

**Youth Offending in Relation to Young People
as Multiple Service Users**

Scoping Paper

Prepared for the
Criminology Research Council

By

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the connection between chronic youth offending and the patterns of use of many different kinds of services by young people. How frequently and on what basis young people interact with police services, social services, housing services, welfare agencies and so on will have a bearing on youth health and wellbeing generally. The key question for research is how a young person's experiences as a multiple service user impacts upon their material circumstances and how these experiences influence their disposition toward (or away from) criminal and anti-social behaviour.

The impetus for this research interest stems from the observation that, on the one hand, many chronic offenders have a history of contact with state agencies such as child protection, as well as criminal justice agencies. Children and young people who have been state wards frequently end up in the hard end of the juvenile justice system (see Community Services Commission, 1996; Jeffrey, 1999; NSW Legislative Council, 2000). Young people offend because of the *negative experiences* associated with certain types of enforced service provision.

On the other hand, the lack of contact with services, such as school support, health and welfare services, may also be linked to offending behaviour. In this instance, it is the *deprivation of appropriate services* that is viewed as criminogenic – young people offend because of their marginalisation from needed resources.

The character and quality of the contact with different kinds of agencies and services is thus seen to shape the process whereby some young people become chronic offenders. This is notwithstanding the fact that most chronic young offenders share very similar social characteristics (such as unemployment, and low educational levels) that ultimately shape their engagement with the law and law enforcement officials. Indeed, it can be argued that it is their social characteristics that triggers the intervention, and that this in itself may explain, at least in part, why it is that some young people become chronic offenders. As Cunneen and White (2002: 88-89) comment:

Are young people who have trouble at school more likely to commit offences, or are they more likely to be reported to authorities and become the subject of surveillance and intervention? Similarly, are children from single-parent families more likely to be subject to welfare/ police surveillance because they are already connected to regulatory bodies as a result of welfare dependence? Are the young of minority groups more likely to appear in arrest rates because they commit more offences, or because they are members of minority groups and therefore subject to differential treatment and sometimes racism by authorities? In other words, the factors that are often presented as predictors of delinquency may in fact be the predictors of intervention.

Be this as it may, aside from the question of intervention versus non-intervention, the central concern then becomes what is the nature of intervention itself? Again, this needs to be appraised by consideration of the specific character and context of different kinds of intervention, and the relevance of these to particular groups of young people.

Service provision as a form of social intervention has many different dimensions and layers. One of the features of how young people use different services and institutions is that often these *experiences are ambiguous in nature*. From an 'institutional' perspective, institutions may combine elements of compulsion and consent (e.g., compulsory attendance at school; use of juvenile conferencing as an alternative to formal court proceedings). From an 'experiential' perspective, young people, depending upon circumstances, may enjoy or benefit from their contact with particular institutions, or they may respond negatively (the latter is frequently associated with greater likelihood of offending). One of the objectives of this paper is to explore these issues in greater depth.

Another issue relates to selecting *which institutions and services are relevant* to the topic at hand. Just a few might include state wards (and issues of constant household shifts), Centrelink (issues of breaches), schools (absenteeism and, also, impact of school exclusions), health services (especially GP-youth relations) and so on. A potentially useful framework of analysis here is the 'Pathways to Prevention' report for National Crime Prevention, and similar work generally in the area of youth development. This, too, will be explored from the point of view of developing a 'matrix' of service provision and institutional sites.

There are also *age-related factors* that are relevant to how young people experience services and institutions. These can be both direct and indirect. For example, in criminal justice there are issues relating to capacity (for 10-14 year olds), in education there is compulsory schooling until 15, and from the point of view of welfare/economic background there are rules pertaining to child support/sole parent benefits that are relevant to consider. The point is that there is an 'age effect' depending upon the type of institution or service on offer.

In considering young offenders as multiple service users, a number of specific questions need to be asked.

About Offending

What is the link between multiple service use and chronic youth offending? To answer this we must first address the issue of whether to adopt a narrow or a broad definition of service. For present purposes, this paper will consider services in the widest sense, to include not only criminal justice institutions and agencies but educational, welfare, health and commercial services as well.

How are different types of youth offending or rule breaking associated with specific kinds of service provision and how do these affect the progression from ordinary to chronic offending? In other words, how do the experiences of young people with different service providers lay the groundwork for persistent offending behaviour?

If the causes of offending can be seen to be multi-factoral in nature, then where do services fit into the risk and protective factor environment? To put it differently, can we describe ways in which service provision itself may contribute to either the criminalisation of young people or the propensity for some young people to engage in criminal and anti-social behaviour?

About Service Provision

Under what conditions are social institutions and services facilitative or oppressive in the lives of young people? This question assumes that young people may have an ambiguous relationship to services, regardless of the formal intent, rationale or objectives of the service provider.

What range of services are available to young people and how does service provision and delivery impact upon the behaviour of the young person? Young people in general utilise a wide variety of services, in differing ways and for different purposes. What are the distinct patterns of use within the youth population?

What are the key issues for service providers in relation to youth development and protecting the human rights of the child/youth? Related to this is the issue of coordination and multi-agency approaches, and how best to institute principles of social inclusion.

Consideration of the issue of youth offending in relation to young people as multiple service users does not take place within a theoretical or political vacuum. It is important to acknowledge that notions of good service provision are increasingly being linked to a particular analytical framework. Specifically, in recent years the multi-factoral model has been prominent across a range of service areas. This is in contrast to theoretical frameworks that rely on one or two key organising concepts in constructing explanations for social behaviour (such as ‘social inequality’, ‘lack of moral socialisation’ or ‘pathological condition’). In the fields of education, welfare, health and juvenile justice, the dominant model of intervention now emphasises that there are multiple factors that influence human behaviour and that affect people’s life chances and social development.

In criminology, for example, theories and studies of juvenile offending point to a wide range of causal factors. In a review of empirical research on the predictors and correlates of offending, Farrington (1996ab) provides a systematic description of the key ‘risk factors’:

- prenatal and perinatal factors (e.g., early childbearing, substance use during pregnancy, low birth weight)
- hyperactivity and impulsivity (e.g., hyperactivity-impulsivity-attention deficit, lack of inhibition)
- intelligence and attainment (e.g., low nonverbal intelligence, abstract reasoning, cognitive and neuropsychological deficit)
- parental supervision, discipline and attitude (e.g., erratic or harsh parental discipline, rejecting parental attitudes, violent behaviour)
- broken homes (e.g., maternal and paternal deprivation, parental conflict)
- parental criminality (e.g., convicted parents, poor supervision)
- large family size (e.g., related to parental attention, overcrowding)
- socio-economic deprivation (e.g., low family income, poor housing)
- peer influences (e.g., male group behaviour, delinquent friends)
- school influences (e.g., use of praise and punishment, classroom management)
- community influences (e.g., high residential mobility, neighbourhood disorganisation, physical deterioration, overcrowding, type of housing)
- situational influences (e.g., specific opportunities, benefits outweigh expected costs, seeking excitement)

It is the combination of these factors, and their association with certain categories of young people, which explains variations in the propensity for anti-social and criminal behaviour among young people. Recent Australian reviews and commentaries likewise identify a wide range of interacting and inter-related factors – pertaining to the individual, peer groups, family, school and community – as integral to any explanation of youth offending (see Baker, 1998; Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium, 1999; Toumbourou, 1999; NSW Legislative Council, 2000). This has major implications for how service

provision is conceived and the role that services might play in the lives of young people.

Any early intervention strategy has to be cognisant of the ‘risk’ and ‘protective’ factors in the community that affect youth development and life opportunities. This is the case for interventions in general, as well as in regard to specific intervention areas such as juvenile justice. For instance, most youth crime prevention strategies tend to focus on specific groups of young people, within a fairly narrow age range (such as 12 to 20). Yet criminological research strongly suggests that crime and anti-social behaviour are intertwined with overall distribution of communal resources and child development experiences (Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium, 1999). The age at which intervention occurs becomes an important part of the intervention strategy.

Causes of Offending and Models of Intervention

The most influential model of juvenile offending and crime prevention in Australia is that put forward by the Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium (1999) in a report prepared for National Crime Prevention. Titled ‘Pathways to Prevention: Developmental and Early Intervention Approaches to Crime in Australia’, the report emphasises the complexities of both the causes of offensive and anti-social behaviour, and the responses required to address these. The Consortium (1999: 100) emphasises the importance of ‘the targeting of multiple risk and protective factors at multiple levels (the individual, the family, the immediate social group, and the larger community) and at multiple life phases and transition points in an individual’s development’. Schematically, the approach can be summarised as follows.

Multiple Factors at Multiple Levels

Risk Factors – include factors that increase the likelihood of an offence occurring or being repeated. These factors might include things such as the characteristics of an individual (e.g., a child’s impulsivity), the family (e.g., a parent’s harsh discipline or weak supervision), the social group (e.g., peers that encourage or tolerate the occurrence of crime), and the community (e.g., a community that is disorganised and offers few alternatives to crime as a source of money or activity).

Protective Factors – include factors that reduce the impact of an unavoidable negative event, that help individuals avoid or resist temptations to break the law, that reduce the chances that people will start on a path likely to lead to breaches of the law, and that promote an alternative pathway. Again, these factors might include such things as responding to the needs of the individual (e.g., active promotion of self esteem), enhancing family relationships (e.g., advice and information), fostering positive social group activity (e.g., sport) and community building (e.g., facilities and social structures that support involvement and attachment).

Multiple Life Phases and Transition Points

Pathways – developmental perspectives view life as a progression through various stages and transition points. These include, for example, movement of a child from the family as the prime setting for their activity, through early education, primary school, high school and adolescence, and adult life. Positive experiences in each setting and transition point will foster pro-social behaviour.

Vulnerabilities – at each life stage or transition point there is the risk of possible negative experiences that may put individuals on an at risk pathway. These might include, for example, experience of failure in schooling, alienation, becoming involved with an anti-social peer group, and unemployment. It is recognised in this perspective that while behaviour can be changed more easily in the young than in the old, later transition points are also sensitive times and it is important to structure intervention to diminish the risk of movement into harmful paths at these times as well.

The crux of the developmental crime prevention approach is that crime is a consequence of cumulative risks and combinations of factors, and that these vary over the life course.

Multi-agency Intervention Strategies

To respond adequately to potential and actual offending behaviour, then, it is recommended that action be taken across a range of institutional and relationship domains, such as family, school, and community. As the consortium members (1999: 100) put it:

This necessarily entails a whole of community intervention model that incorporates a range of programs and services, rather than an intervention built around a single program. It also entails a process of ‘community building’ that helps to create an inclusive, ‘child friendly’ or ‘family supportive’ environment that promotes the normal, prosocial development of children.

In designing youth crime prevention interventions, it is recommended that a wide range of community members, institutions and services be involved. These include, among others, children and young people, parents and carers, other family members, neighbours and friends, schools, housing providers, leisure

and recreation services, health services and general practitioners, drug and alcohol services, community services, non-government organisation, the police, employers, trade unions, the media and so on (see also Toumbourou, 1999).

This kind of intervention model will be more than familiar to people working in the fields of health, education and welfare, particularly given that many of its core concepts are derived from or closely linked to empirical studies undertaken in these fields (especially research on health and wellbeing).

The key assumptions and emphases in this type of intervention analysis and approach can be summarised as follows.

Causes: multiple factors

Social development is influenced by a wide range of factors, most of which are outside the conscious control of the individual. Identification of ‘risk’ and ‘protective’ factors is essential in explaining why children and youth act they way they do, and how they cope or interact with their environments. Such analysis must also consider the impact of cultural factors and personal resiliency on life trajectories, as well as socio-structural variables. Empirical study has ascertained that there are numerous and diverse factors that have varying degrees of impact on any individual’s life experiences and life course. While certain factors have a persistent effect on life chances (such as living in poverty, dysfunctional family life and so on), ongoing research is needed to determine the ever changing, and ever expanding, ‘risk’ factors affecting child development, and to positively identify relevant ‘protective’ factors in any given situation.

Responses: multi-pronged, multi-agency

The hallmark of multi-factor approaches is that they usually stress the need for multi-dimensional and holistic ways of working at the local community level. They also acknowledge the crucial role of community members, including children and young people themselves, in the social development process. In other words, the theoretical framework gives rise to concern to address social problems using multi-pronged methods and involving a wide number of agencies. Many causes require many tactics and strategies operating across a number of fronts.

Nature of Offender and Offending Patterns

The analysis of multiple causal factors, combined with an acknowledgement of the need for multiple forms of service delivery, is also important with regard to

the profile of young offenders. That is, complexity of explanation and complexity of response mirror the complexity of offending itself.

Social factors in offending – data consistently show that young people who become criminalised and enter the farthest into the criminal justice system tend to exhibit certain social characteristics (see Cunneen & White, 2002). For example, a typical young offender profile would include the following kinds of elements:

- the peak age for theft is 16, for robbery 17, for homicide 19
- young men are far more likely to be charged with a criminal offence than young women, and are more likely to re-offend than young women
- increasingly, young offender populations now include greater proportions of ethnic minority youth from specific groups, although the bulk of young offenders are from Anglo Australian backgrounds
- indigenous young people, male and female, are over-represented within the juvenile justice system nationally
- juveniles official processed through the criminal justice system tend to come from low socio-economic backgrounds, with unemployment and poverty being prominent characteristics
- many young people who appear before children's courts do not live in nuclear two-parent families
- those young people most entrenched in the juvenile justice system are likely to have a history of drug and alcohol abuse
- a disproportionate number of young offenders have intellectual disabilities or mental illness

These social characteristics must be taken into account in causal explanations of offenders (and discussions of 'risk' and 'protective' factors). They must also be accounted for when it comes to the development of general and youth-specific services.

Types and processes of offending – the general pattern of offending can be also be broken down in terms of extent and seriousness of offending. Typically, it is the case for example, that a large proportion of juvenile offenders stop offending as they get older, and that a relatively small group of re-offenders account for a large number of court appearances (Coumarelos, 1994; Cain, 1996). Children and young people who offend can be categorised into three main groupings (McLaren, 2000; New Zealand Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Social Development, 2002; see also Leober & Farrington, 1998):

- low-risk or minor offenders, who do not commit many offences and who generally ‘grow out’ of offending behaviour as part of the normal maturation process;
- medium-risk offenders who commit a number of offences, some serious, mainly due to factors such as substance abuse and anti-social peers; and
- high-risk offenders who begin offending early (between 10 and 14 years of age), offend at high rates and often very seriously, and are likely to keep offending into adulthood.

The age at which offending first occurs, or at which criminalisation of the young person happens, has a major bearing on subsequent contact with the criminal justice system (see, for example, Harding & Maller, 1997). The younger the person, the more likely future re-offending. Again, different ages and different types of offending demand different kinds of responses.

Service provision and special populations – the social characteristics of offenders and social patterns of offending mean that service provision has to take both universalistic and selective forms. That is, the fluidity of movement from one group of offending to another, and the numerically large populations out of which the most ‘at risk’ youth emerge, demand responses that cover all young people, yet simultaneously target some young people in particular.

- social characteristics translate into ‘social groups’ (such as young people with disabilities, ethnic minority youth, indigenous youth, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people, young homeless, poor young people), and mainstream services need to be able to cater to diverse needs accordingly;
- special or dedicated services may also be required, particularly for ‘at risk’ young people, beyond those of mainstream provision, due to factors such as religious orientation (e.g., prayer rooms), cultural prescriptions (e.g., separate swimming spaces for men and women) or social disadvantage (e.g., early exclusion from schooling);
- within specific juvenile justice interventions that target ‘at risk’ groups and individuals there is a need to use a multi-faceted approach that targets a number of needs or skill deficits, and that address a wide variety of risk and protective factors.

The relationship between specialist services and mainstream provision is always fraught with difficulty and at times competing purposes. Nevertheless, diversity within the youth population requires diversity of service provision. How this diversity of provision is constructed in practice is a key issue (see Berry, 2002; McLaren, 2000).

Service Provision as Crime Prevention

Recent developments in Australia concerning crime prevention and service provision parallel work that has been done overseas. For example, the Youth Justice Committee of the National Crime Prevention Council of Canada undertook a series of consultations in different locations across Canada between May and August 1995. The Council wished to ascertain what programs and methods might be the most effective in preventing youth crime. It recommended the creation of a constellation of existing programs that 'work'. For present purposes, a list of relevant options will suffice.

Programs that set the stage for community-based prevention

- programs that open doors for youth involvement
- programs that promote collaboration
- programs that strengthen the ability of communities to solve their own problems through co-ordination
- abuse prevention programs
- public education programs

Early Intervention Programs

- parent support programs
- headstart and quality child care
- child abuse prevention programs
- early intervention programs which focus on children manifesting disruptive behaviour

Preventive Support and Activities for Older Children and Youth

- recreational programs
- emotional support and guidance
- counselling and treatment
- education and training
- job readiness, job creation and job location
- holistic programs which help young people make and maintain positive life changes.

The Council makes the point that community involvement at the local level is essential to the development of effective prevention programs, and that this involvement must be broadly based and involve young people themselves (Canada, National Crime Prevention Council, 1996). While emphasising the adoption of holistic, locally-based programs, the Council is aware of a number of barriers to such an approach. Some of these include not enough early intervention, the inappropriate use of the justice system to deal with health and social problems, too little follow-up and follow-through in programming, the fragmented and territorial nature of programs, the racist and classist nature of the youth justice system, too little evaluation of existing programs, the impact of cuts to social and health programs on crime causation, the problem of short-term funding and lack of continuity in service provision, and misinformation about young people and youth crime which reduces the effectiveness of policies and programs.

The concerns and proposals of the Canadian National Crime Prevention Council have been echoed in other countries as well. In Britain, for example, a Home Office report examined different programs designed to reduce criminality among young people (Utting, 1996). The report begins by noting the most significant factors identifying children and young people at increased risk of criminality. These include personal risk factors (e.g. hyperactivity); family risk factors (e.g., parental conflict); socio-economic and community risk factors (e.g., low income); and educational risk factors (e.g., low attainment). In dealing constructively with these risk factors, the report evaluates programs in three main areas.

Families

- universal services [offered to any parent or family who might find them helpful, e.g., parent network]
- neighbourhood services [available to families under stress and/or living within a targeted area of disadvantage, e.g., home-start]
- family preservation [intensive care interventions aimed at families where relationships are under severe stress, e.g., family nurturing network]

Schools

- raising school attainment [e.g., high/scope UK]
- preventing exclusions and truancy [e.g., health alliance project]
- preventing bullying [e.g., anti-bullying initiative]
- crime and anti-social behaviour awareness [e.g., schools crime awareness and reduction programme]

Sport and Leisure

- constructive use of leisure [e.g., motor project]
- outdoor pursuits [e.g., outward bound access programme]
- youth work [e.g., youth action project].

The results of the Home Office study indicated that many of the community-based programs on offer were ‘promising’, although further evaluation was needed. Those projects which appear to work best are those which are targeted geographically on identifiable communities, which are based on a strong commitment to multi-agency co-operation, and which are guided by detailed knowledge of local problems and local resources.

Similar considerations are likewise acknowledged in American research (United States Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1996). Delinquency and violence are seen to have multiple causes, which often occur simultaneously, making each worse and even more difficult to ameliorate. Crime prevention thus requires an approach that can first identify the most prevalent factors in an area, and those pertaining to particular groups. Secondly, it requires identifying specific programs that will help young people, families and communities address these risk factors. It is noted that ‘Improving education and youth employment opportunities, enhancing social skills, and providing youth with mentors and adult role models are essential components of delinquency prevention’ (1996: 55).

A key element in this process is ensuring that all members of the community take responsibility for ensuring the health and well-being of children and young people, and that members of the community work together to respond to local problems (see also, Bownes & Ingersoll, 1997; United States Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995; United States Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1997, 1998). These ideas are likewise central to recent New Zealand reports on youth offending, and in particular, inform the newly adopted ‘Youth Offending Strategy’, a comprehensive developmental approach to offending (New Zealand Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Social Development, 2002).

Fixing the child or reshaping the social environment – this is the tension often apparent in discussions of youth offending and service provision. For example, Semmens (1990) describes two different models or approaches to youth crime prevention, each of which has major service implications.

- The first model, *'Individual Control'*, is premised upon a major distinction between the 'normal' community and 'at risk' groups who stand outside of this community. The point of intervention is to control the actions and behaviour of the outsiders and to draw them into the sphere of the normal community. Service provision is something directed at individuals belonging to groups deemed to be likely to offend.
- The second model, *'Social Development'*, sees the problem in terms of weaknesses within the key social institutions, combined with poverty and unemployment. Primary prevention here refers to the elimination of the social problems that cause delinquency. Attention is directed at strengthening institutions such as the school and family, in ways that allow greater participation and opportunity for young people. Service provision is oriented toward holistic and multi-agency work intended to enhance opportunities by changing institutional practices and maximising communal resources.

These models are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as intervention will always be shaped by local needs, immediate circumstances and individual differences. However, how they are deployed at a strategic level (that is, which model is to dominate project and program development) has substantial ramifications for the nature of youth interaction with social institutions and service providers.

The accompanying chart outlines in summary form four areas of concern regarding anti-social behaviour by young people [Chart 1: Context, Processes and Responses to Anti-Social Behaviour]. Explanations and interventions charted out here are part of a particular continuum of understanding and action, one that underpins much of what presently occurs in the area of juvenile justice (as well as health, education, welfare). The key ideas are that there are many different causal dimensions to youth behaviour, that there are many different transition points and progressions for different types of behaviour, and that there are many different approaches that can be drawn upon to channel youth behaviour in positive pro-social directions (see New Zealand Department of Corrections, 2001; Catalano & Hawkins, 1996; Browning & Loeber, 1999; Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium, 1999; NSW Legislative Council, 2000).

For present purposes, the importance of this 'trajectory theory' of the origin of criminal behaviour (see New Zealand Department of Corrections, 2001) is that it implies that the chronic young offender is the outcome of a social process.

The origin and ongoing construction of offending and anti-social behaviour therefore has to be seen in the context of interactions between service providers, in a range of institutional settings, and individuals and groups over the course of the life cycle. Responding to young offenders after the event, while essential, is insufficient in developing strategic interventions that will address the problem in its entirety. Simultaneously, there is a need to pinpoint how service provision at different ages and involving different kinds of services and benefits influences behaviour for good or bad. Recognising that chronic and serious young offenders are ‘made’ through their social interactions, and that most chronic and serious offenders come from socially and economically disadvantaged families, the essential question is how and why multiple service use might be related to youth offending.

Questions:

How do *service providers* contribute/forestall delinquency through their operation viz risk/protective factors and transitions?

i.e., the structural roles and capacities of institutions and services from the point of view of youth health and wellbeing.

How do young people *experience* services, regardless of intent and presumed benefit of services?

e.g., unintended stigmatisation via application of the notion of ‘at risk’

How do services address the tension between *changing the individual and transforming social systems*?

e.g., enhancing personal opportunities and contributing to social justice

Chart 1: Context, Processes and Responses To Anti-Social Behaviour

Risk Factors

[CONTEXT]

- Individual (e.g., hyperactivity, cognitive problems)
- Family (e.g., criminal parent behaviour, poverty)
- Peer (e.g., association with those who engage in anti-social behaviour)
- School (e.g., low school commitment, poor academic achievement)
- Neighbourhood & community (e.g., availability of drugs, high residential mobility)
- Nation-State (e.g., war, genocide)

Protective Factors

[CONTEXT]

- Individual (e.g., clearly defined aspirations)
- Family (e.g., supportive parents, clear rules of behaviour)
- Peer (e.g., association with those who engage in pro-social activities)
- School (e.g., good academic performance, school attendance)
- Neighbourhood & community (e.g., social cohesion, stable residential patterns)
- Nation-State (e.g., protection of human rights, rule of law)

Developmental Pathways

[PROCESS]

- Transition points (e.g., entry into schooling, entry into labour market)
- Authority conflict (e.g., between teacher and student, police and young person)
- Minor covert acts (e.g., lying, shoplifting) leading to more serious delinquency (e.g., fraud, burglary, major theft)
- Minor overt aggression (e.g., bullying) followed by more serious types of fighting and violence (e.g., rape, attacks)
- Life events (e.g., death of a parent, suicide of sibling or friend)

Service Provision

[RESPONSES]

- Anti-Gang (e.g., targeting of hot spots and particular group formations)
- Youth Crime Prevention (e.g., specifically aimed at issues of crime and disorder)
- Non-Crime Oriented (e.g., health, welfare and education services)
- Multi-agency and multi-pronged (e.g., whole of government approach to youth needs, rights, responsibilities and welfare)
- Commercial Niches & Approaches (e.g., leisure markets, provision of safe play areas, negotiated uses of public areas)

Role of Institutions and Services

Nature of Social Institutions

One starting point for investigation of service provision as this relates to young people is to consider the institutional context for different types of services. There are a wide number of social institutions, community organisations and community action groups involved in the lives of children and young people. Various agencies and institutions play a number of different roles in relation to youth issues and practices, covering both broad welfare and educational concerns (such as schools, welfare agencies and the like) and more directly regulatory and coercive concerns (such as private security guards and justice department officials).

If we are to assess adequately the nature of service provision then we need first to discuss the institutional setting for much of the activity related to youth. Broadly stated, there are three main types of institutions which predominate in the lives of young people: coercive, developmental and commercial (see Cunneen & White, 2002). The key features of these institutional sites are summarised in the accompanying chart [Chart 2: Social Institutions and Young People].

By their very nature, coercive institutions are involved in the negative labelling of young people. That is, the impact of these institutions on young people is by and large one which constructs an 'illegitimate identity' for those caught up in the net of social control (Polk & Kobrin, 1973). In some cases, it is precisely the likelihood of a negative label, and the notoriety and 'street cred' accompanying this, that entice young people to seek out conflict with law enforcement officials (see for example, Johnston, 1991). Much of the work of these institutions is meant to separate out certain groups of young people from the rest of society - through means of exclusion from particular physical sites or by containment in secure facilities. Their activities are thus often premised upon ensuring a disconnection between some young people and other people and institutions, including their peers.

Chart 2
Social Institutions and Young People

i. Coercive Institutions

- designed to enforce rules, regulations and laws
- operate on basis of coercion or violence
- includes police, private security guards, courts, corrections
- impart negative labels on young people
- institutional dis-connection and separation of young people
- denial of usual freedoms

ii. Developmental Institutions

- designed to enhance development, opportunity, potentials
- operate on basis of resources, skills and knowledge
- includes schools, family, work, recreation, social work
- have power to confer positive, and negative, labels
- sources of institutional connection and social inclusion
- flexibility in meeting young people's needs

iii. Commercial Institutions

- designed to make a profit
- operate on basis of buyer-seller commercial nexus
- includes shopping centres, commercial leisure outlets
- have ability to confer positive, and negative, images of yp
- important places for social connection and social activity
- main focus is on customer needs, including young people

Service provision within the context of coercive institutions is variously designed to deter, to punish, to express reprobation, to rehabilitate, to treat and/or to change the offender in some way. Depending upon the extent and type of contact with coercive institutions, young people who progress deeper into the juvenile justice system tend to have a much harder time escaping the life of adult offending and/or chronic and serious youth offending. Recidivism rates for juvenile offenders suggest the failure of the system as a whole to do much more than simply entrench deviant status, rather than facilitating the movement of the young person in more conventional directions.

By contrast, developmental institutions have the power to confer positive as well as negative social labels (Polk, 1994). They thus embody both negative and positive social aspects (e.g., success at school or alienation; family as safe haven or place of child abuse; wages for work or exploited labour). In a similar vein, while developmental institutions may involve some degree of compulsion (e.g., compulsory schooling), they nevertheless can be seen as operating mainly through 'consent' rather than 'coercion'. That is, contact with such institutions is generally seen as desirable and of benefit to the person who engages with them. There is an assumption that there will be social benefits and rewards for the participants (e.g., certificates, knowledge, wages). Such institutions are often an important point and source of social connection for young people, both in terms of peer group relationships and with regard to active participation in other mainstream social institutions (i.e., there is an intersection of participation in the family, at school, in work). To put it differently, positive participation in any one developmental institution usually implies that a young person is simultaneously nested in a web of supportive relationships involving more than one such institution.

Service provision in this instance is intended to enhance the lives of young people in some way, although sanctions may be utilised as a means to ensure order, to guarantee fairness or to enforce a modicum of reciprocity on the part of the young people for the benefit received. How services are provided plays a vital part in how young people will respond to the potential benefits on offer.

As with developmental institutions, commercial institutions have the capacity to apply both positive and negative social labels on young people. Through participation with such institutions young people may develop particular forms of 'consumer-related identity'. Alternatively, as non-consumers they may be labelled 'troublemakers' or 'undesirables'. Given the physical location and the diverse congregations of people who engage with them, young people see

commercial institutions as important places for social connection and social activity.

Service provision in the case of commercial institutions is informed by considerations of profit. This translates into two main concerns. First, to relate to young people as actual and potential consumers and thus to cater to their cultural needs as teenagers by creating comfortable environments within which to purchase goods and services. Secondly, to ensure that customers generally, including young people, feel safe and secure in the commercial environment and that any potential threats to the trading process are adequately dealt with.

Each of the three types of social institutions described so far occupies an important place in the lives of young people. For example, young people have extensive contact with the police, with teachers and with shopkeepers. The relationships that young people have with the agents of these institutions are crucial to consider in any discussion of service use and chronic youth offending.

Social & Legal Frameworks

Services and programs available to young people are shaped in the first instance by particular age factors. That is, childhood and adolescence is bounded by consideration of the idea that young people have varying stages of development and varying levels of understanding. The vulnerability and developmental aspects of youth are legally protected through a range of criminal and civil legal measures designed to take into account their overall level of maturity (see Schetzer, 2000; Western Australia Office of Youth Affairs, 2000). These measures involve elements of prescription and compulsion (as with the imposition of compulsory schooling), and elements of proscription and prohibition (as with the banning of alcohol sales to people under a certain age).

Examples of areas in which age-related legal requirements apply

Criminal Law – international instruments (such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child) hold that criminal responsibility should not be fixed too low an age being in mind the facts of emotional and intellectual maturity. In the Australian context, this generally means 10 years of age as the minimum age of criminal responsibility, with the doctrine of *doli incapax* also applying to young people up to the age of 14 (a rebuttable presumption that children who have turned 10 and not yet reached the age of 14 are incapable of knowing that their criminal conduct was wrong).

Contracts and Leases – as a general rule, people under the age of 18 are not bound by contracts, leases and other transactions unless they are for their benefit. Opening a bank account or borrowing money is possible at age 18, although the former is possible at any age as long as there is parental/guardian consent.

Driving – gaining a driver’s license is generally possible at 16 years (a learner’s permit) with provisional license available at 17 years

Alcohol & Cigarettes – generally a young person under the age of 18 is not permitted to buy alcohol or cigarettes, and to possess or consume alcohol in a public place. Drinking alcohol at a private residence may not be covered by law.

Medical treatment – generally at 14 years or over, young people can legally give consent to their own general medical or dental treatment

The law thus shapes the eligibility and responsibility of children and young people around distinct age markers. Variations will occur between jurisdictions, but generally speaking there are similar key transition ages in most places. In some cases there may be variation in what a child or young person may or may not do, depending upon permission being granted by the parent/guardian, a court, or relevant government department.

Examples of key transition ages for activities

Under 10

No criminal responsibility; compulsory schooling

10 to 15

Criminal responsibility (but rebuttable presumption of *doli incapax*), compulsory schooling

15 to 18

Eligible to leave school, gain a driver’s license, take up full-time job, engage in sexual activity (although different age provisions may apply for same sex relationships), qualify for social security payments if satisfy various eligibility criteria, consent to medical and dental treatment

18 to 21

Drink and buy alcohol and buy cigarettes, live independently, rent a house, borrow money, open a bank account, marriage, vote, watch R rated movies

21 to 25

Adult rather than youth wages, movement toward full adult social security entitlements

Principles of Service Provision

In general, the crucial principle in dealing with children and youth today is that of the ‘best interests of the child’. This principle was established by the United Nations via the Convention of the Rights of the Child, as one of the foundation principles underpinning all of the rights and freedoms of children. Article 3.1 of CROC states that: ‘in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration’.

Allied with this concept are other principles, such as (Cunneen & White, 2002: 276-277):

- The provision of conditions under which children can develop their full human potential, with human dignity, and the requirement that treatment be appropriate to the age of the child
- The capacity for children to participate and to express their views (if the child is capable of forming a view), including the right of the child to freedom of expression, thought, conscience, and religion
- The recognition that children require special protection because of their special vulnerability and stage of maturation
- The recognition that in most circumstances the best interests of the child will be served by remaining with their family and their family being involved in their development

The emphasis is on participation, and developmental opportunities, in an environment conducive to health and wellbeing generally.

In practical policy terms, these principles are often translated into the language of access and equity, building capacity and resilience, and social inclusion (see for example, Crocker & Cuthbertson, 2001).

- Access & equity – refers to the right of children to have access to a wide range of services and not to be excluded from services on the basis of their age or status
- Building capacity & resilience – that is, assisting youth to develop their capacities to cope with change and challenges, by bolstering protective factors (such as education) and diminishing risk factors (such as substance abuse)
- Social inclusion – refers to everyone having the right to participate fully in society and in so doing to have the opportunity to develop fully their full potential as a human being

What these terms mean in practice, however, is subject to variable interpretation. This is reflected in the diversity of service orientations that could purport to be based upon these principles of practice. It is also reflected in actual policy developments in areas such as welfare provision and street policing.

Drawing upon the literature relating to restorative justice (see Bazemore, 1991), there are three broad approaches to young people that might be adopted in relation to any particular service.

- Service provision as something that is done **to** you.
- Service provision as something that is done **for** you.
- Service provision as something that is done **by** you.

The relevance or efficacy of any particular approach very much depends upon which young people are targeted for service intervention, and where they fit within the broad service continuum. Universal services are intended for all young people, with the majority having good health and wellbeing and enjoying conventional lifestyles. Service provision of this nature may be more prevention oriented than intervention as such. However, young people who are identified as being ‘at risk’ or who present with clearly identified problems will require more

targeted and concerted attention than other young people. Interventions for these groups may take the form of crisis care, treatment services and support services. High level support may also involve case management and intensive intervention. The type of service intervention will to some extent be dictated by the needs and experiences of the target population.

Social Inclusion and Exclusion

The kind of government, non-government and commercial services available to young people reflects legal requirements and social principles as these pertain to a wide range of activities and events. Cinemas and pubs, for example, have clear guidelines regarding entry depending upon the age of the person and the service on offer. The exclusion of young people from certain types of activities and venues is important in understanding how and why they create and engage in alternative forms of entertainment, leisure and education – often associated with particular subcultures (see White, 1999). If young people feel left out, or alternatively, they wish to test age-related boundaries in the search of fun and excitement, then positive alternative service provision may be required to fill the gap.

The use of particular services is further shaped by a combination of age and family factors. For instance, whether a young person under the age of 25 is eligible for certain kinds of state financial support depends on whether they are deemed to be dependent (i.e., living at home) or independent. It is their relationship with their parents that counts, not their age as such, although 25 years does constitute yet another age transition point from the vantage of government policy. The exclusion of young people from certain benefits and services is linked to family situation and household arrangements, and depends upon factors such as family asset tests, residential patterns and employment or educational activities.

Conversely, the legal and policy framework within which youth are positioned also propels them into particular types of relationships with distinct institutions and services. For example, schooling is compulsory to the age of 15. Likewise detention centres involve ‘involuntary clients’, who do not have legal recourse to be other than where they have been ordered to be. The element of compulsion is central to how many young people experience institutions. Truancy patrols and the like serve to reinforce the message that schooling is not a matter of choice, but is a social requirement. What happens within the school grounds, however, has a big bearing on whether children and youth view education as liberating or an imposed burden.

Criminal justice agencies such as the police tend to intervene in the affairs of 15 to 19 year olds in a highly active and frequently intrusive manner, and thus to influence where and how young people spend their time. While the legislative basis for action varies from state to state, the general trend around Australia has been for police services to be granted extensive powers vis-a-vis young people (see for example Blagg & Wilkie, 1995). These range from casual use of 'name-checks' (asking young people their names and addresses), 'move-on' powers (the right to ask young people to move away from certain areas) and search for prohibited implements through to enhanced ability to take fingerprints and bodily samples of alleged young offenders.

The removal of young people from public spaces has also been accomplished through specific legislative measures. For example, in 1997 the *Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act* was enacted in New South Wales. The Act allows the police to remove young people under 16 years of age from public places without charge, if the police believe that the young people are 'at risk' of committing an offence or of being affected by a crime, are not under the supervision or control of a responsible adult, or if it is believed the young person is in danger of being physically harmed or injured, or abused. The Act does not specify the sort of offences that might be committed; but if an offence were actually committed, the police would not be picking the young person up under this Act.

Other types of legislation can also affect large groups of young people. This is so even though it may be designed in a manner that is age-neutral, because in practice, implementation frequently has a disproportionate impact upon young people. For instance, the *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Police and Public Safety) Act 1998* commenced in July 1998 in New South Wales. The Act made amendments to the *Summary Offences Act 1988*, so as to make the custody of a knife in a public place an offence, permit police to conduct searches for knives and other dangerous implements, and enable police to give reasonable directions in public places to deal with persons whose behaviour or presence constitutes an obstruction, harassment, intimidation or causes fear. The Act was monitored by the NSW Ombudsman over the first 12 months of its operation (NSW Office of the Ombudsman, 2000).

The Ombudsman found that people from 15 to 19 years of age were much more likely to be stopped and searched for knives than any other age group. While there were more knives found on 17 year olds than anyone else, the proportion of productive searches was relatively low for teenage suspects. In other words,

there was a particularly high number of knife searches of young people in which no knife was found. In a similar vein, it was observed that a high number of teenagers were given directions by police under the terms of the Act. Significantly, it was also pointed out that ‘the proportion of persons aged 17 years or younger affected by the directions power is higher than for the knife searches. The police data indicates that 48% of persons ‘moved on’ were aged 17 years or younger, while 42% of persons searched were juveniles’ (NSW Ombudsman, 1999: 37). The Ombudsman recommended that the New South Wales police service closely monitor the use of these powers, and be aware of the adverse impact this activity might have on police relations with the community in general or sections of the community subject to such activity.

Questions:

What principles and practices do current services embody from the point of view of *special needs and interests of young people*?

e.g., how are the ‘best interests of the child’ interpreted in service terms

What is the *actual and/or preferred policy framework* for different types of service provision?

e.g., based upon notions such as mutual obligation or pre-emptive intervention

What is the *relationship between coercion and consent* in the provision of specific youth services?

e.g., what justifications are there for suppression of choice on the part of young people, and under what circumstances

Service Provision and Delivery

Analysis of chronic young offenders as multiple service users has to proceed from an examination of the range and nature of services available to themselves and their families. The first task in this respect is to identify and describe areas in which services are currently available and the various forms that they take (see for example, Australian Law Reform Commission & Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997; Jamrozik, 2001).

Areas in which services are available

- **Financial & Consumer Affairs**

[e.g., banks, credit cards, telephones, internet use]

Young people as consumers and as communicators require access to a range of financial and other services. Use of and access to bank accounts, credit cards, mobile and stationary phones, and IT equipment depend upon family resources and to some extent the age of the young person. Capacity to take advantage of financial and communication products is also shaped by the knowledge and skills of the young person.

- **Education & Training**

[e.g., vocational, tertiary, social skills]

There are major social differences between private and state schools, and between vocational and tertiary forms of education. Family resources and selection of school have implications for retention rates, the impact of school and university fees, and educational pathways. In addition, community-based education incorporates teaching of social skills, parenting skills and a range of other life skill techniques and methods.

- **Welfare**

[e.g., benefits, subsidies, vouchers, discounts]

There are a range of material and financial services available on a selective (e.g., unemployment benefits, public housing, student assistance) or universal (e.g., family payments, sole parent pension) basis. There are also various non-material and/or personal services available, such as medicare, child care, youth

refuges and women's refuges. Entitlement to welfare services is variable, depending upon whether it is considered a 'right' or a 'need'.

- **Employment**

[e.g., job search, union, conditions, wages]

Services relating to employment include government and non-government agencies that assist with identifying potential employers, and that help to train workers in techniques of job search and job interviews. Work-related services are also provided by unions and advocacy organisations (e.g., youth affairs councils) on matters relating to workplace health & safety, harassment, working conditions and wages.

- **Health**

[e.g., physical, mental, alcohol & drug use, sexuality & sex, suicide]

General health care is provided on a universal basis through the medicare system. Specialist services such as alcohol and drug services, lifeline telephone services, aids advice services, and so on are also available. Health services include proactive health promotion and good health interventions through to reactive diagnosis and treatment. Issues of confidentiality, communication, definitions of health, access and exposure are relevant to how young men and young women used health services.

- **Law**

[e.g., family court, care and protection, immigration]

Legal services that are youth friendly and that have youth-specific expertise are relatively underdeveloped, but include community legal centres, national children's and youth law centre, youth human rights advocacy organisations, legal aid agencies and private solicitors. Many young people experience the law via family court, care and protection orders (including state wardships) and immigration proceedings (including issues pertaining to detention centres). The centrepiece of contemporary 'youth' law is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- **Criminal Justice**

[e.g., policing, crime prevention, courts, corrections]

There are many different types of services related to juveniles and criminal justice. These include, for example, police-citizens youth clubs, youth advocacy centres, children's courts, youth detention centres and family conferences. Non-government services are extensive, and range from coercive forms of crime prevention (some private security services) to community driver education

projects through to employment & education services informed by an explicit crime prevention ethos.

- **Family Support**

[e.g., housing, food, relationships, child care]

There are a myriad of family and parent support services, incorporating health and educational concerns through to relationship building and counselling services. Child welfare services such as child protection and domestic violence units are included. So too, are services directed at child care provision and early childhood education. Family support may also take the form of provision of food vouchers or the like, and emergency assistance to families in need.

- **Recreation & Leisure**

[e.g., commercial, home-based, sports, public spaces]

Governments provide a range of services for play, sport, socialising and games, as well as supporting community arts and entertainment. Examples include provision of skateboard ramps, public parks and libraries. Private sector services include computer games, sports clubs, pay and free-to-air TV, pubs and clubs, and cinemas.

Even a preliminary listing of service areas indicates the complexity and sheer number of services relevant to young people. To ascertain how services impact upon youth behaviour, for good or for bad, it is useful to develop a descriptive matrix of service provision [see Chart 3: Developing a Service Matrix]. One way in which to do this is to first identify the broad service areas (e.g., criminal justice), then to discern the specific institutions and services within these areas (e.g., police, courts, corrections, crime prevention), and then to outline the types of services provided within this subset of services (e.g., law enforcement, order maintenance, etc.). The next task is to identify particular services, projects and programs that are youth-relevant.

The importance of mapping services and developing a national stocktake of what is available in each region is that it provides information on what already exists in each locality, and what, perhaps, is required in the future. To reiterate an earlier observation of those supportive of a developmental crime prevention approach, a ‘whole of community’ intervention model incorporates a wide range of community members, institutions and services (Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium, 1999). If this is so, then it is essential to describe what is available and who is doing what with regards to service provision.

Chart 3
Developing a Service Matrix

Service Areas	Types of Services Provided	Youth-Relevant
<u>Criminal Justice</u>		
Police	Law enforcement	street policing
	Order maintenance	crowd control
	Traffic	license provision
	Crisis response	search & rescue
	Crime prevention	police-in-schools, truancy patrols, police-citizens youth clubs
Courts		
Corrections		
Crime Prevention		
<u>Financial & Consumer Affairs</u>		
<u>Education & Training</u>		
<u>Welfare</u>		
<u>Employment</u>		
<u>Health</u>		
<u>Law</u>		
<u>Family Support</u>		
<u>Recreation & Leisure</u>		

Nature of specific services

- **Youth-specific**

To comprehend fully the relationship between specific services and young people it is essential to have some understanding of the historical and social construction of ‘youth’, and of how contemporary images and perceptions of youth influence service orientation and provision. The category of ‘youth’, as a transition phase between childhood and adulthood, has its origins in the mid-1800s. It was at this time that various factory acts were passed that prohibited child labour, and that compulsory schooling was introduced.

Over time, young people between the ages of 7 and 15 were socially positioned as dependent (through exclusion from the labour market), less responsible (in the eyes of the law), and vulnerable (in the light of their developmental needs). Accompanying these re-conceptualisations there was the rise of a wide range of youth-specific institutions and services (see for example, Cunneen & White, 2002). These included significant changes in existing educational (toward mass schooling), criminal justice (introduction of children’s courts), welfare (enhanced child protection), labour market (regulation of entry) and leisure (commercial pop culture) systems. Age-specific facilities, cultures, benefits and services now form a prominent part of the social landscape.

Not all children and young people are positioned the same way in relation to these youth-specific services and institutions. That is, significant social differences and social divisions are apparent in terms of who is involved with which services, and the benefit derived from these. In the area of child protection and child welfare, for example, state intervention has disproportionately been directed at the families of poor people, working class communities and indigenous groups. With regard to schooling, there are major differences based upon income and class background, while criminal justice tends to be focussed on juveniles from disadvantaged backgrounds.

How specific institutions and services deal with particular individuals and groups of young people is partly shaped by broad perceptions of youth. Different groups of young people are treated differently – in schools, on the streets, in leisure venues, in their neighbourhoods – depending upon whether they are seen in a positive or negative light. Images of young people as victims and vulnerable can be a driver of policies that attempt to protect their interests via welfare intervention. Interestingly, when middle class young people are

implicated in drug use, it is often this image that predominates (see Sercombe, 1999). On the other hand, some young people are seen more in terms of being threats to society, and as parasites on the social body. Intervention in this instance tends to emphasise coercion and social control. Working class drug users are frequently seen as intrinsically 'bad', in part due to their social backgrounds and social networks (Sercombe, 1999).

The point of this discussion is that youth-specific institutions and services tend to be directed at specific groups of young people in general (e.g., criminal justice and working class kids), or to establish and reinforce social differences within the youth population through their everyday operation (e.g., school attainment of middle class kids). Secondly, bad experiences in one service area (child protection) are often associated with bad experiences in other service areas (schooling, contact with police). As is well known in the early intervention literature, poor service outcomes tend to compound each other – the young person having trouble in a foster home is also likely to have trouble at school and with local authority figures such as the police. There is a strong connection between children and young people on enforced welfare orders (state wards) and those who enter into the criminal justice system (juvenile offenders).

- **Youth-friendly**

Not all services are youth-specific in terms of potential client group. For example, most shops and restaurants are ostensibly open to the 'general public', as are hospitals, and doctors and dentists surgeries. In some cases there may be youth-specific agencies associated with a general provider (e.g., centre for adolescent health as well as general medical practice), but these are not mutually exclusive for young people. Here the question is whether or not young people view particular services as being youth-friendly or not.

The concept of youth-friendly encompasses a number of dimensions. It can refer to atmosphere, as in the case of a coffee shop that offers friendly service to teenagers. It can refer to cost (or perceptions of cost), as in the case of some commercial leisure outlets. It can refer to levels of formality, as in the case of venues with strict dress rules. It can refer to feelings of trust, as in the case of GPs and confidential health matters. It can refer to knowledge of services on offer and the language of the service, as with financial institutions and banks. The frequency and intensity of use by young people will be influenced by how youth-friendly the service is. For some services, they will be used only as a last resort, for example, a GP. Others will be used more often if perceived to be

amenable to the young person's capacity to pay, their comfort zone, their sense of welcome and so on.

Another factor that influences service use is whether the service caters to groups or mainly to individuals. For example, a GP medical practice is oriented toward individual young people. Cafes and shopping centres on the other hand lend themselves to groups of young people 'hanging out'. Groups of young people generate their own dynamic in terms of activities and visibility. Accordingly, they may come to the notice of a wide variety of service providers – retailers, private security guards, police, shopping centre managers – and be dealt with differently than one or two individuals. While peer groups are typically seen as a crucial influence in the lives of young people, services may not be geared toward accommodating groups of peers. This can lead to tensions between young people and service providers. The result may be the experience of a service as youth-alienating.

- **Dynamics of Service Provision**

Youth service provision is complicated by a number of factors pertaining to particular services. For instance, any one service may simultaneously be youth-specific but also a generalist service (e.g., cinemas that offer movies with variable ratings), and youth-friendly but also youth-alienating (e.g., licensed restaurants and those with dress codes). Moreover, variation in service provision may take the form of exclusions at various times, in order to cater for the needs of special populations. For example, assigning a women-only swimming period for a couple of days a week, would at one level be exclusive of male young people, but at another level allow young women the opportunity to go swimming when otherwise they would not, due to religious and cultural prescriptions regarding shared facilities.

Whether a service is compulsory or consensual makes a big difference in how some young people relate to it. As discussed earlier, coercive institutions such as those associated with the criminal justice system are ultimately based upon force or the threat of force. The 'stick' in this case is to make the young person into an involuntary client of a system designed to severely restrict their activities. While not all services offered by officials of the criminal justice system are coercive (for example, Parents and Citizens Youth Clubs), the interaction between police and young people is largely coloured by law enforcement considerations. Schools likewise operate through a modicum of coercion in that until the age of 15 young people are compelled by law to attend school. Within school, the student is bound to obey the directives of teachers

and principals insofar as they act in accordance with educational department guidelines. For the post-compulsory years, school attendance may be influenced more by public policy and benefit allocation (student allowances) than legal prescriptions as such.

Whether young people are involved with an institution or service by consent or by compulsion, the nature of the contact will have a major bearing on how they experience the service. Schooling may be experienced as beneficial and/or detrimental. Contact with police or private security guards may be experienced as reassuring and/or repressive. Young people may enjoy such interactions, or fear them. The effect of different services and interventions will vary, depending upon circumstances, and the young people and service providers involved. The dynamics of service provision will, in turn, have an effect on the status, reputation and options of young people.

There are also age-related factors that affect how and when young people use different services. For instance, physical and mental capacity, and level of maturity, are central to the ability of young people to enjoy or take part in various sports, leisure and cultural activities. As indicated earlier, it is also the case that very often there are age limits on diverse kinds of activities, and these too will impinge upon the choices available regardless of individual capacity.

- **Service Domains**

Another way in which to describe and analyse service provision is by reference to specific 'ecological' domains. For example, most crime prevention literature describes risk and protective factors in relation to the individual, the family, peer groups, the school, and the neighbourhood & community. These domains overlap with each other, but they are nevertheless discrete from the point of view of causal explanations of behaviour and service provision site and emphasis.

Abstractly, it is possible to make a number of observations and recommendations about service provision that would, on the surface, appear to be of benefit to young people. However, the closer one gets to empirical reality, the more complicated and difficult matters become. In the next section, the role and nature of family support services is explored as a means to tease out some of the issues surrounding service provision in this area. The intention of this discussion is to highlight the importance of detailed analysis of services, coupled with consideration of the grounded experiences of people who might be targeted for such service provision.

Case Study:

Family Support and Parenting Issues

The nature of family life has a major bearing on youth offending, particularly with respect to younger offenders. In a review of relevant literature, McLaren (2002: 62) cites the following as the main characteristics of families of offenders:

- have more frequent parental disagreements
- give conflicting directions to children
- show little dominance by parents in family decisions, with sometimes an inverted power hierarchy where children have more say in decisions
- be dominated by negative, rather than positive, emotional expression
- show more communication that is misunderstood or misread by other family members
- indicate less willingness to compromise
- use inconsistent parenting strategies, responding differently to the same behaviour at different times
- show negative parenting patterns, for example harsh discipline and little shared positive activities with children
- inadequately monitor the behaviour and whereabouts of children
- have difficulties with family cohesion and adaptability.

From a causal point of view, the two most important variables appear to be the reduction of family bonding due to youth involvement with anti-social or delinquent peers, and the nature of parental monitoring of children's activities, including who they mix with (see McLaren, 2000, 62).

Parental Responsibility and Social Division

Regardless of individual circumstance, public policy increasingly dictates that it is the parent(s) who should take most responsibility for the actions of their offspring. This is seen both in terms of the street presence of young people and the ways in which some jurisdictions are responding to any youthful offending that has already occurred. For instance, the threat of fines for parents who do not 'control' their children and seemingly endless public discussion about the deteriorating quality of parenting places the focus of responsibility for youth behaviour squarely on the backs of the parent. The idea is that crime is essentially a matter of 'bad parenting' and that ultimately the issue is a moral problem, stemming from lack of adequate, or the wrong kind, of socialisation.

The legislative response can involve several different kinds of sanction. In Oregon, for instance, parents can be charged with failing to supervise a minor in the event of a young person's illegal acts and be fined as well as directed to undertake a 'parent effectiveness' program (see United States National Crime Prevention Council, 1996). In the United Kingdom, a Magistrates' Court may impose a 'Parenting Order' on a parent for things such as when a child aged 10-17 is convicted of an offence or where a parent is convicted of failing to make sure that the child attends school. This basically requires parents to control the behaviour of their children (United Kingdom National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, 2000: 41).

A major problem with such policies, however, is that they tend to be based upon very specific concepts of 'parenting' and 'child-rearing', and very narrow conceptions of whose responsibility it is for children's health and wellbeing. Such measures do not take into account different family and parenting contexts, even though they are intended to reinforce the responsibility of parents to control their children. Universalistic assumptions and criteria are invoked about 'good parenting', but these ignore the diversity of actual traditions and practices across different communities.

The concept of childhood varies greatly according to cultural and class norms, and these often involve quite different degrees and types of adult supervision and parental control over children. For example, in Australia there are marked differences between some Anglo-Australian forms of parenting (and conceptions of childhood) and that practiced by many indigenous communities (see Johnston, 1991). In the latter, for instance, there is frequently encouragement of self-direction and independent action in a manner quite at odds with conventional middle-class notions of child-rearing.

Moreover, differences in social and economic resources at the household level can also impact on the capacity of some parents to regulate their offspring's behaviour even where this is deemed to be desirable or warranted. For example, it has been observed that for many indigenous people poor educational background and lowly socio-economic circumstances contribute to poor self-esteem. One consequence of this is that 'parental authority is undermined as the children observe their parents being placed in an inferior position' (Johnston, 1991: 285). The poor material circumstances of some communities, and the particularly disadvantaged position of many sole parent families, means that enforcement of a universal rule regarding parental responsibility will have unequal, and unfair, application. And, in the end, the major socio-economic problems that generate difficulties for many parents and children are too deep

and entrenched to be overcome simply by ad hoc parent support programs or parent penalty schemes.

These observations raise big questions about existing communal support given to parents and children, and the appropriateness of designing strategies of intervention that are based upon what is in essence defined as a 'parenting deficiency'. Family relationships are crucial in the developmental formation of individuals. The task is to nest and nurture positive familial relationships within a web of financial, social and institutional supports. Where these supports are not available, it is hardly just or socially effective, to place the burden of 'good parenting' (in this context referring to parenting that can act as a protective factor in prohibiting gang involvement) on those least able to respond in conventional ways.

Assisting Parents

More positive forms of intervention, which are explicitly designed to assist rather than penalise parents, are possible. Supporting families before breakdown occurs is vital in this regard. This can be achieved to some degree through provision of crisis support services that offer non-stigmatising home visits, and parenting skill programs established at a local level in high crime local government areas (see Wolverhampton Crime & Disorder Co-ordination Group, 2001).

General Parent Support

General prescriptions regarding parent support in the Australian context is provided by the Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium (1999: 106), as represented in the accompanying table [Table 1: Parent/Carers Roles & Responsibilities, Needs and Action Plan].

The Consortium makes the point that family units take different forms with different needs. Any program development therefore has to appreciate the importance of specificity, rather than relying upon presumed 'universal' features of families and/or parenting. It is acknowledged that parenting is a difficult and challenging task, and that there may occasionally be conflict and differences in children and parental needs.

**Table 1:
Parents/Carers Roles & Responsibilities, Needs and Action Plan**

<u>Roles and Responsibilities</u>	<u>Needs</u>	<u>Action Plan</u>
<p>To have primary responsibility for the care of their children & meeting their special needs</p> <p>To provide protection</p> <p>To seek help when things go wrong</p>	<p>Adequate living conditions</p> <p>Advice & information</p> <p>Support in times of stress</p> <p>Respite & relief from their caring role</p> <p>Learning & skills development</p> <p>Time for themselves</p> <p>Time for their children</p>	<p>The development of a state-wide network of non-stigmatising accessible support services</p> <p>Parenting education to be available to all parents</p> <p>Education on alternatives to Physical punishment</p> <p>Measures to tackle childhood poverty & discrimination</p>
<p>Source: drawn from Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium, 1999: 106</p>		

Specific Parenting Projects

Specific projects, such as the ‘Parents and Kids Together’ [PaKT] project in Tasmania, offer opportunities for individual counselling for parents and children, family meetings, telephone support, information and referral and support for parent support groups and information sessions (Stolp, 2002). The PaKT project is very much a support and developmental project for parents and children. Its basic operational principles include:

- PaKT works from a strengths-perspective, believing that parents and children are experts in how their family operates and what has been successful for them in the past. It is solutions-focused.
- PaKT will listen to families and find out what matters most and works best for them.
- PaKT works only with people who have given them their consent.
- PaKT offers a two-worker model, allowing one Family worker to work with the parent(s), the other with the child(ren)
- PaKT seeks to be accessible, offering a mobile service that can meet parents and young people at home, school and/or a suitable alternative venue. Appointments can be made outside school and work hours.

The intention of projects such as PaKT is to build stronger communities through stronger families. In this instance, building a strong family refers to forging positive links between family members, based upon skill development, communication and knowledge.

A summary of some of the family and parent support programs in New Zealand provides a useful indication and overview of the kinds of practical interventions that have been devised for children and young people at risk (see Appendix 3, NZ Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Social Development, 2002).

Family Support Programs & Services

Family Start – intensive, home-based support to 15% highest risk families from the time of a child’s birth

Strengthening Families – case management and inter-agency co-ordination at a local level between health, welfare and education sectors for at risk families

Community-based family support programs – includes such things as education and advice, emergency, special purpose housing, family wellbeing, and counselling on a generalist basis

Stronger Communities Action Funds – designed for communities to develop local solutions to locally-prioritised issues

Programs for child victims of domestic violence – to assist children to deal with domestic violence

Whanau Development Project – Whanau development, whanau mentoring and whanau facilitation pilots

Well-Child – aimed at children from birth to five years of age, and provides health surveillance and screening, family care/support and referral on to appropriate agencies, health education and health promotion

Family Service Centres – ‘one stop shop’ delivering early childhood education, well-child health services and family support services to families with pre-school aged children from disadvantaged communities.

Parent Support & Education

Intensive Home Visiting – a direct home-visiting program with a focus on integrating and co-ordinating existing health and social services

Parents as First Teachers – home-based support and links to other services for families with children aged from birth to three years of age

Awhina Matua – home visiting by community workers who are matched in terms of background with clients

HIPPY – demonstration in the home of instructional activities for parents to undertake with children aged 4-5

Wahau Toko I te Ora – for Maori whanau with an emphasis on those with children under five

Anau Ako Pasifika – monthly home visiting, parental development and creation of links with early childhood education for Pacific peoples

Teen Parent Education Projects – assistance for support groups help teen parents access welfare entitlements, stay involved with education to some extent, and obtain access to childcare

What these lists illustrate is the variety of programs and interventions possible in the area of family and parent support. How they work and whether or not they will substantively change offending behaviour is a question that still requires further investigation.

Specific Issues relating to Families & Parents

There is a range of specific issues that need to be tackled if relevant services and strategies involving families and parents are to be successful.

- **family honour and pride**

Interestingly, ‘good parenting’ and ‘good families’ are usually socially defined in terms that include respect for laws and law enforcement officials. Yet, this too, is bound to be affected by material circumstances and cultural contexts. For example, the development of Lebanese youth ‘gangs’ in Western Sydney has been interpreted by the young people themselves as fundamentally a family building project. On the one hand, what unites them is the persecution and insults suffered by their families at the hands of outsiders. As one young person put it: ‘If you insult one of us, then you insult our brother, and if you insult our brother, you insult our father, our mother, and put shame on our whole family’ (quoted in Collins et.al., 2000: 50). On the other hand, part of the family ethos is to protect each other. This extends to situations where one of the family is stopped by the police, and where the concept of ‘back-up’ becomes highly relevant to each group (see Collins et.al., 2000: 197). Family obligations, therefore, may reinforce particular social identities and social practices that, to those who are ignorant of the local context (such as racist abuse or police maltreatment), may appear to reflect anti-social tendencies. It is but a small step to move from criminalisation of specific individuals (based upon alleged gang membership and involvement) to portraying whole communities as being gang-like.

- **parental experiences of services**

Issues of young offenders experiences of and with support and other services ought to be seen in the context of their parent's experiences of governmental institutions. Many low-income families, for instance, rely on income support payments from different institutions (such as state housing commission support schemes, Centrelink) and/or have considerable experience with employment, income support, education and other types of service providers. Negative parental contact with these agencies and institutions can colour the ways in which offspring deal with them. Emulation is at least partly based upon observation of parental reactions to various types of services and interventions. Another potential source of conflict occurs when low-income households are forced into relying upon the children as key sources of household income, in the form of education allowances and benefits, regardless of the wishes of individual household members (see White et.al., 1997).

- **coverage and evaluation**

One issue of concern is the coverage that any particular strategy or program may have. For instance, is the service provided on a universal basis, to all families and households, or it is provided selectively only to certain families. If the latter, what criteria is to be used to determine eligibility and/or enforced participation? Not only is location of service and target group for the service important to consider, but so too is identifying what the funding source for each service will be. Moreover, service provision may be based upon 'good intentions', but systematic evaluation is needed to identify the strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately, the overall impact of any particular intervention.

Youth and community workers attending a recent youth gangs workshop in Glenorchy (9 July, 2002) identified the following concerns as also requiring close attention:

- **family feuds and the need to diminish conflict**

The question of 'whose problem is it' was raised in relation how family feuds tend to carry over and affect all family members regardless of gang membership or involvement. One suggestion is to approach periphery family members as an entry point to core family members. In order to diminish conflict, there is a need to deal with both inter- and intra-family violence. This would involve working separately with each family. In particular, it is important to sell the possibilities and benefits for the children if peaceful resolution of conflicts (including longstanding family feuds) could be achieved. Doing it for the sake of the children could be an important emotional lever for change. While working

separately with each family, it was considered important to stress the commonalities and similar interests across families as part of this intervention.

- **more and more practical parenting support**

One of the biggest problems is that social problems themselves tend to be inter-generational. Poor parenting gives rise to poor parenting, gang activity gives rise to gang activity, alcohol and drug abuse give rise to more of the same in the next generation. The age of different parents is also an issue, with some parents being mature adults, others only 16 or 17 years old. Rather than ‘lectures’ or ‘theory’, these families need down-to-earth practical skills. They simply have never experienced positive alternative forms of parenting in their own lives. What they want, and need, is how to deal with actual issues within their own families, how to deal with their own children, and how to respond to real incidents that affect their lives and the lives of those around them.

- **improve parent access to services**

While many parenting programs and projects already exist, it is often those most in need who are least likely to utilise them. This is so for a number of reasons. Poor access can be due to illiteracy, perceptions or experiences of bureaucratic red tape, or reluctance to engage services due to fear and suspicions about the government. The issue is how to access parents via some kind of ‘parent outreach’. One possibility is through the juvenile justice system, although this still represents a reactive approach and implies that a young person must come to the attention of criminal justice officials before anything can be done. New models of delivery are also required, given the reluctance of many parents to use mainstream parent support services.

The role of parents, parenting and families is crucial in the development of young people. However, as indicated above, there is no single model of parenting or family life that can be used as a template for ‘good practice’. Rather, personal, family and community relationships are intertwined in complex ways, and particular circumstances and contexts give rise to a multitude of family forms. The development of appropriate and effective strategies in relation to the family and parents, therefore, will be contingent upon the particular styles, cultures and resources pertaining to specific groups in the community.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that much public policy entrenches social differences based upon social class (amongst other differences). This occurs in the area of family policy as it does in other areas. For example, Jamrozik (2001) observes that it is mainly working class families who get caught up with ‘child

welfare' services that operate largely through identification of problems such as neglected and at-risk children and that offer coercive or compulsory solutions. By contrast, the issue for middle class families is 'child care', where the problem is constructed more in terms of rights and entitlements and where intervention is positive, developmental and voluntary. It is argued that there is a dichotomy between how rich and poor are treated in family policy, and that this has increased 'by the recent policy of shifting the services of the 'welfare' category to the non-government sector, thus changing the nature of services from 'entitlement' to 'charity', bringing again to life the distinction between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving', while the services that are used mainly by the affluent are claimed as 'a right' (Jamrozik, 2001: 225). Regardless of the merits or otherwise of this argument, it is relevant to ask how recipients perceive the services to which they are exposed. In particular, if some types of service provision or state intervention are seen and experienced as intrusive and/or unfair, then this will have a marked impact upon families most vulnerable to these processes.

Questions:

What is the *specific client group most affected by a particular service*, and is this to the benefit or detriment of the young people involved?
e.g., user profile based upon social class, ethnicity, gender and other criteria

In what ways *do particular types of service provision entrench social inequality and social differences*?
e.g., by reinforcing notions of success and failure

Is the best way to assist some young people to *assist their parents*? If so, under what conditions or in what circumstances?
e.g., through parent support programs and projects

Issues for Multiple Service Users

At a socio-structural level, the key determinate of service use is that of social class. Even a cursory examination of the top tier compared with the bottom tier of Australian society highlights the gross differences between upper/middle class resources and working class resources, as reflected in material and cultural life (Jamrozik, 2001). Inequality and social differences are apparent across a number of key domains, such as employment (secure versus precarious work), income (salary versus wages), health (private versus public), education (private versus public) and the family (affluent versus subsistence lifestyle). This is the broad canvass upon which specific services and use of services is drawn.

Access

A key issue in service provision are the barriers that may act to prevent access by young people. A number of factors may serve to constrain the social, cultural and leisure opportunities of young people, some of which have been identified as follows (Berry, 2002):

Barriers to Access

Factors Constraining Choice

- cost
- familiarity & emotional access
- making social, cultural and leisure opportunities a priority

Lack of Information

Physical Inaccessibility

Transport Problems/Costs

Need for Training for Staff

- no policy on exclusion

Discrimination (and fear of discrimination)

- against young people: ‘troublemakers’
- racism
- homophobia

Lack of Support to Access Mainstream Services

- relationship building, practical support, follow-up work, pro-active approach
- staffing, training and careful programming
- resources

Planning and Programming

Enhancing access to services forms part of a crime prevention agenda, particularly insofar as the most disadvantaged youth in terms of service provision also tend to be among the most chronic of offenders. But access to services is not the only determinate of youth behaviour. How young people use and experience services also plays a major part in connecting or dis-connecting youth to conventional institutions.

Processes & Experiences

To illustrate how institutional processes and agency dynamics can impact upon youth experiences we can briefly examine some of the more significant influences in their lives. The tensions arising from how services are provided can inadvertently generate momentum toward deviant behaviour and offending careers.

- **schooling and education issues**

Schools play a major role in shaping the social resources and social identities of young people. In financial terms, the weight of government policy change has been in the direction of bolstering youth participation in school and tertiary education by providing enhanced government benefits for those in full-time study (see Szukalska & Robinson, 2000). This has taken the form of both changes in eligibility requirements and in disposable income, with full-time students being better off than their unemployed counterparts. The general trend has been twofold: one the one hand, a large and growing proportion of the 15-24 year old age group attend an educational institution (85 per cent in 1998); one the other hand, a growing number of these young people are combining full-time study with part-time work (Szukalska & Robinson, 2000). This is

creating enormous stress for many young people as they attempt to negotiate their multiple responsibilities, and to forge an existence on relatively low incomes.

For other young people, existing financial incentives to remain in some form of education are simply not sufficient to ensure continuing participation. This may be due to a range of reasons. For example, student alienation within the school context can lead to detachment from the institution, feelings of resentment or failure on the part of the young person, the turning toward alternative peer groups (such as ‘gangs’) for support and identity networks, and active resistance to what the school has on offer. Intergenerational experiences and attitudes to education also have a major bearing on how each young person perceives and acts within the schooling context (see Hunter, 1998). In other words, how one’s family sees education influences how children are socialised with regard to the learning process and educational institutions. Meanwhile, schools are confronted with higher retention rates and simultaneously ‘discipline’ problems on the part of students who may not really desire to be there but who, financially, have few alternatives. This may result in high levels of school absenteeism and/or the use of school exclusions as a disciplinary measure.

The specific kind of schooling available, the nature of youth relationships at the local neighbourhood level and the specific community context will all shape how young people deal with their own personal circumstances. From a school management perspective, the use of restorative justice methods of conflict resolution in school settings has been touted as a possible answer to youth misbehaviour (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001). Youth conferences have been introduced in the school setting in Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (see Strang, 2001). However, a number of difficult practical issues have been identified in relation to the use of conferences in this setting. For example, the traditional management and disciplinary culture of many schools (with an emphasis on punishment and behavioural control) have inhibited successful implementation of conferencing strategies (that emphasise restorative justice in pursuit of a supportive school environment) (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001).

On the other hand, the relationship between school disciplinary practices, in particular suspensions and expulsions, and youth justice conferencing outside the school have placed some young people into double jeopardy. That is, in some cases young people are being doubly punished – by the school, and by the juvenile justice system (see Scher & Payne, 1999). In either instance, it is recommended that professional, administrative and legal guidelines be put into

effect in order to ensure that young people's rights are protected and that conferencing processes reflect a restorative outcome (see Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001; Scher & Payne, 1999).

The pressures of combining work and study, of being in school in order to gain financial benefit, of being penalised for not wanting to be at school, and of being punished twice by two different authorities if the law is broken, are systemic pressures that weigh heavily on the backs of some young people. They certainly pose persistent and ongoing problems for service providers in the educational arena.

- **work & welfare issues**

Most under 18 year olds rely primarily on their parents as a main source of income (see White et.al., 1997), so that the level of resources available to any particular young person depends upon household circumstances, family relationships and expenditure patterns. For many young people, the opportunity to engage fully in recreation and leisure activities, much less attaining basic everyday necessities, requires that they seek an income beyond what is available via parents and relations. Employment, and finding paid work of sufficient level of remuneration, are crucial factors in immediate lifestyle and longer-term life prospects.

One of the important general conditions which shapes the current situation of economic adversity for young people is the collapse in the availability of full-time work for the young (see Polk & White, 1999). What work there is, tends to be insecure part-time and casual, and tends to go to students, rather than unemployed young people. A substantial proportion of Australian young people are today locked into marginal activities, precarious forms of work, and withdrawal from the labour market. This part-time work tends to be casual, with minimum pay and conditions, and limited prospects either for training or further advancement. While technically keeping some young people off the rolls of the unemployed, most such work will not provide avenues into full-time, long-term and career oriented jobs. The work tends to be a temporary measure associated with the educational and recreational financial needs of students, or simply a stepping-stone into yet more work of the same nature.

The unemployed and underemployed constitute a sizeable proportion of those people living in poverty, including young people. The important issue is whether these individuals are defined as 'deserving' or 'undeserving' with regard to the claiming of state benefits or services. It is crucial to acknowledge

here the ways in which social policy encapsulates and structures the social division of welfare (White 1996). In the Australian context, it is clear that more stringent conditions for the claiming of state support simultaneously constitute rules of inclusion and exclusion in relation to state welfare provision. It is notable in this regard that young people under the age of 25 are disproportionately likely to be penalised by governments for breaching social security rules. For instance, in February 2001, while jobseekers under 25 years of age represented only 30.6 per cent of those people receiving Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance, they made up 50.6 per cent of all Activity Test breaches (e.g., not accepting a 'suitable' job) and 57.6 per cent of all Administrative breaches (e.g., failure to attend an interview). The consequences for the young person are particularly severe, given the already low level of payment: a breach leaves a person on a Youth Allowance with only \$110 to \$119 to live on each week (Australian Council of Social Service, 2001: 26).

For those who play by the established rules of the game, the reward is a meager sum with which to achieve some modicum of physical survival. However, there are many who persistently find it difficult to succeed within the terms of the policy agenda (because more training does not necessarily guarantee greater employability); who refuse to accept the notion that welfare resources exist principally as a privilege (rather than a right); or who exhibit high degrees of alienation, resentment and loss of faith in themselves or the system (through accumulated 'failures'). Such people may find themselves subject to the label of 'underclass', and be subjected to other forms of coercive state intervention, such as the police.

The pressures posed by insufficient income and lack of job opportunities, of being forced off of welfare benefits due to minor breaches, of being under constant state surveillance due to disadvantaged living circumstances, and of having a marginalised social status, generate their own responses in the form of anti-social behaviour and anti-authority attitudes. Policy frameworks of 'mutual obligation' and the like force direct service providers into roles that may not be respected or responded to positively by young people reliant upon these services.

The experiences of service users thus can be examined by considering whether any particular service is perceived to be alienating or supporting of young people. Major questions can also be asked regarding whether the service is connecting or excluding in its operation. This applies across different services as well. Exclusions in one service may be based upon other service interventions, for example, trying to find housing for juveniles post-detention if

they have been identified as having an alcohol and drug problem. Or, keeping a young person out of school if they have been involved in the juvenile justice system. Another related issue is whether service provision is interrupted or continuous. Things such as social security breaches and school expulsions can break continuity, to the extent that the young person eventually decides to gain money and 'education' through other means.

Outcomes

In the end, analysis of the issue of multiple service users and chronic offending rests upon two key areas of concern. First, close examination is needed of the potential negative effects **of** service use (e.g., child protection intervention and the later engagement of the young person in crime). Secondly, investigation must look at the negative effects of **lack** of service use (e.g., counselling services for sexual abuse). To evaluate each of these requires scrutiny of service provision itself, and the constraints and opportunities faced by services and practitioners.

- **Difficulties of multi-agency partnerships and practices**

The theoretical model that informs much of the crime prevention literature places a lot of onus on practitioners to intervene at the 'community' level and to do so with as many different parties as possible. Multiple causal factors have to be addressed, so the problem requires concerted efforts involving a constellation of projects, programs and policies in each locality.

The interconnection of social problems makes it difficult to act upon them. Ideally, early intervention strategies should involve positive, active participation of, and partnerships between, government, state organisations, non-government agencies and the wider community. Ideally, community-building perspectives see issues such as crime and safety as being related to wider social problems such as unemployment and substance abuse. Ideally, community-oriented measures are meant to be about social inclusion through a variety of measures that enhance community participation and the use and availability of local resources through community development strategies.

Conceptually, there exist difficulties over how certain preferred methods are to be interpreted in practice (see Stokes & Tyler, 1997). For example, multi-agency collaboration often begs the question of who is to co-ordinate the process, and what criteria is to be used for evaluating the purposes and performance indicators of such co-operation (Hughes, 1996). The issue of

accountability looms large here, particularly given the different institutional sectors that may be represented in any such collaborative effort. It is worth reiterating that the different institutional sectors in a collaborative relationship often have very different core imperatives. This can lead to significant differences in outlook and intervention preferences.

Intervention that is intended to be multi-agency and multi-pronged in nature will inevitably be difficult to organise and administer. This type of intervention raises big questions about the precise nature of ‘partnership’, who is to do what, and how they are to do it (see White & Coventry, 2000). Some of the key issues include basic things such as agreeing on goals (achieving a common understanding of where everyone is going and what they are trying to achieve) and developing a common understanding of how people are going to work with each other (clarifying the terms of any partnership, with regard to decision-making processes, funding arrangements, lines of accountability and so on). Even when organisational structures and administrative processes can be worked out to practitioner and management satisfaction, big issues remain with regard to the toll that such intervention takes on practitioners.

- **Effective and efficient uses of resources and personnel**

For example, case management is closely tied to efforts to coordinate service provision in relation to specific individuals. But, it is the role of the **practitioner** to do the coordinating work, not the human service agencies and institutions. Organisationally, this can be seen as a devolution of responsibility to the ground level stemming from cost pressures within the human services as a whole. Thus, as an American commentator observes:

any major expansion of existing services is unlikely, yet those that exist are inadequate, particularly in the areas of housing, substance abuse treatment, and employment. Recognizing this, policymakers, program administrators, and advocates hope case managers can ensure that clients receive the most appropriate set of services from existing resources, with the maximum possible benefit. (Marks, 1994: 6).

Whatever the various rationales for the introduction of case management and other methods of hands-on intervention, there can be no doubt that, combined with other changes in systemic practice (for example, emphasising programs within the community, rather than institutional settings), the net result is more work for practitioners. This work rests upon a platform of renewed emphasis on involving multiple agencies in client service provision. Scarce resources and

multiple client needs demand that practitioners work across organisational boundaries.

Perhaps the largest gap in discussions about early intervention strategies, projects and programs concerns where practitioners fit in to the scenario (see White, 2002). At the coalface of practice, serious questions can be asked about workloads (number of cases, working with people who demand more intensive service provision), workplace support (high staff changeover, professional development opportunities), and workplace dynamics (low morale, stress). Much of the rhetoric associated with early intervention includes reference to concepts such as ‘resilience’, ‘capacity building’ and emphasising the existing strengths of children and young people. How are these attributes to be fostered in those who are meant to deliver them to others?

- **Evaluation and Leadership**

Perhaps the weakest area of academic, government and community research on service provision and crime prevention has been in the area of evaluation. How do we know that what is being done is achieving what is intended? How do we know what works, and what does not work? How do we measure if community problems or community efforts are changing over time? Whatever strategy or approach is adopted, it is vital that there be systematic efforts to assess them (see McLaren, 2000).

Evaluation can be of a general ‘scoping’ nature, as well as program-specific or linked to any one particular institutional sphere (see McLaren, 2000). For example, a recent British report on anti-social behaviour notes that there are deep-seated problems in this area (United Kingdom, National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, 2000: 8), many of which are shared by those wishing to address similar problems in this country.

- **Lack of priority** – where no agency or government has a specific requirement to reduce anti-social behaviour [can the same be said about anti-gang strategies?]
- **No clear responsibility** – where no one government department or local authority or community group are responsible for pulling together efforts or be clearly responsible [who is going to take responsibility for anti-gang strategic coordination?]

- **Lack of information** – where little accurate information is collected, and where it has it is patchily shared [what do we actually know about youth gang formations in particular locales?]

These problems are seen in turn to cause:

- **Poor implementation** – because there is lack of effective joint working, including sharing of information, confusion over perceptions of the problem and attitudes and knowledge of available measures [what will enhance responses to perceived gang problems?]
- **Real policy gaps** – because strategies have not focused on strengthening communities' resistance to anti-social behaviour through addressing underlying causes and changing perpetrators' behaviour [how do communities benefit and become stronger through anti-gang strategies?].

As has been observed elsewhere (White, 2002), 'If it is everybody's responsibility, then it is nobody's. Part of the difficulty with multi-factoral analysis, leading to multi-pronged approaches, involving multi-agency collaboration, is determining whose problem it is in the end'. Clearly if effective work is to take place at the community level and across a range of institutions and social groups, then issues of priority and coordination need to be addressed. Leadership is central to this process.

It is important to be clear as to the purposes of the evaluation, the underlying values and contested meanings surrounding particular evaluation objectives, and the limitations of any particular evaluation process as dictated by available resources (White & Coventry, 2000). While good evaluation is not determined by one's resources, it is nevertheless bounded by the resources at one's disposal – one can only evaluate according to the limits and possibilities offered by the resources available.

Questions:

What *factors most impinge upon the potential use of existing services?*
e.g., transport, knowledge, skills, money, isolation, discrimination, eligibility, age

What input do clients have when they are *involuntary clients of services?*
e.g., probation, detention, school detention

How do we translate the research-based theoretical models of intervention into *professional practice models* that allow for practitioner development and capacity building?

e.g., what organisational changes are necessary for the creation of positive work environments that will enable good intervention practice

Research Questions and Practitioner Issues

Researching Youth Offending and Service Use

If the main emphasis in future research is to further our knowledge of chronic offenders as multiple users of services (or not), then **chronic offenders** ought to be considered as key informants. One way in which to proceed, is to consider the lived experiences of young people across a wide range of institutions and services. This can be achieved in several ways:

- Through in-depth interviews with young people at various points within the criminal justice system, in order to ascertain which institutions and services have had the biggest impact in their lives and why
- Through analysis of pre-sentence reports, as a means to gain retrospective qualitative analysis of individual life histories

Secondly, we can examine the procedures and processes associated with **particular institutions and services** (e.g., general data on Centrelink breaches; education department policies on use of school exclusions, and absenteeism records; opening of bank accounts and use of credit cards by young people). Analysis of particular institutions and services could involve:

- Quantitative analysis, based upon gathering of relevant data from a wide range of agencies and organisations, in order to highlight instances of exclusion and general patterns of use
- Qualitative analysis, based upon interviews with a wide variety of service providers across different domains, as a means to gauge principles of practice, orientation toward client group, and limitations & opportunities experienced by the providers as workers/practitioners

Thirdly, the qualitative, quantitative and descriptive material can be cross-referenced to **local and overseas studies and evaluations**. This could have several components:

- An important part of this exercise is to develop further the ‘service matrix’ described earlier, and to engage in a local, regional and national stocktake of what services are available to whom and where.
- Much more evaluation work is required in regards to specific services, especially in the particular area of crime prevention as such. Some of this evaluation ought to take the form of meta-analysis of evaluated projects, strategies and interventions.

Methodologies

Statistical data collections:

e.g., Centrelink breaches; unemployment trends in specific locales; education participation rates

Interviews:

Young people in general: positive and negative aspects of services on offer
 Young offenders specifically: retrospective analysis of use/non-use of services
 Service providers across domains of coercive, developmental, commercial

Program/project evaluations [including meta-analysis]:

What seems to work and why for which kids

The broad aims of the research would be to investigate and analyse how service provision (and lack of service provision) is associated with offending behaviour. To do this adequately a very broad definition of service provision should be adopted, one that as far as possible reflects the priorities and life experiences of young people. This requires a mapping of the diverse and varied types of services to which young people are exposed. One purpose of the research would be to explore how and why the operation of particular services may result in youth alienation, criminalisation and/or social exclusion.

Practitioner Issues and Youth Service Frameworks

To successfully change the lives of offenders in positive ways requires changing their wider social environments. This is the key message of criminological literature on crime prevention, as discussed earlier in this report. Juvenile justice workers have an important and growing role in this process. The range of

interventions generally carried out by youth and community workers has been summarised in a recent National Crime Prevention report (Strategic Partners, 1999). The broad categories of intervention identified in that report include:

- **Personal Development** – focuses on developing the personal skills and enhancing self esteem and confidence of the young person and could include such activities as life skills development and self esteem building.
- **Relationships and Network Development** – focuses on the connectedness and interconnectedness of the young person with key individuals and groups in their life, and could include mediation, family group conferencing, family restoration and resolution and peer support.
- **Systems Transformation** – focuses on the way in which the young person and their community interact, and could include activities designed to engage the community in finding solutions, connect young people into their community and/or address the root causes of homelessness, criminal activity and victimisation.
- **Protective Intervention** – focuses on the individual young person as either a victim or perpetrator of criminal activity, and could include youth community, or social worker intervention, such as moving children from at risk situations, and/or activities of the community policing or juvenile justice system.

Depending upon individual circumstance and specific situations, different types of intervention will be appropriate in relation to specific kinds of clients. However, the weight given to each form of intervention will very much shape the allocation of resources and staff time and energy being put into specific measures.

In order to maximise the positive benefit of juvenile justice interventions, in ways that reflect multi-factoral analysis of the causes of youth offending, more work needs to be done on **how interventions might be organised**. For instance, it would be beneficial in the Australian context if action were taken across the following areas:

- mapping out of the existing, and needed, resources available to workers in each State and Territory;

- close examination of the training and professional development needs of juvenile justice staff and community partners (professionals and volunteers) in relation to the restorative social justice model;
- consideration of ways in which to foster the enhancement of regional co-ordination and information exchange;
- pooling of resources and expertise, combined with strategic thinking regarding how best to maximise and increase community assets;
- workshop discussions and continuous education with respect to theoretical developments in the field, and
- compilation of ‘best practice’ examples drawn from Australia and elsewhere.

A crucial aspect of any intervention must be the emphasis placed upon active youth participation in juvenile justice processes and community activities.

A more narrowly defined project for research would concentrate attention on those specialist forms of intervention that are explicitly designed to assist potential young offenders. These vary from general community crime prevention projects and institutions (such as Police Citizen Youth Clubs) through to provision of alternative schools. Evaluation is needed of specific interventions. So too, it is necessary to consider more carefully the conditions under which practitioners do their work, and the principles that guide their practice. This is especially important in the light of the great emphasis placed upon multi-agency collaboration and the adoption of multi-pronged intervention strategies.

Conclusion

The aim of this report has been to canvass a wide range of ideas and approaches relating to service provision as this affects children and young people. The impetus for the review stems from concern that chronic young offenders are also multiple users of services, and that there may be a link between how these young people access and use services, and their offending behaviour. Further research is needed into the content and processes of different types of service provision, the experiences of young offenders with various service providers, and the potential role of juvenile justice practitioners in enhancing the overall quality of service provision.

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