

EUCPN Good Practice Description 2003

United Kingdom Project example – Reducing re-offending amongst young Ethnic Minority offenders

Project title: Youth offending: 'CATALYST' Mentoring Programme

Project description – the 5Is

1. Intelligence

The following section gives an overview of the crime context and demographic background in which the young ethnic minority offender mentoring intervention was implemented.

General context

The mentoring project described in this outline was located in the city of Leicester, in the East Midlands. According to the 1991 Census the youth population (10-17 year olds) was about 27000. The general population of Leicester in 2001 was about 280000. According to the 2001 Census around 36% of the general population were from an ethnic minority background – with the greater part being comprised of South Asians (30%). Both Black ethnic minority groups and Mixed/other in Leicester account for 3 per cent of the general population each. The unemployment rate taken from the Census 2001 rates Leicester (6.3%) as higher than the national average for England (4.8%). Just under half of the wards in Leicester (13 out of 28) were ranked within the top 10% of England's most deprived wards.

The crime problem that the project aimed to tackle

The project aimed to target general crime committed by young ethnic minority offenders. In this location this tended to involve robbery.

Significant consequences of the crime problem

Information on the consequences of the crime problem was not available.

Evidence of crime problem – sources of information and analysis

- Collection of police recorded crime data from April 2000 to March 2003 indicated that 29 per cent of offences (525 out of 1803 offences) could be attributed to ethnic minority offenders from various backgrounds – mainly Asian/Asian British with a smaller number of Black British/Black Afro-Caribbeans. Although these groups were *under-offending* in comparison with their representation in the young population this was a problem which was judged worth tackling.
- 742 young people resident in Leicester received sentences; 17% of these were from ethnic minority backgrounds, with 10% from Black/mixed ethnic minority backgrounds.
- A quarter of those young offenders placed on community supervision orders (18 / 74) were of ethnic minority background.
- It was noted that over half (63%) of the recorded robbery offences committed by young offenders in general were attributed to young people from ethnic minorities. By contrast, just over a third of violent offences were committed by young ethnic minority offenders. Of 87 Drug testing orders placed on offenders, just under half (40) were placed on those from ethnic minorities.

Immediate causes and risk factors¹

Absence/inadequacy of crime preventers and promoters

Parents as crime preventers

- One-parent families where the absence of a role model of a particular gender has implications for the young person.
- Possible absence of parental support, in some cases as a source of possible guidance to encourage and empower potential young ethnic minority offenders to choose a legitimate alternative path, and in particular to commit themselves to employment and education.
- Absence of a positive role model.

Peer group offenders as crime promoters

- Peer group pressure leading a young person into crime.

Lack of Resources to avoid offending

- Lack of education caused in turn by:
 - absence of parental encouragement was not a factor here since most parents of the Catalyst project participants were *very* supportive of their youngsters.
 - peer pressure to skip school.
- A lack of awareness of employment, training and educational opportunities and agencies/ establishments that were available to the young people.
- Low self esteem – which makes them susceptible to peer pressure to offend.
- Absence of social skills to resist peer pressure to offend.

Readiness to offend

- Although lack of financial resources and increased perception of need for commercial goods is said by some to lead to a readiness to offend, in the case of the Catalyst project it seemed more to result from lack of *support structures* for the young person.

Immediate decision making

- Peer pressure.
- Absence of thinking about consequences for victim.
- Absence of guilt in the case of some of the Catalyst participants but not all. Some first time offenders in particular showed remorse for their offence and empathy towards the victim.
- Perception that the risk of being caught was minimal, particularly if a young person was part of a gang or group.
- In the case of the Catalyst project, certain of the young offenders seemed to disregard risk itself. Certain youngsters did not know why they committed the offences, others were in an intense emotional state when they committed the offence.

¹ using the Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity – www.crimereduction.gov.uk/learningzone/cco.htm

2. Intervention

Existing intervention measures

It was noted prior to the project that support existed for *adult* Black/minority ethnic offenders, but less for their *young* counterparts. However, it should be recognised that local Youth Offending Teams run intervention schemes for *all* young offenders including those from an ethnic minority background.

The intervention method – mentoring

The most general principle underlying mentoring as a developmental/ intervention tool is to enable the offenders to resolve/ remove criminogenic influences from their lives, whilst encouraging a legitimate lifestyle. In terms of the practical realisation of this principle, this was carried out through the interaction between the offender and two mentors on the basis of regular meetings.

The following breakdown indicates the specific mechanisms conjectured to underlie the mentoring intervention (although it proved difficult to identify these with precision). They are exclusively offender-oriented rather than aimed at changing the immediate crime situation.

Intervention principle 1 – Reducing criminality

- Increasing offenders' *capacity to empathise with victim* regarding the impact the crime has on others. Practically this involved mentors and mentees engaging in dialogue around the latters' offending behaviour, and mentees (and sometimes mentors) taking part in *victim empathy awareness training* through the Youth Offending Team.
- Provision of a suitable *honest role model*, to act as an exemplar of a legitimate lifestyle.
- Trying to achieve a long-lasting *increase in self-esteem*, which specifically *removes motivation* to follow criminal peers.

Intervention principle 2 –Supplying resources to avoid crime

- Teaching skills of *resisting the temptation* to offend and especially *peer pressure*.
- Offering *guidance on education and careers and leisure* activities.
- Mentors helping mentees to get involved in *training programmes* within the latters' areas of interest.

Intervention principle 3 –Reducing readiness to offend

- Attempt to provide *counselling* to reduce *influences in their current life circumstances* motivating them to offend (i.e. discussion of factors such as family relationships and problems with education, truancy and lack of appropriate training) to *make them aware* of these influences and therefore better able to *control* them.
- Current life circumstances may affect the readiness to offend – factors which amongst other things, may divert the offender from crime are an adequate level of *money* (through legitimate employment/benefits), access to *affordable leisure activities*, *stable social environment* (permanent home address, positive support from relatives and friends, etc).

Intervention principle 4 - Excluding offenders from crime situations

- Promotion of *diversionary activities* for the offenders – to remove the opportunity for offending where the mentors act as a positive distraction for the mentee, which keeps

them (at least for short periods of time) *away from their peers*. In terms of *practical details* this involved passing on information to the mentees of activities, events and schemes in the community from which they might benefit. Specific examples of activities identified included visiting the world's first black astronaut at the UK National Space Centre; Endeavour Training, a voluntary body which promotes personal development through outdoor activities; life skills training at the YMCA; and tenpin bowling.

Offenders' countermoves and reactions

There was no indication from the report that offenders were reacting negatively to the project – the principle of mentoring is to offer positive support even though the offender may be going through a difficult time and consequently re-offending. Likewise, since this interaction was intended to reduce motivation, displacement was also unlikely.

3. Implementation

The following section outlines how the youth mentoring project was translated from the theoretical principles outlined above into practical reality on the ground.

Targeting of the implementation

Offender (Tertiary)

- Action was initially targeted at offenders already within the criminal justice system.
- Action was targeted on individual offenders from ethnic minority backgrounds aged 10-17.
- The mentoring project was not targeted at prolific offenders; these were referred on to the youth offending team's intensive supervision and surveillance programme.
- The project was not specifically tailored for first time offenders although in practice these come to make up a significant proportion.

Offender (Secondary)

- The project is also currently targeting young people from ethnic minority backgrounds *at risk* of offending. These are sought by approaching among other agencies, pupil referral units and school exclusion units.
- Asylum seekers were not actively targeted by the project. Although one was referred to the project, this person opted out before the programme started.

Inputs into the project

- The *funding* for the project came from the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB – see www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk), through the Leicester City Youth Offending Team (YOT). (See www.northyorks.gov.uk/websites/yot/content/yots.htm for links to various YOTS sites.)
- 75 *volunteer mentors* – 15 *professional* mentors from local businesses and 60 *student/peer* co-mentors. The basic requirements for the mentors were that they are committed, good time-keepers, patient, understanding, tenacious (they are dealing with a client group that can be challenging) and a genuine willingness to take part in this scheme. They also require good communication and interpersonal skills, and also need to be able to commit up to 2-3 hours twice a month to the scheme.

The **business mentors** recruited come from a range of backgrounds including:

- Administration
- Customer services/sales/marketing
- Managerial
- Self employed
- Social/youth work
- Teaching
- Volunteering

Student/peer mentor subject areas include:

- Business studies/ Management
- Criminology/criminal law
- Diplomacy
- English
- Law
- Marketing
- Medicine
- Psychology/ Sociology/social work
- Youth & Community Development

Converting plans into action on the ground

- The Leicester Racial Equality Council (LREC) www.lrec.org.uk/Home.htm in co-operation with the Leicestershire Learning & Skills Council (previously the Leicestershire Training & Enterprise Council) completed a scoping study that indicated that there were potential volunteers who would offer their services as mentors.
- Having been referred to the project the aim was to set up a '*catalytic cell*' of three, involving a professional mentor, a student/peer mentor and the mentee.
- Meetings between the student/peer mentor and mentee were more frequent than the professional mentor/mentee due to comparative numbers and time resources. This was a way of extending the scarce resources of the professional mentor.
- Mentors were placed on a standard *induction and training programme* to explain amongst other things the role of the mentor, aims of project, youth offending team operation, skills in objective action planning and target setting for mentees.
- Mentees were able to choose mentors with whom they felt most comfortable. It was hoped that that this would improve completion rate, increase enthusiasm to participate, and aid social development amongst other things. This was implemented at the start of the programme. Matching was deliberately not done on the basis of ethnicity.

Outputs achieved

- The project envisaged a throughput of 60 young offenders over the life-span of the project (three years). 45 Clients had so far been referred to the project at July 2003 of whom 26 offenders came onto the programme.
- The 19 offenders who did not start the programme (45 referred minus the 26 who came onto the programme) were either withdrawn by Youth Offending Team case managers due to non-compliance with current order; or personally chose not to participate in the programme.

Monitoring, quality assuring and adjustments made to the implementation

- The ongoing process with mentoring was measured through verbal and written feedback from the mentors plus keeping a close watch on drop out rate and any information on re-offending whilst on the project.

Supporting environment

- Additional support/resources for the mentors and mentees came from the Youth Offending Team Case Managers, and other support workers such as Connexions. Connexions offered helpful advice on career and training options.

- The Youth Offending Team also acted as a valuable point of reference for the mentors, offering the opportunity to: visit to see how the Team worked, take part in support/training schemes such as Victim Empathy workshops.

4. Involvement

The following section describes different mechanisms involved in the interaction between different related or interested groups that were necessary for moving the project forward. In the case of this project, involvement was primarily between the LREC, the youth offending teams, the mentors (and associated education/business organisations) and the offenders. A high level of interaction between groups was important in relation to this project, as it involved amongst other things recruiting a group of volunteers with specific skills/backgrounds, locating relevant offenders for the programme and communicating about the progress of the project.

Mobilisation

Mentors

Locating and alerting the mentors to the project

A mixture of use of local media as a source of advertising the mentoring project, coupled with networking between the LREC and relevant businesses/ education services, was applied to locate and alert potential mentors about the project. The media sources were the Leicester Mercury (the local newspaper), BBC Radio Leicester and the local television station MATV. Catalyst was also advertised at Voluntary Action Leicester (the body that co-ordinates volunteering across the city).

Motivating the mentors

To some extent motivation was assured since these were volunteers who came forward. Additionally motivation of the mentors was carried out by highlighting to them the importance of their own personal experience and knowledge of the employment and education system, which were felt to be essential to promote a legitimate alternative to crime.

Empowering and directing the mentors

Mentors were placed on a standard *induction and training programme* to explain amongst other things the role of the mentor, aims of project, youth offending team operation, skills in objective action planning and target setting for mentees.

Offenders

Referral of the offenders placed on the project

The mentees were initially referred to the project through Case Managers from the Leicester City Youth Offending Team (a public sector service dealing specifically with youth offenders).

Motivating the offenders to be committed to the project

Motivation was judged to be achieved through:

- Allowing the offender to choose his/her own mentors, which allowed them to actively participate in the project.
- Running activity-based sessions, where mentees learned something new was thought to be effective.

- The training phase was thought to work well where it involved an activity-based meeting between all three components (professional mentor, peer mentor and mentee) including an element of movement and familiarisation with one another.
- Sitting down and talking at every meeting was not thought to work well, as certain mentees were said to find this tedious and consequently mentors had to work harder to maintain the attention of the mentees.

Partnership

Partnership within this project centred on the support structure running between the YOT, the LREC and the mentors (and associated organisational bodies). For example in this study the programme was able to gain the support of two local sector employers – HSBC and McDonalds for recruiting mentors.

The project was steered by a multi-agency management group made up of agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council, Connexions, educational establishments, the Leicester City Council, the Leicestershire Education Business Company, Young Offender institutions and community groups

The project has also established firm *regional partnerships* with other Youth Justice Board-funded projects in Derby and Wellingborough with the aim of *working together and sharing good practice*.

The Leicester Racial Equality Council is also involved in the 'SHERPA' programme, which is funded through the European Social Funds SOCRATES – Grundtvig 1 programme. 'SHERPA' is developing good practice in the integration of individuals deemed to be at risk or socially excluded into main stream education, employment or vocational training. The partners in the project are from The Netherlands, Finland, Spain and Latvia. A major contribution made by the LREC is providing training and consultancy in establishing mentoring programmes for the Latvian and Spanish partners. A mentoring programme for newly arrived refugees has been established with Leicester College.

The partnership working has been very successful with no major problems.

Policy implications

This project fits in with the movement towards community-based crime solutions as currently favoured by the Home Office and more widely within the public services.

5. Impact

The main source of impact analysis was through analysis of recidivism within the young ethnic minority offender population involved in the project conducted 'in house'. The results at present are very provisional, but do indicate possible success of the intervention. A high quality independent evaluation is due to report on the wider context/ impact of the project next year.

Preliminary impact evaluation

Preliminary results indicate that:

- At July 2003, 45 clients had been referred to the project since Nov 2001.
- 26 clients had been placed on the project – the remainder were withdrawn due to non-compliance with YOT orders, or because the mentees decided against joining the

project of their own volition. It should be noted, however, that these clients may have been placed on alternative YOT intervention schemes.

- Of the 26, the retention rate was 77% ie 20 clients were active before the summer period 2003; however following the summer this has decreased to 38% (10 clients).
- This drop in the retention rate during the summer was said to be due to a number of factors:
 - Mentees pursuing other interests.
 - The project lost touch/contact with some mentees.
 - Mentors/mentees had other commitments and couldn't attend as many meetings.
- Of the 10 remaining, one has re-offended. The success rate is high among those who have remained on the project; however, one of the areas to be looked into in the 2004 evaluation will be how successful those who were *not* mentored have been.
- The characteristics of those who remained on the programme were:
 - Those who were slightly younger and hence more likely to be first time offenders.
 - Those who connected with the ethos of the project.

The examination of a control group which would be used to compare young ethnic minority offenders who went on the programme and those who did not, is ongoing and the findings of this will be available in 2004.

Process lessons

- Preliminary findings suggested that successful mentors:
 - were reliable (ie they turned up to meetings on time, were pro-active about arranging meetings, submitted feedback sheets unprompted, and gave verbal feedback).
 - were visibly dedicated to their client.
 - were patient with the client.
 - were innovative through bringing different elements into the relationship (example of action planning session held after bowling with mentee).
 - accompanied the clients to meetings/interviews.
- Not all mentors stayed for the whole length of the project. Reasons for not remaining for the whole run of the programme were as follows:
 - Peer mentors dropped out most frequently due to educational issues (starting University and hence moving away; unable to attend due to exam commitments).
 - Professional mentors left due to other non-specified commitments.

The absence of a mentor in one participant's case led to further re-offending. The project aimed to minimise the effect on lack of mentor by assigning them new mentors as soon as possible.

Authorship

This project description was produced by Andrew Kent and Paul Ekblom, Home Office, with the substantial assistance of Carmen Gilfillan, Project Co-ordinator, Catalyst Mentoring Programme, Leicester Racial Equality Council.