

Investing in Youth



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Justice Reinvestment Response to Youth

Justice Reinvestment effectively proposes that ‘prevention is better than cure’. With this stance, it aims to direct its energies, resources and finances to local communities and seeks to address the underlying causes of crime in local communities and contextualise the current and projected future costs associated with juvenile detention.¹ Fundamentally, costly investment in juvenile justice centres has not been effective in reducing juvenile re-offending and demands a new approach: increased numbers of children and young people held in Juvenile Justice centres is producing poor outcomes at large expense.

The Noetic Report recommends the NSW Government adopt a Justice Reinvestment Strategy that would involve diverting funding that would otherwise be spent on building additional juvenile justice centres to evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs, as well as services for local communities.

***Recommendation 52:** NSW Government adopt a Justice Reinvestment policy based on diverting funds that would otherwise be spent on additional juvenile justice centres, to preventative and early intervention programs that address the underlying causes of crimes in communities.*

***Recommendation 75:** The NSW Government engage with Indigenous communities to develop long-term strategies to address the underlying causes of juvenile offending. Preventative and early intervention strategies are to be funded in local communities based on the Justice Reinvestment approach outlined in Recommendation 52.*

Forms of Justice Reinvestment

Effective Practice in Juvenile Justice (Noetic Report, Enclosure 1) analyses a number of effective programs which are shown to reduce re-offending by up to 22%. Additionally, evidence shows that the most effective programs in terms of reduced offending and more positive life outcomes are those administered within the community, as opposed to within restrictive juvenile justice systems. They are also significantly cheaper than juvenile detention.

Examples of effective programs include Juvenile drug courts, Restorative justice for low-risk offenders, Aggression Replacement Training, Multi-systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care.²

International Experiences

Unresolved Problems and Suggestions

On a balanced consideration of experience in the UK and the United States, the Noetic Report concludes

¹ Point 533, *A Strategic Review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System* (Noetic Report).

² Point 559, *A Strategic Review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System* (Noetic Report)

that investment in early intervention, prevention and community based programs and services is the most cost-effective means to reduce offending (and re-offending) and ultimately deliver better social outcomes.³

A major publication produced in the UK (*Backing the Future*) makes a compelling case for significant investment in prevention services for children and young people. It argues that targeted interventions for the most vulnerable children and young people will deliver wide benefits to society, reduce the need to deal with the impact of problems later, and break the intergenerational cycle of deprivation.⁴ In terms of more wide reaching social problems such as crime, mental illness, family dysfunction and breakdown, drug abuse and obesity, the costs of failing to act are immense and estimated to be almost £4 trillion over a 20 year period in the UK.

In the United States, Justice Reinvestment has been adopted by several states including Arizona, Connecticut, Kansas, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont and Wisconsin. The avoidance of future prison construction in Washington State through evidence based options for adult corrections programs, juvenile corrections programs, and prevention has saved approximately \$2 billion and reduced crime rates.

In 2006, state policymakers in Kansas requested intensive technical assistance from the Council of State Governments Justice Center. In response, the Justice Center provided state officials with an analysis of the prison population that identified the factors driving the projected 22 percent increase in the prison population:

- In 2006, probation and parole revocations accounted for 65 percent of prison admissions, consuming 27 percent of prison capacity at a cost to taxpayers of \$53 million annually.⁵
- That same year, 90 percent of revocations were for conditions violations, with alcohol or drug use accounting for 32 percent of parole revocations. Additionally, 58 percent of people revoked on probation supervision demonstrated a need for substance abuse or mental health treatment.⁶
- Most people were released from prison without participating in programs that could reduce their risk of reoffending. Half of people in need of substance abuse treatment and 72 percent of people needing vocational education did not participate in relevant risk reduction programs prior to their release from prison.⁷ Such participation would encourage rehabilitation by addressing various issues that are central to re-offending.

³ Point 537, *A Strategic Review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System (Noetic Report)*.

⁴ Point 538, *A Strategic Review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System (Noetic Report)*.

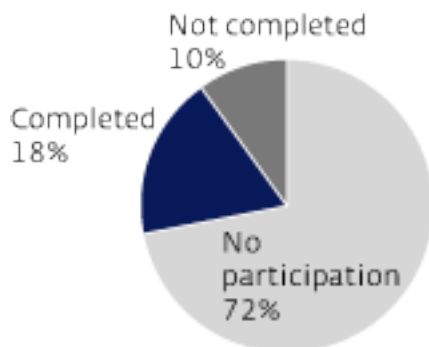
⁵ Dr. Tony Fabelo, "Tough and Smart: Opportunities for Kansas Policymakers to Reduce Crime and Spending," Presentation, December 12, 2006.

⁶ Dr. Fred Osher, "Kansas' Opportunity to Improve Public Safety Through Effective Treatment," Presentation, February 5, 2007.

⁷ Ibid; Department of Corrections Analysis, October 2006. Ibid; Department of Corrections Analysis, October 2006.

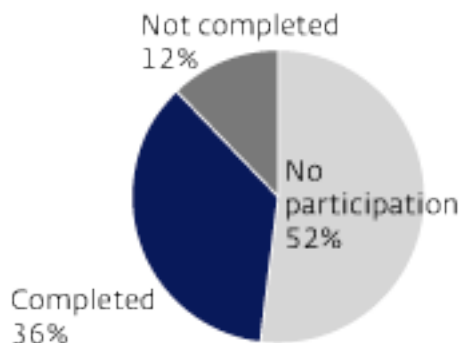
Offenders in Need of Vocational Education:

Program participation & completion prior to release



Offenders in Need of Substance Abuse Treatment:

Program participation & completion prior to release



Effective Strategies

Kansas:

- Under the name of the *New Communities Initiative*, Kansas invested in the community by bringing together State, County and community leaders to improve public safety, education, job-creating-essentially embarking on initiatives to increase public liability and community life.⁸
- In 2006, rather than investing over \$500 million over a ten year period to the building of a new prison, Kansas opted to undertake a Justice Reinvestment strategy which will see them save over \$80 million. Money would thus be reinvested in the community through programs such as substance abuse and vocational programs, focusing on children and youth, adult education and economic vitality etc effectively ensuring safer and more secure communities.
- Kansas has experienced a 7.5% reduction in their prison population, and the re-offending rate for people on parole has dropped by 35% since adopting Justice Reinvestment.

Oregon:

- In 1997 legislation was passed which allowed counties to supervise juveniles in the community who would otherwise have been sent to state prisons. In return, the local counties were given the money that would have been spent on locking the young people up in state institutions. These funds were then reallocated to neighbourhood improvement projects and quality community based supervision.
- Strong community service programs were put in place, with kids working on neighbourhood regeneration programs in their own communities as well as skill enhancing activities like building furniture for disadvantaged families and even building houses in partnership with Habitat for Humanity.
- Within one year Oregon has reduced youth incarceration by 72%, which is the biggest ever decrease in juvenile detention according to the National Centre for Juvenile Justice.

Justice Reinvestment in Australia

Indigenous Children and Young People

⁸ Australian Institute of Criminology,
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/speeches/social_justice/2009/20090831_AIC.html

With extremely high levels of Indigenous over-representation existing within Australian prisons, the financial and social toll placed upon the wider community suggests that Australia could greatly benefit from justice reinvestment. During 2008, there were 8,411 Indigenous people enrolled in tertiary education programs, while a staggeringly similar 6,605 were in prison. Although such rates would be considered unacceptable for non-Indigenous populations, they represent a continued struggle for Indigenous communities. Additionally, despite comprising only 2% of Australia's total population, 50% of the juvenile detention population consists of Indigenous individuals. As with the United States, increases in imprisonment expenditure have evidently failed to result in improved community outcomes. With the NSW expenditure for juvenile detention in 2007-08 alone standing at \$103.3 million, it is clear that huge savings could be made if Indigenous imprisonment was reduced.⁹ In combining the United Kingdom's previously established concepts of localism and penal moderation with strategies engaging Indigenous communities in both partnerships and general community development, it is clear that justice reinvestment may provide a successful means of reducing Indigenous over-representation.

Justice reinvestment would offer innumerable benefits to not only Indigenous offenders and their communities, but also to Australia as a whole. Such benefits include¹⁰:

- Community building through crime prevention, as opposed to merely building more prisons
- Ensuring the multi-level structural causes of crime are the primary target of intervention
- Providing funding for culturally-relevant programs (e.g. mentoring and residential programs)
- Identifying and addressing the policy and legal factors involved in Indigenous imprisonment
- Assisting victims of crime
- Ensuring compatibility with existing Indigenous community justice mechanisms

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, has also advocated the use of Justice Reinvestment as a policy framework for effecting a more successful Indigenous Juvenile Justice system.¹¹ Indigenous children and young people currently represent over 50% of the custody population. But any approach to addressing or understanding the underlying causes of Indigenous Juvenile crime and overrepresentation in the Juvenile Justice system must take into account the deficiencies across all services and programs available at the Commonwealth and State level, including those relating to health, housing and accommodation. The Noetic Report accordingly calls for a comprehensive stock take of services and programs as an initial step to a targeted strategy of Justice Reinvestment within Indigenous communities.¹²

On the basis of high levels of Indigenous detention and detention across all children and young people, the Report has identified Mt Druitt, Dubbo, Kempsey, Bourke and Wagga Wagga as communities that would especially benefit from a shift in attitude and strategy. At the same time, existing programs such as the Intensive Support Program (currently being piloted in Western Sydney and Newcastle) should be expanded as part of a more comprehensive approach to communities' needs across NSW.

It is expected that as a bold and challenging reform, the benefits of Justice Reinvestment significantly outweigh any potential risks and provides the greatest return on investment through the reduction of crime, reduction of re-offending and overall cost savings for the Government. Whilst providing long

⁹ Social Justice Report, *Chapter 2*,
www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/sj_report/sjreport09/pdf/sjr_ch2.pdf

¹⁰ Social Justice Report, *Chapter 2*,
www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/sj_report/sjreport09/pdf/sjr_ch2.pdf

¹¹ p. 69 *Enclosure 1 – Review of Effective Practice in Juvenile Justice*.

¹² Point 491, *A Strategic Review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System (Noetic Report)*.

term benefits to local communities, this Strategy seeks to address Indigenous overrepresentation in the Juvenile Justice system.

PROPOSALS FOR JUSTICE REINVESTMENT IN NSW

Peer Mentoring for Youth Issues

Peer mentoring could play a critical part of the processes of rehabilitation/ reintegration of juvenile justice detainees. Mentoring is about ‘building a relationship of mutual trust, friendship and support within which help, advice and assistance can be offered as part of the process of re-building a life after being labeled a criminal and where many barriers actively prevent return to normal life’¹³. Peer mentoring acts as a rehabilitative process for juvenile justice detainees, effectively assisting them with their unmet needs. Essentially it provides skills and objectives that will enable them to survive on the inside and outside. These needs include, but are not limited to: shelter, food, clothing, health care, drug counseling, a home, education, and job search assistance.

Peer mentoring provides a cultural experience for the juvenile justice detainees as the peer mentor is able to communicate on the same level and thus creates a positive atmosphere. The selection of mentor involves a ‘person trusted by the offender, in a one to one relationship on a daily basis, to give support and guidance’¹⁴. Ideally the mentor should have a background or personal experience as clients of the criminal justice system. Prisoners and ex-prisoners are some of the best and most qualified people to offer support to other individuals caught up in the justice system. Adequate training would be provided to mentors, with and NSW TAFE currently running additional mentoring courses in correctional centers.

Juvenile Justice Effective Practice Review within the Noetic Report (Enclosure I) makes several evidence-based observations on the benefits of peer mentoring to improving Juvenile Justice outcomes. By creating relationships between ‘at risk’ children and young people, and their ‘pro-social’ peers, such programs ‘aim to enhance the social-emotional development of youth by providing role models as well as improve the cognitive development of youth through dialogue and listening. Often mentors also act as advocates for youth concerns’¹⁵. Furthermore, the Noetic Report links the notion of peer mentoring with recommendation 29 illustrating the need ‘to involve children and young people in Government decision making with Best Practice Principles for Youth Participation’. Additionally, recommendation 30 supplements this idea by stating that the NSW government needs to reinforce and build a relationship working with ‘children and YPs with complex needs, including those that are or have been involved with juvenile justice system’¹⁶

In 2006, the Australian Institute of Criminology noted that, whilst little evidence of the long-term impact of mentoring programs existed, some positive short-term outcomes were identifiable: these included reductions in offending behavior, completion of juvenile justice orders, reductions in substance misuse, and increased participation in education, training and employment.

¹³ Justice Action Mentoring Group Project, Fourth Edition (May 2008) p4

¹⁴ Justice Action Mentoring Group Project, Fourth Edition (May 2008) p8

¹⁵ Noetic Solutions, *A Strategic Review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System: Report for the Minister of Juvenile Justice* (April 2010) P35

¹⁶ Noetic Solutions, *A Strategic Review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System: Report for the Minister of Juvenile Justice* (April 2010) p12-13

Significant benefits to mentor programs have been identified through improvements in young people's academic performance, risk behavior and psychosocial development.

Peer Influence

Uberto Gatti, Richard E. Tremblay and Frank Vitaro have investigated the possible negative effect of contact with the justice system on young people, and the influence that peers have on young people's risk-taking behavior:

It is well known that the peer group plays a fundamental role in orienting adolescent behavior. Deviant behavior is no exception, and all investigations have demonstrated that juvenile delinquency is above all a group phenomenon. Any intervention that places youths within a deviant group therefore risks exacerbating and consolidating their antisocial behavior¹⁷.

The UN World Youth Report in 2003 made the following comments in respect to the socialization effects of peer groups upon juvenile delinquency:

Youth policies seldom reflect an understanding of the role of the peer group as an institution of socialization. Membership in a delinquent gang, like membership in any other natural grouping, can be part of the process of becoming an adult. Through such primary associations, an individual acquires a sense of safety and security, develops knowledge of social interaction, and can demonstrate such qualities as loyalty or leadership. In "adult" society, factors such as social status, private welfare, race and ethnicity are of great value; however, all members of adolescent groups are essentially in an equal position and have similar opportunities for advancement in the hierarchical structure. In these groups well-being depends wholly on personal qualities such as strength, will and discipline. Quite often delinquent groups can counterbalance or compensate for the imperfections of family and school. A number of studies have shown that juvenile gang members consider their group a family. For adolescents constantly facing violence, belonging to a gang can provide protection within the neighborhood. In some areas those who are not involved in gangs continually face the threat of assault, oppression, harassment or extortion on the street or at school.¹⁸

NSW Mentoring for Young Offenders Pilot Program

The NSW Young Offenders Act 1997 introduced new methods for diverting young offenders from the court system, predominantly through formal warnings, Police Cautions and Youth Justice Conferences. To explore the scope for complementing these new initiatives with a method for supporting young offenders, the NSW Government funded the Mentoring for Young Offenders pilot program in April 1999.

The issues over payment significantly affected peer mentoring, being both immediately obvious and undermining the objectives of peer mentoring. Mentors are fundamental to the program. However as unpaid volunteers, they could only devote limited time to show their expression of good will. Effectively this caused other problems such as young offenders being unable to easily identify with their peer mentors. The idea of mentors acting as a role model was also not included. The JA mentoring program recognizes the importance of appropriate and adequate support for mentors, as it is vital to the success of crime prevention programs.

¹⁷ Gatti, V., Tremblay, R., Vitaro, U. (2009 12 February) ' *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* ' Volume 50, Issue 8, P 991-998

¹⁸ United Nations, 'Juvenile Delinquency' in World Youth Report (2003) Chapter 7, 196-197.

The program was developed and managed as a partnership between five NSW government agencies: the Crime Prevention Division (CPD) of the Attorney General's Department, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), NSW Police, the Department of Community Services (DOCS) and the Office of Children and Young People in the Cabinet Office. Representatives of these agencies, as well as a representative from a youth sector non-government organisation, formed the project's Steering Committee.

The Mentoring for Young Offenders pilot program operated for the period from April 1999 to March 2002. Mentoring was offered to young offenders referred through Police Cautions or Youth Justice Conferences (YJC) and piloted at two sites: Parramatta and Coffs Harbor/ Clarence on the NSW north coast.

The YWCA of Sydney won the tender to establish the two projects, using its Big Sister Big Brother (BSBB) model of one to one mentoring. The model involves adult volunteers, who are carefully screened, being matched with a young person with the goal of developing a friendship. The matches are monitored by skilled program staffs, who conduct regular reviews. The model also included regular group outings of the young people and their mentors in addition to a new component; a family support worker who would assist the families of young people involved in the program.

The ARDT Review of the program draws the following conclusions:

The pilot demonstrated that mentoring, using the adapted BSBB model, can be an effective intervention for suitable young offenders by reducing their offending behavior and producing positive benefits for the young people and their families.

However, the scope of mentoring as an intervention with young offenders is limited. Firstly, it is likely to be appropriate for only a minority of those who are cautioned or conferenced. The two pilots found less than 30% and 14% respectively of the potential target group in each location were referred to them as suitable for mentoring and interested in participating. This suggests that mentoring should be only one element in any strategy targeting young offenders.

Secondly, the number of mentor matches (27) was low, reflecting significant difficulties for both projects in recruiting enough volunteers (with a further 16 young people waiting to be matched as at March 2002).

While it is not clear whether the same difficulties would be experienced in other locations, these findings question the model's scope and sustainability. To be sustainable, a mentoring program may need to reach a certain minimum size (e.g. 20-30 current volunteers), or be delivered in conjunction with other youth and family support programs.¹⁹

Overall, mentoring was found to achieve positive outcomes for young offenders (at least in the short term, as long term outcomes are unknown). All the young people in performing matches of six months or more reported reduced offending, increased community involvement, improved self-esteem and communication skills and more motivation.

These outcomes were consistent across reports by the projects, by young people themselves, by their families and by police. Families in particular noted changes in the young person's attitudes and behavior and how much their family relationships had improved as a result. Parents also found that the time the young person spent with the mentor gave them more time to spend with their other children. The Youth

¹⁹ Delaney, M & Milne, C (2002) 'Mentoring for Young Offenders- Results from an Evaluation of a Pilot Program' Australian Institute of Criminology and the Crime Prevention Branch, P 5-12

Liaison Officer (YLO) in Coffs Harbour noted that local police have generally taken their attention off the young people involved in performing matches due to reduced offending.

These positive outcomes highlight the potential of mentoring as a successful strategy for crime prevention and diversion. They were achieved by young people already some way down the offending pathway and at risk of further offending, with approximately one third being repeat offenders. Most were experiencing significant conflict at home and at school, some had left school early, and many were socially isolated, had poor communication skills, anger management problems and low self esteem.

An unintended but positive outcome reported by some YLOs involved with the program has been their improved profile in the community.

PROPOSAL

1. That an independent youth NGO be formed which is directly responsive to youth in the institutions, and that a guaranteed portion of the youth budget be provided.
2. That this NGO should also be supported in employing and training young people who have been through the criminal justice processes as mentors to other youth at risk. That the project be maintained for three years and be reassessed.

PEER SUPPORT: ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

“Peer Mentoring - Juvenile Justice”

(A) Mentoring and crime prevention : what is good practice?

AICrime reduction matters no. 43 (ISSN 1448-1383)

Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, March 2006

In a crime prevention context, mentoring is **often directed towards young people already involved in the criminal justice system or 'at-risk' of engaging in criminal activity**. Such programs are targeted **secondary prevention** as opposed to universal prevention within either multi-component or stand-alone programs.

Little evidence of the long-term impact of mentoring programs exists as there are so few evaluations. However, some positive short-term outcomes have been identified, including reductions in offending behaviour, completion of juvenile justice orders, reductions in substance misuse, and increased participation in education, training and employment (National Crime Prevention 2003).

Good practice components that may lead to effective mentoring programs include:

- a program structure that screens volunteer mentors and provides orientation, ongoing training and supervision for them;
- engaging young people voluntarily and providing activities that are needs-based and developmentally appropriate (National Crime Prevention 2003); and
- involving all parties in forming the relationship, including caregivers (DuBois et al 2002).

In addition, **good practice components for Indigenous youth include:**

- strong links with Indigenous communities and services;
- an understanding of the historical, cultural and social factors that affect Indigenous peoples' lives;
- sensitivity to cultural requirements in matching Indigenous mentors and young people; and
- adequate consultation with, and promotion in, Indigenous communities (Hartley 2004).

Organisations developing mentoring programs should also consult Mentoring Australia's (2000) key principles for establishing and managing effective mentoring programs.

(B) Developmental and early intervention approaches to crime prevention

AICrime reduction matters no. 4 (ISSN 1448-1383)

Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, July 2003

Developmental and early intervention strategies for the reduction and prevention of crime can operate across all three levels of prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary. Developmental prevention is intervention early in developmental pathways that may lead to the emergence and recurrence of criminal behaviours and other social problems.

Developmental prevention emphasises investment in strategies and programs for creating "child friendly" institutions and communities.

In Australia, developmental prevention programs typically cover areas such as parenting and early childhood support, health care assistance and home help, literacy training and alternative learning programs, anti-bullying initiatives in schools, programs addressing violence reduction, self-esteem and self-empowerment development and training, job skills training and development, establishment of theatre and arts groups, sport and youth centres for recreation, and early school-leavers' programs.

The most significant challenge for developmental and early intervention crime prevention remains moving the research evidence into effective everyday programs.

(C) Early Intervention Youth Mentoring Programmes

An overview of mentoring programmes for young people at risk of offending

Australian Government Attorney-General's Department, Canberra

Commonwealth of Australia, September 2003

Background

The Crime Prevention Branch (CPB) of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department commissioned social research consultants Urbis Keys Young to conduct a project to profile and review mentoring programmes for young offenders, **particularly those in the 10 to 13 year age group.**

This report, commissioned under the Australian Government's National Crime Prevention Programme, provides a national profile of mentoring programmes for young people at risk of offending, identifies differing approaches and models for mentoring programmes and highlights good practice in the field. In particular, this research analyses the crime prevention outcomes from youth mentoring, and the value of strengthening links between families and communities.

Overview of mentoring programmes

This audit and review of mentoring programmes was based on 21 projects nationally, from the initial group of 24 which were identified in the scoping process. **This report provides a 'snapshot' of mentoring in early 2002. Since then new projects have started and others have ceased operation.**

From the snapshot the following profile emerges:

- 62 per cent are run by community organisations.
 - **Government is the primary funding source for most projects.**
 - **More than half those surveyed cited insufficient funding as a significant weakness for the programme.**
 - Almost half the projects are pilot programmes.
 - Most programmes have organisational autonomy from government.
-
- A key Australian external evaluation report (of One2One in NSW) indicates that stand-alone mentoring projects may have greater difficulties 'getting off the ground' than integrated projects, and there was general agreement amongst the stakeholders consulted for this project that integrated projects are more likely to be effective.
 - There is no evidence from the literature or the consultations concerning whether formal or naturalistic programmes are more effective, other than it appears important for formal programmes to avoid simply replicating a 'youth worker' function.

Formal programmes tend to be more regimented in nature and involve the mentor and young person completing designated tasks together. Some formal programmes are more focused on the juvenile justice or education systems, and involve activities such as the completion of homework, job applications or the requirements of juvenile justice orders, attending appointments and so on. Australian examples include the mentoring programmes run by the WA Ministry of Justice and the NSW DJJ, which both focus on completion of specific tasks in case plans. Another example is the Big hART programme in Melbourne, which solely comprises activities based around the production of artistic materials.

Naturalistic programmes take a more informal approach to the development of the relationship and activities that the mentor and young person undertake together. For example, they might go for a coffee together, do sporting activities, or just 'hang out' together. Examples in Australia include Great Mates in WA and One2One in NSW.

- Establishing mentoring programmes involves effective scoping to determine need. It also requires effective consultation with specific groups, in particular Indigenous people and their organisations. Strong organisational administration and infrastructure are essential for a mentoring programme to operate effectively.

The mentoring process: good practice

The literature and consultations show that specific policies and processes around the mentoring relationship are likely to improve positive outcomes.

- Initial meetings
- Length of contact
- Frequency of contact
- Parental involvement
- Activities undertaken by the mentor and mentee
- Ending the mentoring relationship
- Monitoring and supervising mentors
- Training and orienting mentors

Finding and employing mentors: good practice

The literature and consultations show that there are a number of practices which should be put in place when selecting and employing mentors.

- Recruiting mentors

When recruiting mentors, a project must provide a clear and realistic idea of the benefits and expectations of mentoring, including the level of commitment required.

There is no one 'good practice' in recruiting - the mode of recruiting will depend largely on the types of people who are desired as mentors (such as ethnicity, interests, age, etc). It should be noted that personality is often considered to be more important than physical, social or racial demographics.

- Characteristics of mentors

There are a number of characteristics, which should be focused on when recruiting mentors, with the most important elements being the ability to listen, a non-judgemental attitude, flexibility, respect for and ability to relate to young people and reliability/consistency.

- Screening procedures

Mentors should be rigorously screened prior to being matched with a young person. At a minimum, screening processes for mentors should include at least one personal interview with project staff, a criminal record check, a reference check and an application form.

- Excluding mentors with criminal records

A criminal record should not necessarily preclude someone from being a mentor; indeed, some programmes even seek out people with a criminal record to act as mentors. However, any person who has been convicted of sexual offences, any offences against children, any violence offence, or any serious offence within the past five years should not be accepted as a mentor.

- Matching

The matching process should be based on a clear and consistent policy. While sex, race, ethnicity and cultural background may be considerations, the primary factors in matching should be the interests, needs and goals of the young person.

Any mentoring programme should take care to consider the cultural circumstances of both their mentors and their mentees when developing programme and relationship structures. This issue is likely to be particularly significant for Indigenous people as both mentors and mentees.

➤ **Paid versus volunteer mentors**

There is no evidence to indicate whether it is preferable to employ paid or volunteer mentors. However, payment may be particularly important where there is an attempt to include specific groups of people as mentors (such as Indigenous people) who are likely to fall within a lower socio-economic bracket.

It is good practice to reimburse mentors for agreed costs and out of pocket expenses relating to the relationship (such as fares, mileage, entry fees etc).

Recommendations

❖ Mentoring programmes for young offenders

In the course of the scoping consultations for this study, it appeared that there were numerous mentoring projects operating around Australia for 'at risk' young people, but relatively few covering the specific target group of young offenders or young people at risk of offending.

The evidence shows that mentoring with young offenders may be more intensive or complex for young offenders than generally 'at risk' young people (especially in relation to mentoring frequency).

Therefore, programmes need to carefully consider the implications of the target group and develop programme elements and strategies accordingly, especially:

- the greater resources needed for young offenders
- the greater demands on mentors.

❖ Programmes that particularly appeal to young people

The literature states that mentoring programmes should be developed on the basis of the mentees' needs (Mentoring Australia 2000). Consistent with this, consultations indicated that young people are more likely to be attracted to mentoring programmes which have a hook of offering mentors, activities or other aspects of the programme which might be particularly appealing to young people, and in particular young offenders. This can help make mentoring appear cool to young people with a history of offending and multiple problems who might otherwise not find the prospect of hanging out with an adult attractive. This appears particularly important for older teenagers, and for young men. Examples of youth-friendly hooks offered by Australian mentoring programmes include:

- * high profile mentors/coordinators
- * focusing on activities which particularly appeal to young people
- * proactively encouraging young people to participate.

❖ The programme activities and objects

There are no specific 'rules' about what works in relation to the activities undertaken during the mentoring process. However, several points emerge from the literature and the consultations. There is a need to proactively 'sell' the programme to young people, with a focus on activities which are appealing. High profile mentors or coordinators can be particularly appealing to young people.

From the outset, a mentoring project should have well defined objectives, a clearly stated mission, and established operating principles (involving designation of tasks, accounting principles etc). Ideally, these should be developed in consultation with potential participants and stakeholders. Programme plans should be realistic and attainable, and maintain a degree of flexibility as the programme develops.

Flexibility and adaptability are crucial for any mentoring programme. Programmes need to be imaginative and thoughtful in overcoming barriers and altering the programme to best serve the target group (OJJDP 1998, pp.18-22). A number of the mentoring projects examined for this study reported that they had changed or modified different aspects of their work or strategies as it became apparent that certain approaches worked better than others.

Any programme plan must be realistic and easily attainable, with full descriptions of the role of each participant, an assessment of need, and clear goals, objectives and timelines for all aspects of the programme (Mentoring Australia 2000). Programmes should also ensure they have written policies and procedures covering issues such as rights, responsibilities, confidentiality, legal issues, insurance, duty of care, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), sexual harassment, grievance issues, and ethical issues (Mentoring Australia 2000).

❖ **Stand-alone versus integrated projects**

Mentoring projects which are integrated into a range of other services are more likely to be effective than those which are stand-alone.

Mentoring projects can be either stand-alone initiatives, or integrated into a range of services offered by the auspicing organisation. Many programmes, both in Australia and overseas, are integrated into other service offerings.

Mentoring is therefore a component which supplements or enhances other project elements. Common examples of additional elements, both in Australia and overseas, include:

- * drug education programmes
- * life skills programmes
- * career or job-seeking techniques
- * educational/academic assistance.

Mentoring projects that are linked to juvenile justice agencies/facilities tend to feature more of these additional elements, such as education, psycho-social assessment, violence reduction programmes, parent education sessions, supervised recreational activities and skill-building activities (Mathieson 1997, pp.110-115; Howitt et al 1998, p.39). Again this is a feature of both Australian and overseas programmes.

In projects where mentoring is linked with other services, the mentors will often specifically concentrate on building on these other programme elements through tutoring, or positive reinforcement (Ware & Lucas n.d., pp.11-12).

The literature also suggests that services other than mentoring should be available to the clients of mentoring programmes, either via that or other organisations. Additional community support services, or interagency support is noted as an important factor in a responsible mentoring programme (California Mentor Initiative 2000, p.1).

There was clear agreement among the informants for this project that integrated mentoring projects are also more likely to be effective than those which are stand-alone. This is particularly critical given that many mentoring programmes appear to take a while to establish, and typically only have one or a small number of staff. Informants felt that it is more cost-effective, quicker and easier to establish a mentoring programme if there are already established infrastructure, administrative and professional support and networks with key agencies and potential clients.

Another factor that was stressed in the consultations was the need for mentoring programmes to establish effective referral networks eg drug and alcohol services, mental health services, and educational institutions.

❖ **Evaluation: an essential part of good practice**

This report has found that in practice most mentoring programmes both overseas and in Australia have not been subject to a formal evaluation, particularly of an external nature. Monitoring and evaluation is essential for any mentoring programme to determine its effectiveness.

There is a need to build evaluation processes and mechanisms into any mentoring project from its very inception, with external evaluations are preferable to internal evaluations.

The general lack of evaluation of mentoring programmes significantly limits the conclusions that can be drawn about the effectiveness of mentoring in reducing offending and problematic behaviour or in improving self-esteem and social skills.

From the overseas and Australian literature the following conclusions can be drawn:

- * Mentoring is a promising but unproven strategy.
- * Mentoring can achieve positive outcomes for some young people.
- * Mentoring is only suitable for some young people.
- * Where positive outcomes have been reported from mentoring programmes in both Australia and overseas, they have been short-term. Overall there is a dearth of evidence of long-term impacts of mentoring programmes.

Limitations

➤ **Mentoring is only suitable for some young people**

The literature and consultations show that mentoring will only be suitable for some young people. There are two aspects to this point:

- * Not all young people will be suitable to refer into mentoring programmes. In other words, some young people will be screened out as unsuitable for mentoring.

* Mentoring will not work for all young people referred into programmes. There will also be some young people who will not successfully engage in a mentoring relationship.

There is some limited evidence that the effectiveness of mentoring may vary according to the demographic characteristics of mentees.

➤ **Indigenous programmes**

Information was gathered on a number of Australian Indigenous specific programmes through both the consultation process and the literature review. The data identified a number of mentoring issues which are specific to Indigenous programmes:

* There needs to be sensitivity about the location of the programme - particularly if it is seen as 'too close' to government.

* There may be an added need for flexibility in programme delivery if Aboriginal young people are in remote or isolated communities.

* Adequate scoping and consultation is particularly important for Indigenous projects, to ensure that they will be acceptable to and engage with those communities.

* Indigenous projects need to continue to engage with the Indigenous community once they are in operation. This may involve special measures to ensure participation in steering committees.

* Projects need to be specifically promoted within Aboriginal communities using measures which are likely to reach those communities.

* Some Indigenous projects reported that because the mentoring positions were only part-time it was more difficult to recruit mentors. There are also stronger arguments for the payment of Indigenous mentors given the lower socio-economic status of Indigenous people.

* While it should not be assumed that it is always appropriate to match an Indigenous young person with an Indigenous mentor, most Indigenous projects found that it was often beneficial to match Aboriginal mentors and mentees.

* Aboriginal family and kinship networks may place significant cultural requirements on how mentoring is organised.

There is a relatively widespread view that mentoring is likely to be particularly effective for Indigenous young people. This may in part derive from the opportunity mentoring provides for Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people to actively participate in the process of working with Aboriginal young offenders.

➤ **Organisational context of mentoring programmes - Location of mentoring projects**

There are a number of possible reasons for the marked variation in the number of mentoring projects across states. These include:

1. Differences in the perceived 'fit' between mentoring programmes and the overall policy emphasis and priorities in particular states (particularly by key funding agencies).
2. The perception that mentoring may be particularly appropriate for certain sub-groups of that state's population.
3. Previous experiences with mentoring projects in that state.
4. The interest in mentoring developed by key individuals. For instance, consultations indicated that some mentoring projects - particularly smaller, community-based projects - have been set up on the initiative of one key person.

➤ **Auspicing organisation**

Government agencies are the sole or primary funding source for most mentoring projects (67 per cent). A fee-for-service mode of provision where the young person or their family is expected to meet the costs may reduce or preclude access for some young people in need.

However, a different, and less problematic, fee-for-service model is where government contracts non-government organisations to provide individual mentoring services on a fee basis. This is a common model used for Australian mentoring programmes.

The literature also notes that to be successful, mentoring programmes require organisational autonomy (Jurik et al 2000, p.315). Many of the Australian programmes appear to have organisational autonomy, although there are some mentoring projects that are run under the auspices of various state government departments.

All the government-sponsored programmes in the study received higher levels of funding than those run by community organisations and reported similar project strengths and issues compared to non-government programmes. It was also clear that - perhaps not surprisingly - **the programmes that have been in operation the longest time tend to have ongoing government funding.**

Nonetheless, from the consultations it appeared that it is preferable for a mentoring programme to at least have the feel of being a community-based, youth-friendly organisation, and be perceived as such by young people and others. This is regardless of whether the funding source is government or otherwise.

More successful mentoring projects seem to be viewed by young people and others as being 'separate' and 'different' from the 'standard' agencies which might be working with young people such as juvenile justice and child welfare. This makes the project more welcoming to young people, and differentiates it from those other agencies. From the consultations with mentees it was clear that this is particularly critical given that they have often had contact with multiple workers from numerous agencies over considerable periods of time. **It is important to counteract the view that this will be just another agency who's going to tell them what to do.**

As noted in the literature, it is important for mentoring programmes to be established in premises where young people feel comfortable and welcome, which are accessible by public transport, and where there is sufficient meeting and activity space for events and meetings. It is also important to consider any associations or inferences that may be drawn from selection of premises, as young people may not feel comfortable in premises located near certain organisations, such as the police (Benioff 1997, p.20).

The attitude and approach of staff and the organisation generally can also promote the 'community-based' feel of a mentoring organisation and again differentiate it from 'standard' agencies.

➤ **Funding**

Under-funding is a major issue for Australian mentoring projects, with more than half of those surveyed citing insufficient funding or a lack of resources as a significant weakness in their programme, and a serious challenge to the programme's operation.

Funding insecurity has clearly impacted on the development of mentoring programmes in Australia. For instance, there is a tendency for mentoring programmes to be established and then vaânish, to concentrate on their most immediate programme goals, and to place little emphasis on evaluation. It also appears that mentoring programmes can take a comparatively long time to effectively establish. This may mean that newly-established programmes can be in danger of not getting fully 'off the ground' before their funding ceases.

(D) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (US Department of Justice)

(a) Programs

(i) Juvenile Mentoring Grants Program

Mentoring is a process, which uses relationships to teach, impart, or institute changes in behaviours or attitudes. Research indicates that, when well implemented, mentoring can be a useful strategy in working with at-risk youth and those who experience multiple risk factors for delinquency, school failure and other negative outcomes.

OJJDP's Juvenile Mentoring Grants Program includes solicitations geared toward supporting national and community organizations that directly serve youth through mentoring, target specific populations of youth, and/or enhance the capacity of other organizations to recruit, train, and supervise mentors.

(ii) Cross-Age Teaching (Bulletin: Youth in Action Series, July 1999)

Cross age teaching occurs when you (as a peer mentor) share your skills and knowledge with persons who are either younger or older than you (like ninth graders or recent high school graduates) or they may be significantly younger preschool, elementary, or middle school students or even senior citizens.

As a cross-age teacher, you may teach lessons by yourself to a class, as part of a group, or as a one-to-one tutor. Subjects can cover a broad spectrum, from crime and drug prevention to traditional academic subjects to special skills.

How Does Cross-Age Teaching Prevent or Reduce Crime?

Teaching crime and substance abuse prevention skills directly -- such as how to resist peer pressure to use alcohol -- clearly helps students learn about safe behaviors and avoid crime. Teaching academic subjects or providing training in special skills also indirectly helps prevent or reduce crime. By giving students one-to-one tutoring in subjects such as math or English, for example, cross-age teachers strengthen students' academic abilities, allowing them to improve performance, gain confidence, and experience success.

With these results, students may enjoy school a bit more and become more involved in their studies and school activities and less likely to drop out. Since dropping out of school is closely linked with getting involved in crime, staying in school is a key step in avoiding crime.

Cross-age teaching programs that focus on learning skills like playing a sport, performing music, mastering a painting technique, or preparing a meal can also help reduce or prevent crime. Youth

who are busy practicing guitar, playing in a soccer league, or creating artwork obviously have less time to get involved in crime or other dangerous activities than students with no special interests or activities.

(b) Juvenile Mentoring Program -1998 Report to Congress (JUMP)

- **The very presence of a mentor in a youth's life can help to reduce isolation and provide needed supervision and support.**

Mentoring can directly address the lack of parental supervision. The very presence of a mentor in a youth's life can help to reduce isolation and provide needed supervision and support. A positive adult role model offers new perspectives to youth who live in situations rife with substance abuse and violence. The tutoring and other school support a mentor offers may open an opportunity for academic and future career success that is not otherwise available.

- **Mentoring Supports and Enhances Protective Factors**

Within this same social context, protective factors buffer the negative impact of identified risks, allowing one child to succeed while another child flounders (Resnick, 1997). Some of the frequently noted categories of protective factors are related to the categories of risk factors addressing environmental or community supports, family conditions, school, and personal/peer factors

One comprehensive review of literature and research on the development of competence of children in both favorable and unfavorable environments (Masten and Coatsworth, 1998) points to key "systems for competence" that appear to be essential for healthy development. **One of these key systems is the capacity, ability, and opportunity to build relationships with caring adults.** The JUMP program addresses the opportunity for building healthy relationships with caring adults by providing a mentor.

- **Mentoring Holds Promise**

In recent years, much has been written about mentoring as an effective intervention, and anecdotal evidence points to the importance of mentor-like relationships in children's successful development (Rak & Patterson, 1996; Bolig & Weddle, 1988; Garmezy, 1981; Hauser et al., 1985; Grossman & Garry, 1997). The fact that mentoring programs, both formal and informal, have been established in so many different arenas is further indication of the growing popularity and acceptance of mentoring as an effective tool for supporting healthy growth and development.

- **Resilience research provides additional clues to possible reasons for mentoring's success, and supports the assumption that appropriate, constructive adult guidance and supervision are key components in the development of resilient youth.**

For children, resilience is the capacity of those who are exposed to identifiable risk factors to overcome those risks and avoid long term negative outcomes such as delinquency or school problems (Rak and Patterson, 1996). Two factors that are frequently cited as predictors of a child's resilience are a close bond with a caregiver during the first year of life and a personal temperament that elicits positive responses from both family members as well as strangers. In other words, both the presence of someone to relate to and the ability to generate that relationship are related to later success (Werner, 1984).

In particular, Werner found that resilient children often had at least one significant person (not necessarily a family member) who accepted them unconditionally (Werner, 1985; Werner & Smith 1992).

- **The strength of mentoring may come from the fact that mentoring can impact many different risk factors and can support many different protective factors at the same time.**

A mentor's presence can provide a youth with personal connectedness, supervision and guidance, skills training, career or cultural enrichment opportunities, a knowledge of spirituality and values, a sense of self-worth, and perhaps most important, goals and hope for the future. The complex interrelationships among and between the risk and protective factors require prevention interventions that can take into account this complexity.

(E) United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines)

Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 45/112 of 14 December 1990

I. Fundamental principles

3. For the purposes of the interpretation of the present Guidelines, a child-centred orientation should be pursued. Young persons should have **an active role and partnership within society and should not be considered as mere objects of socialization or control.**

4. In the implementation of the present Guidelines, **in accordance with national legal systems, the well-being of young persons from their early childhood should be the focus of any preventive programme.**

5. **The need for and importance of progressive delinquency prevention policies and the systematic study and the elaboration of measures should be recognized. These should avoid criminalizing and penalizing a child for behaviour that does not cause serious damage to the development of the child or harm to others.** Such policies and measures should involve:

(a) The provision of opportunities, in particular educational opportunities, to meet the varying needs of young persons and to serve as a supportive framework for safeguarding the personal development of all young persons, particularly those who are demonstrably endangered or at social risk and are in need of special care and protection;

6. **Community-based services and programmes** should be developed for the prevention of juvenile delinquency, particularly where no agencies have yet been established. Formal agencies of social control should only be utilized as a means of last resort.

II. Scope of the Guidelines

7. The present Guidelines should be interpreted and implemented within the broad framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, **the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, **the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child**, and in the context of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules), as well as other instruments and norms relating to the rights, interests and well-being of all children and young persons.

III. General prevention

9. Comprehensive prevention plans should be instituted **at every level of Government** and include the following:

- (a) In-depth analyses of the problem and inventories of programmes, services, facilities and resources available;
- (d) Policies, programmes and strategies based on prognostic studies to be continuously monitored and carefully evaluated in the course of implementation;
- (e) Methods for effectively reducing the opportunity to commit delinquent acts;
- (f) **Community involvement through a wide range of services and programmes;**
- (g) Close interdisciplinary co-operation between national, State, provincial and local governments, with the involvement of the private sector, representative citizens of the community to be served, and labour, child-care, health education, social, law enforcement and judicial agencies in taking concerted action to prevent juvenile delinquency and youth crime;
- (h) **Youth participation in delinquency prevention policies and processes**, including recourse to community resources, youth self-help, and victim compensation and assistance programmes....

IV. Socialization processes

10. **Emphasis should be placed on preventive policies facilitating the successful socialization and integration of all children and young persons, in particular through the family, the community, peer groups, schools, vocational training and the world of work, as well as through voluntary organizations.** Due respect should be given to the proper personal development of children and young persons, and they should be accepted as full and equal partners in socialization and integration processes.

B. Education

21. Education systems should, in addition to their academic and vocational training activities, devote particular attention to the following:

- (b) **Promotion and development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of young people to their fullest potential;**
- (c) **Involvement of young persons as active and effective participants in, rather than mere objects of, the educational process;**
- (d) **Undertaking activities that foster a sense of identity with and of belonging to the school and the community;**
- (e) Encouragement of young persons to understand and respect diverse views and opinions, as well as cultural and other differences;
- (f) Provision of information and guidance regarding vocational training, employment opportunities and career development....

29. **School systems should plan, develop and implement extracurricular activities of interest to young persons, in co-operation with community groups.**

30. Special assistance should be given to children and young persons who find it difficult to comply with attendance codes, and to "drop-outs".

31. Schools should promote policies and rules that are fair and just; students should be represented in bodies formulating school policy, including policy on discipline, and decision-making.

C . Community

32. **Community-based services and programmes** which respond to the special needs, problems, interests and concerns of young persons and which offer appropriate counselling and guidance to young persons and their families should be developed, or strengthened where they exist.

33. Communities should provide, or strengthen where they exist, a wide range of community-based support measures for young persons, including **community development centres, recreational facilities and services to respond to the special problems of children who are at social risk**. In providing these helping measures, respect for individual rights should be ensured.

37. **Youth organizations** should be created or strengthened at the local level and given full participatory status in the management of community affairs. These organizations should encourage youth to organize collective and voluntary projects, particularly projects aimed at helping young persons in need of assistance.

38. **Government agencies should take special responsibility and provide necessary services for less or street children**; information about local facilities, accommodation, employment and other forms and sources of help should be made readily available to young persons.

(F) World Youth Report, Juvenile Delinquency 2003

Negative Peer and Family Influence

- In an attempt to explain the theoretical underpinnings of delinquency, sociologists associate the specifics of youth behaviour with the home, family, neighbourhood, peers and many other variables that together or separately influence the formation of young people's social environment.
- Similarities in the basic characteristics of juvenile group behaviour are found in almost every class and cultural context. Juvenile peer groups are noted for their high levels of social cohesiveness, hierarchical organization, and a certain code of behaviour based on the rejection of adult values and experience.
- The subcultural aspect of juvenile group activities is rarely given the attention it deserves. Different juvenile groups adopt what amounts to a heterogeneous mix, or synthesis, of predominant (class-based) values, which are spread by the entertainment industry, and intergenerational (group-based) values, which are native to the family or neighbourhood.
- Subcultures can be defined as particular lifestyle systems that are developed in groups and are in structurally subordinate positions as a result of pressure exerted by the predominant systems.
- The family as a social institution is currently undergoing substantial changes;

its form is diversifying with, for example, the increase in one-parent families and non-marital unions. The absence of fathers in many low-income families can lead boys to seek patterns of masculinity in delinquent groups of peers. These groups in many respects substitute for the family, define male roles, and contribute to the acquisition of such attributes as cruelty, strength, excitability and anxiety.

- The importance of family well-being is becoming increasingly recognized. Success in school depends greatly on whether parents have the capacity to provide their children with “starting” opportunities (including the resources to buy books and manuals and pay for studies). Adolescents from low-income families often feel excluded. To raise their self-esteem and improve their status they may choose to join a juvenile delinquent group. These groups provide equal opportunities to everyone, favourably distinguishing themselves from school and family, where positions of authority are occupied by adults.
- When young people are exposed to the influence of adult offenders they have the opportunity to study delinquent behaviour, and the possibility of their engaging in adult crime becomes more real. The “criminalization” of the family also has an impact on the choice of delinquent trajectories. A study carried out in prisons in the United States reveals that families involved in criminal activities tend to push their younger members towards violating the law.
- Youth policies seldom reflect an understanding of the role of the peer group as an institution of socialization. Membership in a delinquent gang, like membership in any other natural grouping, can be part of the process of becoming an adult.
- Through such primary associations, an individual acquires a sense of safety and security, develops a knowledge of social interaction, and can demonstrate such qualities as loyalty or leadership. In “adult” society, factors such as social status, private welfare, race and ethnicity are of great value; however, all members of adolescent groups are essentially in an equal position and have similar opportunities for advancement in the hierarchical structure. In these groups well-being depends wholly on personal qualities such as strength, will and discipline. Quite often delinquent groups can counterbalance or compensate for the imperfections of family and school.
- A number of studies have shown that juvenile gang members consider their group a family. For adolescents constantly facing violence, belonging to a gang can provide protection within the neighbourhood.
- The peer group plays an important part in the construction of gender roles and relations, including delinquent behaviour. Youth gangs reflect the gender-based power relations in society and the related discourse and practices by which they are reproduced. Consequently, differences in male and female behaviour in this context are partly a product of the social construction of gendered dominance and subordination in gang arrangements.

Preventing Juvenile Delinquency

It is widely believed that early-phase intervention represents the best approach to preventing juvenile delinquency. Prevention requires individual, group and organizational efforts aimed at keeping adolescents from breaking the law.

Early preventive work is being carried out in several areas. Some of the most promising approaches, programmes and initiatives are described in some detail below.

1. Within the economic sector, professional development programmes are being set up to provide legal alternatives for income generation. Supplying adolescents and young people with increased economic opportunities, professional training and education, new workplaces and assistance in organizing businesses can help prevent

youth involvement in delinquent activities.

2. Educational programmes are helping young people learn how to engage in positive self-appraisal, deal with conflict, and control aggression. The programmes debunk the myth of gang glamour and help young people find alternatives to illegal behaviour. Some work with troubled youth to help them develop the social and cognitive skills necessary to avoid conflict and control aggression.

3. Recently, greater attention has been given to the role and responsibility of local communities in dealing with juvenile delinquency. There are programmes designed to train groups and individual representatives of local communities in which juvenile delinquency has increased to informally control youth and include young people in constructive activities.

The idea that young people can and should work in partnership with adults to improve conditions in their communities has gained currency in the past decade. Young people are being asked to sit on boards, submit ideas and support community efforts through structured (sometimes required) volunteering.

A promising development in efforts to prevent juvenile delinquency and crime is the involvement of NGOs and volunteers (students and pensioners, along with well-known and authority figures such as sportsmen, politicians and public figures) in social work with adolescents. Generally, programmes for preventing gang delinquency should endeavour to integrate children and youth into organized group activities. This can be achieved through social service agencies or organizations such as the YMCA, YWCA, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, as well as independent boys' and girls' clubs and community centres; local government recreational activities also serve this purpose.

5. The family, as the primary institution of socialization, appears to play the most important role in the prevention of child and juvenile delinquency. The most impressive prevention efforts focus on the families of troubled youth, including those young people with serious behaviour problems.

MENTAL HEALTH: CONSUMER WORKERS

Consumer Workers' Forum Project

Mental health consumer workers are people with the lived experience of mental illness, employed (either paid or volunteer) in consumer designated roles within mental health services - public, non-government and private. Consumer workers are employed to provide various services, such as peer support, education, representation and individual and systemic advocacy for mental health consumers.

The establishment of the consumer workforce in NSW has resulted in many challenges that need to be addressed to ensure an effective and sustainable consumer workforce. The range of challenges that present themselves in the employment of consumer workers may prevent services from employing consumer workers. These challenges include:

- Role conflict and confusion
- Job titles that often do not reflect the work performed by the mental health consumer workforce
- Dual relationships and boundary issues

- Concerns regarding the inadequacy of remuneration of their work
- Little support and supervision structures
- Limited access to education and training for professional development
- Addressing reasonable accommodations in the workplace, and
- The need for evaluation of the consumer workforce.

For more information on the consumer workforce, a literature review has been produced detailing the history of the consumer workforce, the barriers and challenges that face the consumer workforce and the benefits of the consumer workforce. The literature review can be found here: Literature Review on the Mental Health Consumer Workforce (http://www.nswcag.org.au/page/consumer_workers_forum_project.html)

EARLY INTERVENTION – PRIVATISED INTERESTS

Parenting Programs: Should they be privatised and limited, or government-funded and widely available?

With justice reinvestment proposing that preventative measures offer more benefits than reactive measures such as incarceration, the importance of behavioural parenting programs in improving children's adjustment – both in terms of general behaviour and problematic or aggressive tendencies – should not be ignored. However, despite the evidence supporting the effectiveness of such programs, their privatised distribution is ultimately limiting.

There has been strong evidence to support the efficacy and effectiveness of parenting programs such as Parenting Behaviour for Learning's *The Incredible Years* within Australia. Aiming to promote social competence, reduce and treat aggression and related conduct problems in children aged between 4 and 8 years, it is arguable that programs such as *The Incredible Years* should be the first point of action required by the government in reducing rates of youth crime and juvenile delinquency.

Functioning via a three-tier model wherein separate programs are administered to parents, teachers and children, *The Incredible Years* has been effective in improving the behaviours of up to 80% of children whose parents and teachers participated. In light of such figures, it is questionable why such strategies exist merely as a privatised system. Due to the expenses involved in purchasing training and licensing for these programs, only a limited number of schools have been afforded access to them. However, with all schools experiencing similar problems regarding the behaviour of their students, this seems like an inappropriate privatisation of remedial education practices.

While it has been criticised for inadequate success rates in relation to severe behavioural problems (66% among conduct-disorders and oppositional-defiant disorder children), the program may have immeasurable effects on improving behaviours more broadly. As a result, it may reduce the rates of youth offenders and juvenile crime by addressing the general aggressive and anti-social tendencies of some children before they develop into more significant issues.

There is a considerable lack of research regarding the economic costs and benefits of parenting programs. If such programs were to reduce later rates of youth crime and detention, they would prove ultimately cost-effective, with the expenses involved in implementing them being eventually recovered. Thus, it appears it would be in the government's best interests to fund programs such as

The Incredible Years and realise them in schools across the country. While the financial weight of education is already substantial, it is arguable that the principles underpinning parenting programs – such as effective communication, improved skills and confidence, as well as good behaviour – may provide the foundation for a more successful education system. Serving to create a more efficient classroom environment, it is therefore crucial that the government considers purchasing these private programs that would ensure all children are given a chance at having a quality education.

Summary of questions that should be considered:

- Should parenting programs remain privatised and purchasable, or should they be government-funded?
- Are they necessary, or are redundant expenses being paid to provide parents and teachers with information they already have?
- Should parenting programs be compulsory, or just provided to everyone who wishes to attend?
- Do compulsory programs (which are incorporated into the normal educational system) raise issues about democracy? Will parents be forced to raise their children in the ‘correct’ way according to a specific behavioural theory? Will teachers be encouraged to teach according to one particular theory of successful teaching, thus limiting creativity?

For more information on *The Incredible Years*:

www.incredibleyears.com