

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The Partnership Project was developed by NCH Action for Children Scotland, APEX Scotland and Glasgow City Council Social Work Department. It provides integrated supervision for young people who are involved in offending and at risk of custody, either immediately or through early entry into the criminal justice system. The project targets two principal groups of young people in Glasgow:

- 15-18 year olds whose offending is serious; who, as a result of this offending, are likely to progress quickly to residential/secure measures of care or the criminal justice system; and who are at risk of further offending; and
- 16-21 year olds whose offending is serious and/or repeated; who, as result of this offending, are at high risk of receiving a custodial sentence; and who have already been sentenced to other existing community-based disposals. Attendance at the project is an additional requirement of a probation order.

The project provides a range of services and interventions aimed at addressing young people's offending behaviour and associated needs and promoting their reintegration into their communities. It began accepting referrals in February 2000 and had a target of 80 participants per annum (approximately 40 each from the children's hearings and criminal justice systems). The number referred in the first year (February – December 2000) was 111 (42 CHS and 69 CJS) and in the second year (January – August 2001) was 71 (10 CHS and 61 CJS). The number of actual participants between February 2000 and August 2001 were 29 CHS and 50 CJS.

## *Methods*

The methods used to evaluate the project included an analysis of the following:

- self-administered questionnaires (to social workers, project workers and young people);
- interviews with key stakeholders (young people and their families, sheriffs, reporters, panel members, social workers, partnership managers and project staff);
- information supplied through the project's database;
- reconviction data;
- vignettes of anonymised case studies; and
- staff time diaries and the overall project budget.

## *Characteristics of the sample*

Information was available in respect of 182 young people who had been referred to the project between February 2000 and August 2001, 130 young people referred through the criminal justice system and 52 through the children's hearings system. The vast majority of referrals were for young males, with six females being referred. The age range of the young people referred was 14 to 23 and all referrals were white. Young people were most commonly referred for non-sexual crimes of violence, crimes of dishonesty or motor vehicle offences. According to the characteristics and offending histories of the sample, it seems that the project was successful in targeting high risk and high tariff cases.

## **The referral process**

Professionals and young people alike were familiar with and supportive of the project's dual aims of reducing offending and offering a 'moving on' service to young people, though there existed varying levels of knowledge about the identity and role of the two service providers within the partnership (Apex and NCH) and the project's referral criteria (in particular the age range

accepted). Despite the efforts that had been put into promoting the project locally, referring agencies suggested that it was important that the project should be publicised in a sustained way because it was perceived as a valuable and effective resource for young people involved in the children's hearings and criminal justice systems. This might also serve to address the issue of inconsistency in the use of the project across geographical areas.

Young people and their parents/carers spoke highly of the project. It was viewed as giving young people the chance to address various problems in their lives, including offending and substance misuse, as well as helping them to avoid a custodial sentence or secure accommodation as a result of escalating offending.

### **Working with programme participants**

Most professionals were satisfied with the operation of the project, in terms of report writing, liaison between project worker and supervising social worker on progress and initiating breach procedures. Any concerns raised by the professionals in this respect centred on the extent to which a client's progress within the project was reviewed, the clarity of roles between project worker and social worker and the procedures for terminating cases. Young people spoke very highly of their relationship with the project workers, seeing the staff as fair-minded, open and friendly. Being able to talk about their problems and being helped to reduce their offending were factors that rated highly in participants' views of the project.

### **The effectiveness of the project**

The main objectives of work at the project for the participants included stopping offending, increasing employability, finding employment and addressing alcohol or drug misuse. Participants, social workers and project workers were of the view that the clients' objectives had, in the main, been partly or fully achieved on completion of the programme. Professional respondents were, on the whole, very encouraged by the apparent success of the project, especially in reducing offending behaviour, reducing the likelihood of custody/secure accommodation, offering educational and employment opportunities/advice and encouraging personal development and integration.

A prediction exercise which asked a panel of reporters and social workers in Glasgow to assess the needs of, and likely outcomes for, an anonymised group of ex-participants was undertaken towards the end of the fieldwork period. The results of this prediction exercise suggested that the young people on whom vignettes were based were, indeed, at serious risk of custody/secure accommodation or deteriorating behaviour or circumstances. There were, however, provisos made by both social workers and reporters about the resources and expertise available within social work area teams and other agencies to address the needs of these particular young people. They included the motivation of clients, limitations imposed by waiting lists, eligibility of clients (for example, in terms of age or geographical area) and the workload of the agencies/workers concerned. However, social workers were more optimistic than reporters in suggesting that services could be provided from sources such as specialist teams, counselling services and the careers service. Most of the professionals approached in this exercise adopted an holistic approach to the needs of the clients concerned which required a multi-disciplinary or multi-agency response.

An analysis of reconviction among 60 young people found that young people who completed the project were less likely subsequently to have been imprisoned than were young people who did not complete the project or who received an alternative disposal.

Overall, the professional respondents suggested that the project was invaluable in providing an intensive and effective service to young offenders, particularly since social work departments were unable to provide a service of this type because of limited resources and time. The quality of the relationship between project worker and client, the structure of the programme and the twin focus

on offending behaviour and employment/education ensured that the project had the confidence of sheriffs, reporters and social workers alike.

The cost per CJS participant *referred to* the project was calculated at £2,798 and the cost per CJS participant *attending* the project was £7,051 (including reduced social work supervision costs). It is assumed that CHS participant costs would be similar. Comparing these with the costs of a custodial sentence (£14,187 per six months) and secure accommodation (£2,500 per week), and with the costs of other intensive community-based disposals (for example, the Airborne Initiative, which is £25,240 per successful completion), it is suggested that the savings that would accrue from attendance at the project would be significant.

### **Managing the partnership**

Generally, respondents were satisfied with the number and calibre of staff in post within the project. Whilst reconciling the differing values and practices of the partner organisations provided challenges, the staff team are to be commended on their ability to create a relatively seamless service in the eyes of referring agencies and young people participating in the project. The timing, relevance and contribution of the employability aspect of the project was being positively addressed within the staff team.

Two pilot Youth Justice Teams have recently been introduced as part of Glasgow's wider youth crime agenda. The relationship between these new teams and the Partnership Project is an issue that the project management group will need to address.

### **Conclusions**

The research suggests that the project is a well-regarded and valued resource that has succeeded in engaging with young people and impacting positively upon their offending and their wider circumstances, at least in the short term. The research also highlights the positive views of key stakeholders about the calibre and professionalism of the project workers and also about the effectiveness of the programmes in terms of targeting, assessment, modular groupwork and the achievement of overall project objectives.

At the time of writing (February, 2002), the project has been operational for two years and has developed, modified and tightened its procedures and practice to good effect during this time period. The learning curve has been steep for three particular reasons. Firstly, the project has adopted an innovative focus on a partnership arrangement not previously attempted; secondly, its location is within Scotland's largest and busiest social work department; and thirdly, it has had to endure, albeit understandably, a 'goldfish bowl'-type transparency within the wider social work and criminal justice community. The positive achievements of the project both in its work with individual young people and in the confidence it has secured from stakeholders are all the more commendable in the light of these challenges.