

Executive Summary

Between 1997 and 1998, Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) Community Advisors worked with community groups to establish crime prevention projects under the Community Project Workers Scheme (CPWS). The projects were located in areas identified under the 1997 Government Crime Prevention Package as five of New Zealand's crime "hotspots":

- Christchurch
- Gisborne
- Hamilton
- Otara
- Kaikohe

Each community group received funding for the salary of one community project worker (\$36,800 GST exclusive per project, per annum). Project workers were responsible for developing programmes targeting "at risk" young people.

Specifically, "at risk" young people were defined as those who had come to the attention of government and community based organisations because they were:

- at risk of offending or already committing offences;
- only attending school sporadically or not at all;
- showing symptoms of being "disengaged" or "alienated" from their families and communities

At risk indicators were defined as violent and threatening behaviour, attraction to gangs, misuse of alcohol or drugs, and low self esteem.

The programmes developed by the CPWS worker were to aim at facilitating the following outcomes:

- positive behavioural changes
- increased personal strength and self reliance
- increased positive participation in their communities, whānau and schools
- increased community capacity to effectively deliver programmes and projects targeted to at-risk young people
- improved co-ordination between groups involved with youth at risk of offending

By May 2000, each of the projects had been operating for at least two years. During this time, CPWS workers engaged intensively with more than 200 young people. Definition of intensive engagement varied by project but always included contact specifically aimed at working through and changing identified behaviours. In addition, at least twice this number (another 400) came in contact with the CPWS workers during less structured events (i.e. wānanga and recreational activities).

Of the young people with whom the CPWS workers engaged, at least 65 percent were Māori, and between 10 and 25 percent were of a Pacific Island ethnic group. Most (approximately 48% in the first year of operation and 65% in the second) were aged between 14 and 16 years old, and the majority (at least 70%) were male.

Almost all (more than 80 percent) of the young people who became involved with the project workers were identified as committing criminal offences, and the majority of these had come to the notice of local law enforcement authorities. More than two thirds (70 percent) were reported to be chronically or intermittently abusing drugs and/or alcohol, including marijuana, solvents, amphetamines and narcotics.

Overwhelmingly, CPWS workers identified family problems and/or alienation as a significant contributor to these at risk behaviours. In some communities, more than half of the young people participating in the projects were no longer residing with their parents. At least half of the project participants were chronically truanting, expelled from, or no longer enrolled in an educational institution.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the CPWS projects, a range of information was collected during the first two years of each project's operation. This information included annual evaluation reports

completed by the CPWS worker and agency; contact between the CPWS worker, agency and the local DIA community advisor; visits by a DIA research analyst; and administration records such as project proposals, client records and case studies, and application information.

In addition, literature concerning crime prevention project best practice was reviewed and compared with the processes undertaken by each of the CPWS projects.

The CPWS projects implemented a range of processes to match the diverse social conditions in which they operated. These included activities and interventions identified in crime prevention literature as particularly effective in preventing or addressing crime. These activities included:

- clarifying and communicating behavioural norms by way of community based mentoring programmes, pro-social role models
- involvement of the major influences in young people's lives, including family, home, school/educational programmes, marae and cultural affiliations, and co-ordination across these to consistently provide positive reinforcement
- accurate identification of at risk young people by way of risk assessment and peer review
- graduated systems of intervention providing intensive, high contact services to high risk young people and lower contact programmes as the level of risk decreased
- structured and focused programmes
- interventions aimed at addressing offender characteristics associated with individual criminal activities, using behavioural methods to improve young people's reasoning and social competency skills
- positive reinforcements for clearly identified pro-social behaviour
- continuous review and improvement of the processes involved

These processes were particularly effective where projects were supported by agencies involved in a range of services for young people. Specifically, projects were effective where co-ordination across services proceeded in an integrated manner with clearly defined mechanisms for internal referral. Locating CPWS workers in such agencies provided them with the back-up and support to fully develop their projects and to be effective in very stressful working environments. They were able to share information and gain assistance and relief from co-workers. Where specific issues arose for project participants, internal referral provided easy access to specialist services, and ongoing monitoring of the client. Furthermore, working alongside related professionals provided access to a greater network of associated community groups and agencies, than working alone.

Project effectiveness was measured in terms of the outcomes identified for project participants and the community. Individual outcomes identified across projects included:

- reduced offending
- increased participation in (and identification with) mainstream economic and social life, including family, marae, education, training, work, cultural and volunteer activities
- increased social networks, reduction in community ties between offenders and negative role models/at risk peers, and access to alternative networks and relationships
- improved self esteem and confidence
- development of social, academic and behavioural skills

In addition, community stakeholders in each of the locations being served by a Crime Prevention CPWS project reported that the activities of the CPWS worker had:

- enhanced the work of, and reduced the strain on, other agencies working with local youth populations
- provided important and effective assistance, information and resources
- facilitating networking and referral between agencies

These stakeholders included representatives from the Police, schools, DCYFS (Department of Child, Youth and Family Service, previously CYPFA), Iwi Social Services and other community groups. It was also indicated that the CPWS worker played an important role in facilitating interaction between the young people, their whānau and other agencies. Furthermore, all of the CPWS projects were identified as playing an important role in monitoring the progress of young people and their whānau and ensuring that they did not "slip through the cracks".

However, in addition to demonstrating the effective implementation of methods aimed at reducing at risk behaviours, the overall evaluation of the Crime Prevention CPWS projects also highlighted implications for ongoing development of such interventions. Overwhelmingly, project stakeholders identified a lack of resources for project development. In particular, they identified the need for increased funding to cover project expenses other than the project worker salary, including the costs of contributing to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the projects and participants.

Similarly, stakeholders indicated the need for administering agencies to provide sufficient time for communities to identify resources, develop capacity and implement projects. It was suggested that three years was not long enough for projects to set up programme and administration systems, effect long term change, and address issues of sustainable funding. The evaluation also demonstrates that over longer periods even more significant outcomes could be expected from the youth intervention programmes.

Another problem associated with effective project implementation was the persistence of negative community attitudes towards project participants. Young people and project staff described how community groups continued to treat them as criminals even after they had stopped offending. This was reflected in an unwillingness of potential employers to hire young people associated with the projects. It was also shown in the continued suspicion placed on them by the police. Indeed, in some cases it appeared that participation in the projects made young people even more vulnerable to these attitudes and labels as it focused attention upon them. Furthermore, many of projects facilitated more effective monitoring of young people. While this is an important outcome, the results of the evaluation suggest that monitoring activities should focus as much, if not more, on the positive behaviours demonstrated by young people as the negative. This can contribute to changes in community attitudes and reinforce the changes made by the young people.

Project stakeholders also identified the need for changes in the services offered by community groups and agencies. Specifically, they expressed frustration with the lack of appropriate referral options within some communities. Furthermore, even where referral options existed, project stakeholders indicated that service administration methods often prevented access to them. In particular, agency staff indicated a significant amount of their time was used establishing relationships with social workers and government officials in order to access services for their young people, only to return to “square one” when the worker left or agency restructured. Furthermore, many of the workers felt that their project was seen by government agencies as a “last resort” or “dumping ground”. As such, they received some of the most difficult cases, but no resources to deal with them.

In order to address these issues it is important that the successes of the projects, and the positive behaviour changes demonstrated by young people, are recognised by other community groups and agencies. It is also important that the projects work with other service providers to define mechanisms for referral, including the appropriateness of the service for the young person, and the resources which would need to accompany referred young people.

Overall Recommendations

1. Continued emphasis should be placed on ensuring that positive role models and mentors are culturally appropriate to the young people with whom they work. This is especially important where negative stereotypes are common for a specific cultural identity. It should take account of differences between cultures within a specific ethnic group (i.e. urban compared to rural Māori) or grouping (i.e. distinguishing between different Pacific Island identities such as Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, Cook Island, Tokelauan, etc.)
2. Fund administering agencies (especially government) could enhance the holistic approach, especially in terms of young peoples increased involvement in social and economic activities, by further encouraging support for the community projects from other relevant agencies working in the locality. In particular, fund administering agencies should receive the resources and assistance to work further with business, educational and training providers so that young people leaving the projects are able to access real opportunities. In terms of the CP-CPWS projects, intervention could include resources and assistance to facilitate the formation of partnerships between DIA and other agencies such as local authorities, Skill New Zealand, Schools and Polytechnics, Department of Labour, etc., and to embed maintenance of these partnerships into the core activities of each of these agencies.
3. Fund administering agencies should ensure, where at all possible, that any additional community based crime prevention projects are based in agencies that offer a range of social services. These should include other youth services for varying levels of at risk behaviour, and links to services targeting the whānau, schools and other community resources associated with the young people.
4. Risk assessment tools and methods used within each of the current projects should be further tested to establish their validity in measuring at risk behaviours and their reliability in consistently measuring these behaviours across different at risk youth. Specifically, the risk assessment tool developed for the Te Puna A Rona project could be trialed in some of the other CPWS projects. Similarly, the methods used in the Whaia Te Tika and Awhinatia Te Whānau projects could be further reviewed by other professionals external to the agencies involved.
5. The CPWS projects should be assisted to clearly define the type of young people they are able and willing to work with. Although target populations were identified in the project proposals, some of these changed in response to community and project developments. Furthermore, in some cases a lack of recognition from referring agencies meant that a number of referrals did not fit the specified criteria. Therefore, agencies need a mechanism to effectively communicate these criteria to referring agencies. For young people who do not fit the criteria, clearly defined methods for referring to other agencies must be established, along with knowledge of the most appropriate agencies for such referrals.

6. Referring agencies should ensure that referrals conform to the projects' target population. In particular, intensive assessment procedures should be applied to particularly violent offenders before they can be referred on to community organisations.
7. Development of community projects aimed at specific outcomes should emphasise the need for structured interventions. Although a drop in centre may provide a useful place for attracting young people, and co-ordinating workers, it should not be the sole focus of crime prevention efforts. Rather, such centres must be accompanied by services, activities and/or programmes specifically aimed at reducing at risk behaviours. In order to facilitate this emphasis, government should target agencies with the capacity to deliver such interventions and/or assist them to develop this capacity prior to initiating intervention. An implicit part of developing this capacity is the recognition of positive trends within communities upon which to build. Specification of such trends could be requested within project proposals.
8. Individuals and groups working with young people at risk should be identified for their skills and connections and encouraged to use these to enhance the nature of the interventions they provide.
9. Further support should be given to community groups and agencies to allow them to develop and test intervention methods specific to their own needs and cultural context. In particular, fund administering agencies should encourage them to access feedback from the young people involved in them, and ensure that these young people are represented on wider community forums. Such representation might also include obtaining opinions and ideas from young people and passing them directly to local authorities and central government.
10. Collection of data which accurately measures change and documents progress requires commitment from within the fund administering agency, to allow time for planning, co-ordination and analysis.
11. It is essential that all projects be supported in developing data collection and monitoring methods that accurately define and measure outcomes. These systems should be community wide and include information about positive activities as well as those that are less desirable. As such, they should contribute to facilitating community recognition of any changes made by project participants. In terms of the CP-CPWS projects, DIA staff could encourage representatives from other government agencies to assist with the development of such tracking/monitoring systems.
12. The relationship between community agencies, urban Māori and iwi authorities, and government agencies needs to be enhanced so that there are clear mechanisms for interagency referral. Specifically, these mechanisms should define how and when government agencies can refer young people to the projects, including the resources and support required. They should also define the means by which CPWS workers may refer project participants, and/or their whānau, to government agencies, or work with government agencies to resolve issues of concern to project participants, and/or their whānau. In terms of the CP-CPWS projects, intervention could include additional resources for liaison between DIA workers and other government employees, as well as urban Māori and iwi authorities to establish specific guidelines for these processes. In order for such an intervention to become sustainable, effort would need to be made to ensure that the mechanisms through which it operates are embedded in the agencies' core systems and processes.
13. In terms of Māori development, intervention for Māori is most effective when it is undertaken by Māori. However, where a range of Māori service providers exist, it is essential that all appropriate options be explored. Referrals to these providers should be made on the basis of need as well as culture. As such, prior experience that the youth have had with each provider (including iwi authorities) should always be considered. Where this experience has been negative (or non-beneficial), alternatives should be sought. Furthermore, where urban Māori authorities are working effectively with local iwi, allowance could be made for diversion of some iwi targeted funds to the urban Māori authority.
14. In terms of the CP-CPWS projects, future targeting of resources needs to allow time for Community Advisors to explore all options when projects are being established. It is imperative that Māori service providers be effectively assessed from within their own communities, before the project is established.

15. In the case of urban and culturally diverse populations, there is an additional need for government support to assist with co-ordination between groups. Providing additional funds for such activities may be appropriate, but the significant need in these locations is more likely to result in the diversion of such funding to address the immediate requirements of the young people involved. Rather, it may be necessary for government officials to assume a pro-active role in leading this activity.
16. Identification of questions regarding the nature of the relationship between at risk behaviours and status, as well as issues regarding the targeting of project resources point to the need to further test the effectiveness of specific interventions. In particular, the difference between individual and group approaches to intervention, the different needs of different age groups, gender and ethnicity.
17. Given that community projects appear to take considerable time to develop, particularly in terms of community capacity and co-ordination, evaluation of outcomes should only occur once the project has had time to achieve its objectives or outputs (i.e. at least three years after initiation). However, in order for this to happen, data collection and periodic analysis needs to be an ongoing process.
18. The initial funding period should be extended to account for the time taken to develop projects and effect outcomes. It is recommended that at least five years be allowed for this process. Furthermore, decisions regarding ongoing funding after this period should be made in sufficient time for alternative options to be explored, without detracting from project delivery. Ideally, there would be no time periods put on funding duration. Rather, projects and funding options could be reviewed annually to assess the feasibility of both.
19. Government agencies should work together to co-ordinate statistical reporting boundaries between police, local authorities, statistics New Zealand, central government and other relevant agencies.
20. In all cases, projects require increased funding to cover project expenses other than the salaries of the project workers.
21. The development of effective data collection methods requires additional resource allocation. Resources should either provide project administrators with the means to contract evaluation professionals, or provide them with time and training to develop their own skills and put these into practice.
22. In terms of ongoing development of crime prevention projects, there is clearly a need to develop and fund projects targeting at risk youth under the age of 13 years. This is especially true in isolated communities and those where culture encourages participation as a family group, such that individuals are likely to bring along younger brothers and sisters (i.e. Māori).
23. The data also suggests a need for a similar project addressing the needs of high risk young women (especially Māori), and for medium risk young people who are not yet committing crimes but are still considered disadvantaged.

