family breakdown on young people.

The research represents a challenge not only to those agencies working directly with young people, but to society as a whole. For simultaneously we need to encourage young people not to run away in the first place, through early support to them and to families in difficulty, and we need to respond to the vulnerable group of young people who do run away. The former demands a primary prevention programme including 'running away issues' as part of the personal and social education curriculum, parenting preparation, and the development of more positive attitudes towards young people in society. The latter, secondary and tertiary prevention, demands a well co-ordinated response aimed at working with young people and families and improving the quality of substitute care, so that no young people under 16 will find themselves 'on the streets'.
APPENDIX

Comparison with Research in other Countries

The research findings presented in Chapters 3 and 4 are similar in many respects to research on ‘running away’ and ‘street children’ which has been undertaken in other countries, particularly the USA. A brief summary of some of these findings is presented below.

Running away experiences

A study by Brennan et al. (1978) in the USA produced similar findings to recent survey research in the UK. Their findings suggest a significant incidence of running away (one in nine young people in a large survey). About half of runaways ran alone; around three-quarters left home only once; half of the runaways returned home within three days; half of the runaways travelled less than ten miles. These findings are broadly consistent with those in a survey carried out in Leeds (Rees, 1993). Similarly, the fact that only 38% of parents of runaways reported the incident to the police, and that most runaways returned home of their own volition, fits in with current knowledge about runaways in the UK.

Several studies, including Shane (1989), found that many homeless and runaway young people had been forced to leave home rather than run away.

Whitbeck and Simons (1990) examined the victimisation of young runaways on the streets. They found different experiences for males and females. Females were most likely to be sexually assaulted (42% of a sample had been), whereas males were more likely to be threatened or assaulted with a weapon. They found a link between running away and ‘deviant’ subsistence strategies, and then a strong link between these strategies and victimisation.

Cohen, MacKenzie and Yates (1991) found that one-quarter of homeless young people/runaways were providing sex for money in order to survive, compared to 0.3% of non-homeless teenagers. Homeless young people and runaways were six times more likely to be at risk of HIV infection than other young people.
Family background

A number of studies (e.g. Farber (1984)) found significantly higher levels of physical violence in the families of runaways than in those of non-runaways. Whitbeck and Simons and Janus et al. (1987) both found that the population of runaways had experienced much higher rates of physical and sexual abuse than did randomly sampled populations of young people.

Brennan et al. found a number of aspects of family relationships which are significantly more common for runaways than non-runaways, including physical violence, marital conflict, parental remoteness from the child, and negative labelling by parents. Johnson and Carter (1980) state that runaways' families "are typically marred by high rates of internal conflict, divorce, residential mobility and death". Both Brennan et al. and Ek and Steelman (1988) found that differential treatment of siblings was a significant factor in the family situation of runaways. Roberts (1982) found a significant level of alcohol-related problems in parents of runaways.

In one respect, US findings differ from research findings in the UK. Shane (1989) found that young people living in single parent families are significantly more likely to run away than other young people. However, the research presented in this report, and in Rees (1993), suggests that in the UK the highest rates of running away are from reconstituted families, whilst running away rates from single parent families are similar to those from families with both birth parents.

School experience

Brennan et al. found significant differences between runaways and non-runaways in terms of experiences of school. Runaways, for example, had less positive attitudes to school. They were also twice as likely as non-runaways to truant, to be beaten by teachers, and to be suspended or expelled from school.

Cohen et al. found that 38% of a sample of homeless young people/runaways had dropped out of school compared to 7% of a comparison group of non-homeless young people.

Self-harm and depression

Cohen et al. found that homeless young people/runaways were far more likely to be depressed and actively suicidal than non-homeless young people. They found no evidence, however, that they were more likely to have major mental health problems.
Drug and substance use

Cohen et al. found that homeless young people/runaways had considerably more experience with drugs than other young people — 54% had used marijuana, 35% stimulants, and 8% had injected drugs — although few of them felt they had a drug problem.

Long-term effects of running away

Relatively little research has been done into this area. However, Simons and Whitbeck (1991) looked at the possibility that running away during adolescence is a precursor to adult homelessness. They found empirical support for their hypothesis that many young people who run away repeatedly and for considerable lengths of time grow up to become homeless adults.
REFERENCES


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REFERENCES

[Insert references here]
“It’s very scary and no one wants to be near you. You smell and become a liar and you’re very lonely.”

**Running – the risk** powerfully portrays the experiences and survival strategies of young people living on the streets of Britain in the 1990s. The authors present the findings of in-depth research carried out with young people in contact with four of The Children’s Society’s streetwork projects. Many of these young people have lost contact with families, schools, social workers and all other support networks. Some have lived on the streets for years.

The Society is at the forefront of innovative work with children and young people who run away. **Running – the risk** offers an insight into how four distinct models of its provision operate:

- the projects’ aims and how they achieve them
- meeting the immediate needs of young people
- practice issues and inter-agency work
- addressing young people’s long-term needs.

For the first time, a model of running away ‘pathways’ is presented, revealing clear patterns in behaviour. The model highlights the need for intervention and prevention strategies at all levels – not only in specialist youth organisations and statutory services, but also in the family, in children’s homes, in youth clubs, in schools and at a national policy level. The evidence of **Running – the risk** challenges all who have responsibility for children and young people.