

Hertfordshire Young Citizens Programme

A report from inception to sustained status



Prepared by Anita *Omatseone* and Chief Inspector Tim Bonnett
For the Tilley Award 2001

The Hertfordshire Young Citizens Project

Project Summary:

The Hertfordshire Young Citizens project was set up in 1996 as part of the Safer Hertfordshire Partnership programme – a joint Constabulary and County Council initiative. The project addresses the needs of identified young people who are seriously at risk of offending or other life style damaging behaviours.

The project began when it was identified that many agencies that dealt with problematic young people were dealing with the same clients. Scanning available information showed:

- The support and guidance given to young people was not co-ordinated.
- There was considerable duplication of effort between agencies.
- The young person and family were subject of multiple and conflicting interventions that failed to address problems in a holistic way.
- None of the agencies knew who was doing what to whom when.

There needed to be a co-ordinated approach to benefit the young person and properly address the range of problems that may present..

The response to the problem was to develop a project, which co-ordinated interventions. Two pilot sites were identified, each with a key worker. Young people were identified initially through them being known to two or more statutory agencies. Each young person is subject of:

- a comprehensive assessment
 - action planning with the young person and family
 - a structured co-ordinated remedial programme to address needs.

The action plan progress is monitored by the key worker and all relevant agencies advised.

An essential part of the project was careful progress monitoring for each individual. The subjects' progress during and after participation in the programme is carefully evaluated. Key successes achieved by the programme have been:

- 95% of families offered the programme participated
- 70% of those referred ceased offending
- 74% were diverted from exclusion from school
- 83% of clients and families stated an improved family life following involvement

It should be remembered that this programme deals with young people who are seriously at risk and who have multiple behavioural and other problems.

The best measure of success is that the project has progressed from being a small pilot subject of special funding to a County wide, mainstream activity that has significantly influenced the way that young people are dealt with in the County. In less than 5 years, the programme has gone from a client base of 20 young people to deal with around 250 clients per year.

The Hertfordshire Young Citizens Project

The Young Citizens project was developed as a key project within the work of the Safer Hertfordshire Partnership. The Safer Hertfordshire Partnership was a joint project between the Constabulary and County Council involving staff from a variety of agencies. The Partnership was set up to promote multi-agency activity to reduce crime and address local community safety issues. The unit was a precursor of the District Crime and Disorder Partnerships in place today. Youth offending and issues around disaffected young people had been identified as a key cross cutting issue within the Safer Hertfordshire remit.

The basis of the project is that disaffected young people become disaffected for a variety of reasons that relate to their background, social circumstances and upbringing. This disaffection commonly leads to offending and other anti-social behaviour. In order to attack the disaffection, the root causes have to be addressed. The root causes are addressed through a variety of agencies. These agencies need to work together cohesively so that the outcome for the young person is that all his or her needs for support are met. The outcome for the agencies and for society is that the damaging effects of disaffection — offending and anti-social behaviour — are reduced or eliminated.

Scanning Process

Whilst reviewing policy and procedure including information sharing relating to young offenders, it became clear that some client young people were being dealt with by a multitude of agencies. An instance was identified when a young person was dealt with by a different agency each day in the same week. None of the agencies knew of the other agencies' involvement. There was no linking of activity. The net result was considerable resource wastage in the system. More critically, the response to the young person's problems was unstructured, uncoordinated and confusing for the young person and the family. It was agreed to scan the client database of all relevant agencies to identify the young people subject of intervention most frequently. It was quickly identified that there was a small core group of young people who were known to most or all agencies. The impact of these young people on the resources of many agencies clearly identified this problem as a priority issue for multi-agency action.

Using research from the UK and elsewhere, a series of critical issue factors were identified that were likely to drive a young person towards offending or other anti-social and damaging life styles. Factors identified included:

Social deprivation.

- Parent or sibling offenders.
- Poor school attendance.
- Poor school attainment e.g. illiteracy, innumeracy.
- Behavioural difficulties.
- Substance abuse.
- Poor parenting e.g. inconsistent discipline.
- Mental and physical health issues e.g. self-harm, aggression and violence.

The project was therefore set up to deal with the range of issues identified and to improve the life chances of these seriously at risk young people. Positive outcomes that would be sought would be:

- Improvement in school attendance and performance.
- Reduction in health issues e.g. substance abuse; self harm.
- Improvement in family life through behaviour and parenting improvement.
- Elimination or reduction of offending behaviour.

Analysis Process

Arrangements were put in place to share information between key agencies on young people. This was a relatively difficult part of the process as, at the time, there were still local networking issues regarding trust and openness. These were resolved and mechanisms put in place to satisfy the concerns of involved parties. Information was made available from the following agencies:

- Police — arrest and crime data, nuisance youth data, drug offending data
- Youth Justice — repeat offender data
- Education — exclusion, behavioural difficulty and performance data
- Social Services — At risk register and family conflict data

The information thus obtained was then used to map the occurrence of disaffected young people. Using GIS mapping, two key hot spot areas, Watford and Stevenage, were identified. This was in fact a confirmation of professional judgement. However, the statistical background work was essential to the development of the project and its future success.

Using local data and the expertise of local professionals, a pilot group of 20 young people felt to be significantly at risk were targeted for the project: 10 in Watford and 10 in Stevenage. Whilst a current offending history is just one of the selection criteria now the project has developed, the initial pilot group of 20 young people were all known to police. Several of the candidates were significant repeat offenders with other multiple behavioural and psychological problems. They were therefore at serious risk as young people.

Analysis of the range and type of problems presented soon made it clear to the project team that there could not be a single response to the needs of the young people identified. It was agreed that each young person and their family would be subject of an individual assessment and action planning process. There would then be a range of optional support activities provided by the appropriate agencies. It was also recognised that there needed to be clear goals within the project for behaviour improvement. Systems were therefore established to monitor the progress of young people in the programme during their participation and at monthly intervals afterwards for six months.

Response

The Young Citizens' Project is intended to directly address the individual needs of seriously at risk young people. The response is tailored to the needs of each young person through a detailed assessment process. Following this assessment, each young person and their family agrees to and signs a behaviour improvement contract. This

includes key goals and targets for the young person and the family. Whilst it was an innovative approach, it was directly based on the scientific research into risk factors for young people. Addressing the risk factors would, it was believed, lead to the prevention of exclusion and reduction of the tendency to offend. Funding for the response was achieved by a successful bid for government support from the Department of Health supplemented by local match funding. The Youth Justice Service managed the project on behalf of the Safer Hertfordshire Partnership. At the time of initial inception, this concept of multi-agency co-operation and joint working was unusual and innovative. The project was initially evaluated externally by researchers from the Department of Health. The evaluation methods have been continued locally to monitor outcomes.

In the initial pilot project, two small teams of social workers and youth workers identified those children who were:

- Between 8 and 18 years old.
- Known to Social Services as in dysfunctional families or Looked After Children.
- Known to Education as out of school 50% or more of the time.
- Known to the Police as a nuisance or offender.

As previously stated two pilot groups were identified, each of 10 young people, in Stevenage and Watford boroughs. These young people and their parents were then offered a voluntary opportunity to meet with the project and other professionals engaged with them. The aim was to look for a way forward for the young person and family to reduce the risk of exclusion and offending.

Whilst the action plan would be individual for each young person, it was clear from analysis that there would need to be certain key elements to all programmes. These were:

- Co-ordination of all interventions to avoid duplication.
- Agreement of the young person and family to activities.
- Clear goals and targets for all parties.
- There would be an identified key worker to focus all interventions and activity.

As stated, an essential part of the response was to monitor the effect that the project had on the young person. Careful records were kept to demonstrate the outcomes achieved. This was essential to maintain funding but also, as it was an innovative approach, to give evidence to support replication in other areas.

Interventions can take many forms and may be drawn from a menu of available support options. Sometimes the interventions have been developed around particular individual needs. Typical interventions could include:

- Low school attendance/achievement
 - Educational welfare support
 - Literacy/numeracy work with the young person and family
 - School attendance and behaviour contract
 - Work placement in area of interest
- Family Dysfunction
 - Parenting advice

- Support from Benefits agency re finance and budgeting
 - Family support counselling
 - Provision of mentor support for the young person – positive role modelling
- Abuse of drugs/alcohol
 - Health education programme with young person and family
 - Intervention with family
 - Regular health screening

Initially managed as a stand-alone project within the Youth Justice service, the programme was evaluated as a success (see Assessment below) and is now fully integrated into the multi-agency Youth Offending Teams established in 1999. The project has grown from the initial 20 clients to a service that supports and works with around 250 young people each year throughout Hertfordshire.

It should be noted from the policing perspective that a benefit of the programme for the Constabulary was that, whilst our information identified clients, there was limited police resource involvement in delivery of action plans. Funding support was supplied through the Safer Hertfordshire programme. It was overall a low resource impact, high gain project for the Constabulary.

With the advent of the Crime and Disorder Act, and the subsequent management of the project by the Assistant Director, Youth Justice Service, the original objectives of the project have developed. It was always accepted that the projects had to remain fluid in delivering services to young disaffected people and the changes from 1999 are a natural progression of the original aims. The remit of the Young Citizens' Project Teams now cover:

- Chairing Final Warning Panels and offering packages to reduce re-offending rates
- Developing and running Parenting programmes
- Working with young offenders in a voluntary capacity beyond the end of statutory Orders
 - Working with the siblings of young offenders to divert them from crime.

The Young Citizens' Project takes about 35% of their work from Youth Offending Teams at present, though this may increase as Final Warnings expand and Parenting Orders become more popular. Other sources of referral are Children & Families Teams, Education, voluntary organisations (such as National Children's Homes and Community Service Volunteers, both of whom work in the county).

In addition to work targeted at identified socially excluded or at risk young people, the Young Citizens' Project also looks to assist in the delivery of District Council Community Safety plans. Most often this is following local identification of youth issues as a concern – often youth nuisance. The Young Citizens' Project has been engaged in offering alternatives to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and the establishment and management of summer schemes, targeted at disaffected young people, to help reduce crime in the summer holidays. These schemes have taken young people known to the teams and in some areas those referred by concerned agencies.

Assessment

When the idea was first put forward of integrating and co-ordinating the way agencies support and work with disaffected young people and their families, it was hoped that the most disaffected could be given improved life chances. The programme has grown from a pilot with 20 young people to a County wide mainstream service in less than 5 years. The reason for the rapid growth in the programme was that the detailed evaluation of the outcomes with each young person planned into the project soon showed excellent outcomes. The initial pilot project was monitored and evaluated by the Department of Health through its funding programme. As the project has expanded, the client outcome monitoring has remained a key aspect of the programme's work.

To illustrate the success of the Young Citizens Project (YCP), the following statistics highlight the impact the programme has had on disaffected young people in Hertfordshire.

The Client Group

The Young Citizens Project has dealt with young people made up as follows:

76% Male

24% Female

4% from ethnic minorities

2.5% from Traveller backgrounds

Impact on Offending

59% of young people referred to the Young Citizens Programme had offended.

Following intervention from the YCP, of young people who had offended at the point of referral, in 70% of cases, offending reduced or ceased.

Impact on Educational Attainment

85% of YCP clients had associated problems with education such as:

- excluded from school
- behavioural difficulties
- at risk of exclusion
- poor attenders

70% of the young people referred to the YCP were not attending school on a regular basis.

77% of young people referred to the YCP who had no school place offended

68% of poor attenders referred also offended

Provision for young people who are excluded from school is often part time and leaves them with lots of free time on their hands. There is no provision for chronic non-attenders. These are the young people whose parents are least able to control or influence them positively and who are most at risk of offending or have actually offended.

Most of the young people referred to the YCP were lacking in basic literacy and did not appear able to cope in their current school environment. Parents frequently spoke of difficulties that were longstanding and not addressed at an early stage in the child's school career. A significant number of the young people referred to YCP had special educational needs and behavioural difficulties. A significant number had a statement of educational needs.

Successful outcomes achieved in Education have been:

61% of students referred to the Young Citizens project have been returned to mainstream schooling with suitable support if required.

74% of students in danger of exclusion remained in school.

62% of students showed an improvement in school attendance.

Whilst these results have a direct positive impact in Education terms, there is also the 'knock-on' positive effect of improved employment chances and reduced opportunities to offend. By having positive educational impacts, the programme achieves long-term behaviour change and harm reduction.

Impact on Social Factors

65% of YCP clients at the point of referral were assessed as being 'beyond parental control'. Issues causing families to experience acute difficulties included: -

- breakdown in adult/child relationship
- loss of respect and authority
- lack of boundaries or response to boundaries imposed
- Reconstructed families i.e. young person/step parent conflict.

A pattern emerged of young people who had offended and also experiencing family difficulties. Of the 12% of young people referred to the YCP, who had no known school problems, over 75% had family difficulties, and were known to Social Services. Strategies aimed at preventing young people from offending clearly need also to include supporting vulnerable families and help them to resolve difficulties at an early stage.

Following YCP intervention, where the identified problem was that a young person was 'out of parental control', outcomes show:

- **60%** improvement in young person's behaviour
- **60%** improvement in parents and young people identified as having family difficulties

The positive outcomes here are measured by parent/carers perception indicated in casework and from evaluation forms completed by parents and carers. Although this may be subjective, if parents/carers perceive an improvement, they are likely to feel more able to cope with the young person.

Impact on Health Issues

Each YCP client young person is assessed for a personal health action plan as part of the programme. Emotional and/or psychological trauma can manifest itself in behaviours such as:

- deliberate self harm
- eating disorders
- * alcohol and drug misuse
- depression
- aggression and violence
- attempted suicide
- disruptive behaviour

Many of these factors can lead to the young person being at physical risk. Low self-esteem, violent tendencies and substance abuse can all lead to offending behaviour. Provision is such that help with mental and physical health problems can be difficult to access for some young people. The YCP ensures that the young person gets the necessary support and treatment. Patient confidentiality precluded close evaluation of health outcomes. However subjective assessment through the parent/carer and support worker reflected positive improvements in most young people with health issues.

Overall Conclusions

In terms of Problem Oriented Policing, the Young Citizens Project is an excellent example of multi-agency partnership working. The policing problem identified was youth disaffection and offending. The response to reduce the policing problem was identified as being almost wholly within the remit of agencies other than the police. It was recognised that the benefits of reducing the policing problem would benefit all agencies. The project therefore illustrates the key factors of partnership:

- shared objectives
- shared resources
- positive benefits for all partners.

The positive outcomes achieved are summarised in the graph reproduced below. It is important to remember when viewing these outcomes that the young people engaged by this programme are already at serious risk having come to the notice of at least two referring agencies.

- 95% of young people positively engaged with the programme or other agencies.
- **60%** of young people were reported as showing behaviour improvement.
- **60%** of client families showed improvement in family relationships and behaviour.
- **83%** of young people and their parents felt more able to cope following involvement.
- 70% of young people ceased offending following engagement with the programme.
- 62% of young people improved their school attendance record.
- 61% of young people without a school place were found one following programme participation.
- 74% of YCP clients at risk of exclusion were retained within school.

The desired outcomes from the early days have been achieved. Hertfordshire now has an established multi agency approach to working with disaffected youth. This programme now forms part of the comprehensive Preventative Strategy for children and young people. The work of the original Young Citizens Programme has influenced the major organisational change that is happening within Hertfordshire County Council with the merger of Social Services Children's Services and the Education Department into the new Children, Schools and Families Service. The project and its evaluation by the Department of Health also informed the development of the multi-agency Youth Offending Teams now established throughout England and Wales.

%sumess fates et identified Problems



-
- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ nbt eciu:lad | pram |
| OBdfratla oe | l:l Crendre ceased |
| ■ InprooretinyargpesalsLeFeuioir | lll drpro Erretinfardyskeiion |
| ■ <u>Yargpersonaimingw7h1CPOdFer agmdes</u> | ll Varypaww Ipared nveA:leloo adsto "vnciwrtet |

The Home Office Tilley Award 2001

Project Title: The Hertfordshire Young Citizens Project

Entry Category: Crime and Disorder Reduction

Name of Force: Hertfordshire Constabulary

Name of Endorsing Chief Officer: Paul Acres QPM, Chief Constable

Contact person: Chief Inspector Tim Bonnett, Head of Community Safety

Address: Hertfordshire Constabulary
Stanborough Road
Welwyn Garden City
Herts AL8 6XF

Telephone: 01707 354612

Fax: 01707 354609

Email address: tim.bonnett@herts.police.uk