MENTORING PROJECTS

THE NATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD'S MENTORING PROJECTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 made major changes in the operation of the youth justice system. It established the Youth Justice Board (the Board) for England and Wales and set up 154 Youth Offending Teams (Yots). These are local, multi-agency groups responsible for implementing and co-ordinating youth justice services for young people aged 10 to 17 years.

As part of its aim of preventing criminal offending by young people, the Board funds and supports a number of programmes designed to combat youth crime. Over a three-year period from 1999 to 2002, the Board funded a number of intervention programmes. One of these was the mentoring initiative, which forms the subject of this report.

As part of this initiative, the Board provided financial support for 43 mentoring schemes (39 of which are included in the present study). Provision was made for each scheme to be evaluated, and local evaluators were duly appointed by the managers of the local schemes. The Board appointed national evaluators to provide a central monitoring and evaluation service by co-ordinating the activities of the local evaluators and conducting a reconviction study based on aggregate data from the schemes.

THE MENTORING SCHEMES

❖ All the mentoring schemes offered one-to-one mentoring, in which an adult mentor is matched with a young person. The mentor is seen as a source of advice, guidance and support. The relationship is inherently a voluntary one[1], with meetings often organised around recreational activities and social outings.

❖ The principal aim of the individual youth mentoring schemes was to reduce or prevent offending and the risk of offending. Reflected in the aims and objectives of the schemes was a recognition of the importance of targeting those factors that contribute directly to offending behaviour, such as poor educational attainment and underdeveloped interpersonal skills.

❖ Eleven of the 39 schemes were already established and operational before receiving funding from the Board. Two-thirds of all schemes were located in largely urban environments, five in rural settings, and eight served areas encompassing both rural and urban populations.

❖ The majority of referrals to the schemes came from Yots. However, other referrals came, in varying numbers, from the educational welfare service, schools, social services, youth voluntary organisations, family members and the young people themselves.

❖ Schemes varied in terms of the planned duration of the mentoring period. Fifteen did not specify the length, but 13 considered one year to be adequate and schemes were often flexible within the limits set. Regarding contact time with the young people, the most frequently cited recommendation was for

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[1] In four of the schemes, mentoring was used on at least one occasion as a statutory contact in an order.

weekly meetings. Of the 23 schemes recommending this frequency of contact, 17 favoured meetings lasting, on average, between two and three hours, and six schemes suggested meetings of approximately one hour's duration.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE

- ❖ A total of 3,596 young people were referred to 38 schemes[2] between April 2000 and September 2001 inclusive. Schemes varied in size, with the number of referrals per scheme ranging from 12 to 239. While 11 schemes (29%) received fewer than 50 referrals each, 14 schemes (37%) had over 100 referrals each.
- ❖ Of those young people who were referred to a scheme, 2,049 (57%) were matched with a mentor. Of those who were referred but not matched, 65% declined the opportunity of having a mentor, 20% wanted a mentor but a suitable match could not be found, and 15% were rejected by the schemes as being unsuitable for a mentoring relationship.
- ❖ Around three-quarters of the young people who were referred to the schemes and then matched with a mentor were between 13 and 16 years of age. About three-quarters of those referred, and those matched, were male. The overwhelming majority of young people who were referred (85%) were white.
- ❖ Almost two-thirds of all referrals came from Yots,.social services and schools, and the Education Welfare Service accounted for just over a quarter of all referrals. Of the Yot referrals, 59% resulted in a mentoring match; compared to a figure of 57% in the case of all referrals.
- ❖ Although the majority (63%) of those young people referred by Yots had no previous convictions, many will have received Reprimands and Cautions in the past.
- ❖ Of those Yot referrals accepted and matched, 42% were subject to Final Warnings, 23% were subject to Supervision Orders, and Action Plan Orders accounted for 10%.
- ❖ Where information on the main offence committed was available, theft was the most frequently cited (29%) followed by violence (17%), burglary (14%) and criminal damage (14%). More than a third of young people had started their criminal careers before their 13th birthday, and more than half by their 14th.
- ❖ Slightly over 10% of young people had received five or more previous convictions and approximately 5% had served one custodial sentence.

MENTORS AND MENTORING

- ❖ The two most effective ways of recruiting volunteer mentors were advertising in newspapers and by word of mouth. After volunteers had expressed an interest in mentoring, checks were carried out by the police and other official agencies to ensure their suitability for working with young people. Of the 6,104 potential volunteers who expressed an interest, 1,712 (28%) went on to complete a training course and 136 (8%) of these trained

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[2] No quantitative data was available from one scheme.

volunteers left before being matched with a young person. The training of mentors was given high priority, and 18 schemes had accredited training courses.

❖ Twice as many women (1,096) as men (535) trained to be mentors. Thus, while most mentees were male, the majority of mentors were female. Just over 60% of mentors were between the ages of 26 and 45. Nearly a quarter of mentors were from non-white ethnic backgrounds. About 40% of mentors were single and had never married, and 48% were either married and living with a spouse or co-habiting. The majority of mentors (78%) were in paid employment, either full-time or part-time. About 50% of mentors had previous experience of voluntary work.

❖ On completion of training, more than 60% of mentors had to wait more than one month and about 40% had to wait more than two months before being matched with a young person. During this waiting period, some mentors lost interest and withdrew from the scheme.

❖ By and large, from the mentors' perspective, many of the young people's problems were seen as being related to school, parents, peer groups and a lack of basic coping skills. However, some young people had more serious and complex problems ranging from sexual or physical abuse to homelessness.

❖ Schemes stressed the importance of giving mentors support throughout the course of a mentoring relationship. This could involve individual supervision sessions, appraisal meetings or just regular contact with the scheme co-ordinator. The ending of a mentoring relationship could be particularly traumatic for a young person, who could feel rejected, but it could also be equally traumatic for the mentor, who could feel tremendously responsible for the young person and concerned about his or her future well-being. Many schemes therefore considered important to plan for the natural ending of a relationship.

EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES

As reducing youth crime was the main objective of the individual schemes, reoffending formed the principal strategic outcome measure in the ensuing summative evaluation. Data from the local evaluators' reports and the findings of a follow-up study conducted by the national evaluators were used to draw some conclusions concerning the impact of the mentoring interventions.

Completed mentoring relationships

Given the nature of the social circumstances, family backgrounds and lifestyles of many of the young people who are accepted by mentoring schemes, sustaining a mentoring relationship, even for a relatively short period, may be regarded as a successful outcome.

❖ During the 18-month period from April 2000 to September 2001, a total of 2,049 young people were assigned a mentor. At the time of collating the data, 38% of these mentoring relationships had been successfully completed, 27% had been prematurely terminated and 35% remained active.

❖ Of the mentoring matches for which outcome data were available, 58% were successfully completed and 42% ended prematurely. The majority of breakdowns (58%) occurred before the sixth meeting. In nearly three-

quarters of these cases, (74%) the termination of a relationship was initiated by some event directly related to the young person. For example, in nearly half of all relationship breakdowns, the primary reason was attributed to the young person having lost interest in the relationship and thus withdrawing from the scheme.

Local evaluators' findings
Local evaluators used questionnaires and qualitative interviews to explore the impact of the mentoring experience on young people. In a number of cases, they also provided quantitative data on reoffending.

❖ Where interviews were conducted with young people, the majority expressed the view that mentoring had been a worthwhile and beneficial experience. There were many references to improvements in such personal qualities as self-esteem and self-confidence. Mentors also reported witnessing such positive changes in their mentees.
❖ Where schemes formulated objectives in relation to tackling poor school attendance and reducing the risk of school exclusion, some local evaluators reported positive outcomes.
❖ A small number of local evaluators provided data on reoffending. Although the numbers are relatively small, there is evidence to suggest that some schemes had a modicum of success in reducing offending behaviour.

National evaluators' reoffending study
In the period July 2000 to March 2001, a total of 505 young people joined the programme by participating in those schemes that were by then in operation. These young people were followed-up for one year, and any subsequent offences committed that resulted in a Caution, Reprimand, Final Warning or a conviction at court were noted. Of this follow-up group, data were available in 359 cases. Almost three-quarters of this cohort were male and a quarter female; with only 40 from minority ethnic backgrounds. The main findings were:

❖ Within one year of joining the programme 198 (55%), young people had committed a further offence for which they had been dealt with by the police or by the courts.
❖ Females were much less likely to reoffend than males.
❖ The age of the offender at the time they joined the programme was found to be associated with reoffending. Those aged between 10 and 13 years were less likely to receive a further Caution or conviction for a subsequent offence than those aged between 14 and 17 years.
❖ The age at which a young person started his or her criminal career was highly significant; 62% of those beginning their criminal career between the ages of 10 and 13 years reoffended, compared with 42% of those beginning their careers between the ages of 14 and 17 years.
❖ Whereas around 30% of first offenders reoffended, nearly 80% of those with at least 10 previous offences committed further crimes. This finding was highly statistically significant.
❖ Finally, the rate of reoffending was examined in relation to the disposal that the young person had received prior to joining the programme. Reoffending rates were lowest for those who had been given a Reprimand/Caution or a

final warning (less than 40%) or who had been given a financial penalty. Those receiving community disposals or a custodial sentence were more likely to reoffend; between two-thirds and four-fifths did so.

❖ There appeared to be some change in the rate at which young people offended before joining the programme and during the follow-up period. On average it was estimated that an offender committed 2.1 known offences in the before period and 2.6 offences in the follow-up period.

❖ There was no clear evidence of any change in the seriousness of offending, following participation in the programme.

The one-year reconviction rate found in this study (55%) is much higher than the reconviction rate of 26% obtained in follow-up studies of national cohorts of young offenders which have been conducted by the Home Office. However, the Home Office study included a much greater proportion of first offenders; 65% had 'no previous appearances', compared with only 19% of the young people in this study who were first offenders. Nevertheless, after controlling for the differences between the two groups, those on the mentoring programme fared a little worse in terms of reoffending than the national cohorts.

The future of mentoring

❖ Twenty schemes secured additional funding to continue after March 2002. A further 11 schemes were in the process of seeking alternative funding, five schemes were due to close through lack of funding and the situation of three schemes was unknown.

❖ It remains to be seen to what extent youth mentoring, which is essentially a voluntary arrangement, will become part of a more formal and official response to offending.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 made major changes in the operation of the youth justice system in England and Wales. A key feature of this piece of legislation was the introduction of a new statutory aim of preventing offending, which was presented as a new starting point for multi-agency working. Henceforth, all agencies and individuals working in the youth justice system were placed under a duty to have regard to the principal aim of reducing offending. As part of the new framework for multi-agency working, the act established the Board and Yots, which comprise representatives from the police, social services, the probation service, education authorities and health service. Given the emphasis placed upon a broad-based youth crime reduction strategy, Yots are also encouraged to establish links with a range of organisations outside the youth justice system, such as youth career and employment services and voluntary sector groups working with young people.

As part of its aim of preventing criminal offending by children and young people, the Board funds and supports a number of national programmes and local initiatives designed to combat youth crime. These various crime prevention interventions address not only those factors seen to place young people at risk of committing crime, but also take into account those factors deemed likely to protect young people from offending or reoffending. Tackling risk factors and promoting protective factors form a dual feature in many of the youth crime prevention programmes supported by the Board.

In pursuit of its principal aim of reducing youth crime, the Board provides grants to support local programmes targeted at young offenders and those young people 'at risk' of offending. Over the three-year period from 1999 to 2002, a development fund of £85 million was made available to issue grants in order to support a wide range of programmes. This included a sum of £40 million to fund a number of intervention programmes run by Yots in partnership with voluntary sector organisations. These covered six specific areas: mentoring; restorative justice; cognitive behaviour; parenting; alcohol, drug and substance abuse; education, training and employment; and a separate, general, preventing offending programme. Unlike other interventions, mentoring cannot be enforced, it can only be entered into voluntarily - the young person has to agree to participate. In order to encourage innovation and foster the development of new approaches, the Board invited bids from Yots and voluntary sector partners. As a result of the competition, 43 schemes were awarded funding to provide mentoring programmes.

The evaluation of the mentoring interventions is the subject of this report.

MENTORING

In the closing decades of the last century, mentoring emerged as an increasingly popular form of intervention with young people in the USA - especially those young people who were seen as being in some way vulnerable, disaffected and/or at risk of becoming involved in criminal activity (Freedman, 1993). More recently, mentoring has become established in the UK as an important mechanism for working with disadvantaged youth, and there has been a marked increase in the number of mentoring schemes nationwide. Mentoring support is now a key feature in many programmes designed to combat social exclusion and

tackle youth crime. Organisations such as Crime Concern, The Divert Trust, the Society of Volunteer Associates (SOVA) and RPS Rainer are actively engaged in designing and delivering a variety of mentoring projects in a range of diverse settings.

Despite the growing popularity of mentoring, the mentoring role 'almost defies clarification' (Gibbs, 1999: 1060). Not only is there a lack of consensus concerning the precise definition of mentoring (Gay and Stephenson, 1998), but its theoretical base remains underdeveloped (Philip, 1999). Consequently, the nature, scope and content of established mentoring relationships can vary not only across schemes but also within a single scheme. From an evaluation perspective, this inherent variability in the treatment delivered (i.e. the mentoring) can constitute a potential threat to the methodological integrity of any chosen research design.

Although the concept of mentoring remains elusive (Piper and Piper, 2000), its high profile makes it ripe for rigorous and systematic evaluation (Philip, 2000). In youth work, mentoring is generally defined, in developmental, terms as a way of helping young people through the processes of transition from adolescence to adulthood (Gottlieb and Sylvestre, 1994; Hamilton, 1991). In planned mentoring programmes, an unrelated volunteer adult mentor is matched with a young person, with a view to establishing a supportive one-to-one relationship in which the young person is encouraged to develop essential interpersonal skills and behavioural competencies. Given the nature and content of the mentoring relationship, the role of the mentor has been variously described as that of friend, teacher, guide, role model, adviser, counsellor and protector (Hamilton and Darling, 1989; Dondero, 1997). Although no single word can adequately convey the nature of the relationship (Levinson, et al., 1978: 97), mentoring has been described as 'a process within a relationship or set of relationships which embodies elements of trust, reciprocity, challenge, support and control and which has the potential to empower the partners' (Philip, 1999: 11).

From a conceptual perspective, it is useful in exploring the nature and content of the mentoring relationship to distinguish between what may be broadly termed natural or informal mentoring and planned or artificial mentoring (Philip, 2000: 6-7). Natural mentoring networks are a feature of informal social settings and community contexts. As Philip and Hendry (2000) describe in a qualitative study of informal mentoring in one area in Scotland, young people tended to select as mentors known adults whom they considered to be 'good neighbours'. The researchers conclude that, 'by having a choice in developing the relationship, young people believed that they could exert more personal control, thereby creating a more equal association than they perceived they normally had with adults. In this respect they could act as active participants in the process, rather than recipients of "treatment"' (ibid: 221). In contrast, artificial mentoring occurs when, as part of a planned intervention, a third party attempts to replicate the natural mentoring process by introducing a young person to a previously unknown or unrelated adult who has volunteered to act as a mentor.

It is the informal and voluntary nature of the mentoring relationship that effectively serves to distinguish it from those more formal interventions by professional workers that also involve the provision of counselling, advice and support. While young people tend to perceive the role of an adult mentor as possessing some of the characteristics associated with the more formalised roles of parent and teacher, volunteer mentors tend to be viewed

as friends rather than figures of authority (Tarling et al., 2001: 31). Indeed, it has been suggested that if a mentor is seen to occupy a position of authority over a young person, this can be a potential source of tension and conflict, which can ultimately jeopardise the establishment of a successful mentoring relationship (Philip, 1997). For some commentators, the voluntary nature of the mentoring relationship is essential to its success. According to Benioff (1997), where schemes accept statutory referrals, there is a danger that mentors may find that they are cast in the role of 'voluntary probation officers', which has consequences for how they are perceived by the young people with whom they are matched.

In the case of vulnerable and disadvantaged youth, there is a sense in which mentoring is viewed as compensating for poor parenting, inadequate family support and dysfunctional socialisation, as well as helping to promote new attitudes and behaviours (Rhodes, 1994). The mentor is seen as being there not only to encourage the young person to take advantage of available opportunities in education and training, and set personal goals, but also to counter the influence of inappropriate peer pressure.

Mentoring is not only viewed as a way of combating social exclusion, but also as providing a potentially effective and efficient means of tackling youth crime (Audit Commission, 1996; Benioff, 1997). Adult mentors can be positive role models, offering young people from disruptive and unstable family backgrounds an alternative source of practical help, guidance and support (Home Office, 1997). In this context, mentors can constructively criticise and challenge existing attitudes and behaviours associated with anti-social conduct and criminal offending.

Despite the growing popularity of youth mentoring schemes in both the USA and the UK, it is only relatively recently that demonstration research projects have begun to produce evidence to suggest that mentoring has positive results. Unfortunately, many evaluations and impact studies in this area are methodologically unsound and care needs to be taken when interpreting the findings. Furthermore, caution is also recommended when attempting to extrapolate from results found in the USA to the situation found in the UK. For example, it cannot be simply assumed that the youth justice systems in the different jurisdictions deal with comparable groups of young people in terms of risk assessment, criminogenic profiles, offending records and socio-economic needs.

In an evaluation of the North American Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme, Grossman and Tierney (1998) used a random assignment evaluation design and compared a group of young people who had received mentoring support with a matched control group. At the end of an 18-month follow-up period, they concluded that those young people who had been assigned a mentor 'were less likely to have started using drugs or alcohol, felt more competent about doing school work, attended school more, got better grades, and had better relationships with their parents and peers than they would have had, had they not participated in the program' (Grossman and Tierney, 1998: 422).

Research in this country has also produced some promising results regarding the benefits to be gained from mentoring. For example, in a study of the Community Service Volunteers On-Line Mentoring Scheme, Porteous (1998) reports a reduction in offending behaviour and an improvement in the self-esteem of some young people as positive outcomes. However, there is evidence to suggest that gains or benefits can be modest, especially when

dealing with some particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of young people (Tarling et al., 2001).

METHODOLOGY

The Board required that each mentoring scheme appointed its own local external evaluator to undertake both a process and an impact evaluation. The Institute for Social Research, University of Surrey, was appointed as the national evaluator for the mentoring component of the Board initiative. A key role for us as national evaluators was to co-ordinate the local monitoring and evaluation activity in order to provide a summary assessment of the 39[3] schemes that formed the mentoring programme. As part of this process, each local evaluator was required to submit progress and interim reports to the national evaluators at periodic intervals, followed by a final evaluation report at the end of the research period. Given the timetable we were working to as national evaluators, we were required to submit our report before the local evaluators had completed their final evaluation reports.

Data collection

Given that our central remit was to pull together the monitoring and evaluation work undertaken by the local evaluators and produce a summary evaluation incorporating an elementary form of meta-analysis, we attempted, from the outset, to encourage a consistent approach to data collection across the 39 schemes. Consequently, we sought to use data obtained from the *Asset* assessment profile, which was introduced by the Board in April 2000. This constituted part of a national standardised assessment procedure, whereby Yots were required to complete an *Asset* form for each young person referred to them. This form contained information on family background, lifestyle, substance use, attitudes to offending and motivation to change. Although originally designed as an assessment tool, given that it was administered at the beginning and the end of a prescribed intervention, the form offered some potential for constructing before-and-after measures for evaluative purposes.

In pursuit of our aim of introducing an element of uniformity into the data collection process, we produced a number of research instruments for local evaluators to use:

❖ Young person's baseline data and follow-up form: a data collection instrument for scheme staff to complete, where a young person had not committed an offence and, therefore, was not subject to an *Asset* assessment profile.
❖ Self-esteem questionnaire: a shortened version of a self-administered questionnaire devised by Rosenberg (1989) to measure self-esteem. The intention was that this would be completed by young people on two separate occasions - first when they joined a mentoring scheme and then again at the end of the mentoring period.
❖ Young person's mentoring questionnaire, designed to elicit young people's views on mentoring.

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[3] Shortly after our appointment as national evaluators, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned a separate evaluation of Crime Concern's 'Mentoring Plus' projects. Four of these projects were in the original group of 43 schemes funded by the YJB, and in order to avoid them being subjected to two separate evaluations it was agreed to exclude them from this study.

❖ Mentors' questionnaires: two questionnaires were designed - one focusing on the early stages of the mentoring relationship and the second completed when the relationship had been established for at least six months.

❖ Young person's questionnaire: a shortened version of the questionnaire on self-reported offending used by Graham and Bowling (1995). It was prepared for local evaluators to administer both before and after the mentoring intervention.[4]

In addition to the above, we provided questionnaires for those young people who, although referred to a mentoring scheme, did not, for one reason or another, actually receive any mentoring support. Our initial thought was that, at the local level, evaluators could draw matched comparison or contrast groups from among this sample in order to help establish whether or not mentoring interventions were effective. However, only a few local evaluators explored the possibility of compiling comparison groups.

Not all local evaluators adopted the questionnaires we provided. Some schemes were already well established before they received Board funding and, as a result, had already got their own assessment forms and questionnaires in place. Also, some evaluators adapted our questionnaires for local use, while others chose to cover the topics in semi-structured qualitative interviews with small samples of young people.

Given the emphasis placed by schemes on reducing or preventing youth crime, offending or reoffending was adopted as primary outcome measures. Some local evaluators provided data on criminal offending before and after the mentoring intervention. We also conducted a reconviction study as part of the overall evaluation design. All young people who began receiving mentoring support during the period July to March 2001 were followed up for one year from the date they started the programme. Any subsequent offences committed during the year were recorded.

In addition to evaluating processes and outcomes, provision was also made for collecting data on programme costs. Information on the funds given to each scheme was available from the Board and some breakdown of their expenditure was available from schemes themselves.

Samples available for analysis
Various samples of young people and of mentors were available, and each sample offered different opportunities for analysis. This section starts with a description of the samples of young people and ends with a description of the samples of mentors.

Figure 1.1 outlines how young people became involved with the mentoring programme and what happened to them. It can be seen that 3,596 young people were referred to the 39 schemes and 2,049 of them were accepted by the schemes and matched or teamed up with a mentor (first and last boxes). Some young people were referred by Yots (2,274) and the remainder by other agencies. Different information was available for the different groups. If a young person was brought into the programme by the Yot, an *Asset* form should have

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[4] Only a very small number of local evaluators collected data on self-reported offending and not all of them administered this instrument at both the pre-intervention and post-intervention stages. Consequently, it is not possible to draw any meaningful conclusions from the data obtained.

been completed providing detailed information on the young person's criminal history. If a young person was accepted by the scheme and matched with a mentor the scheme would hold additional information on the young person - in particular, details of that person's participation in the programme and their relationship with their mentor.

In order to exploit the available information, four different groups were constructed and analysed: all young people referred to the schemes (3,596), those referred by Yots (2,274), total accepted and matched (2,049), Yot referrals accepted and matched (1,336). These groups are shown in bold in the Figure 1.1.

Unfortunately, although certain information should have been available for each sample, not every item of information was available for every young person within the group. There was a varying degree of missing data depending on the group of interest and the data item of interest.

In addition to the samples of young people described above, 359 met the criteria to be included in a one-year, reoffending follow-up study. As mentioned above, these individuals joined the programme between July 2000 and March 2001, and details of their criminal careers could be traced via the Police National Computer (PNC).

With regard to the samples of mentors, a total of 6,104 volunteers expressed some initial interest in mentoring, but only 2,278 went on to complete an application form. Having completed the form, some eventually withdrew. Consequently, the main sample of mentors for whom detailed information was available consisted of 1,712 volunteers who joined the programme by completing the training courses provided.

Figure 1.1: Samples of young people available for analysis
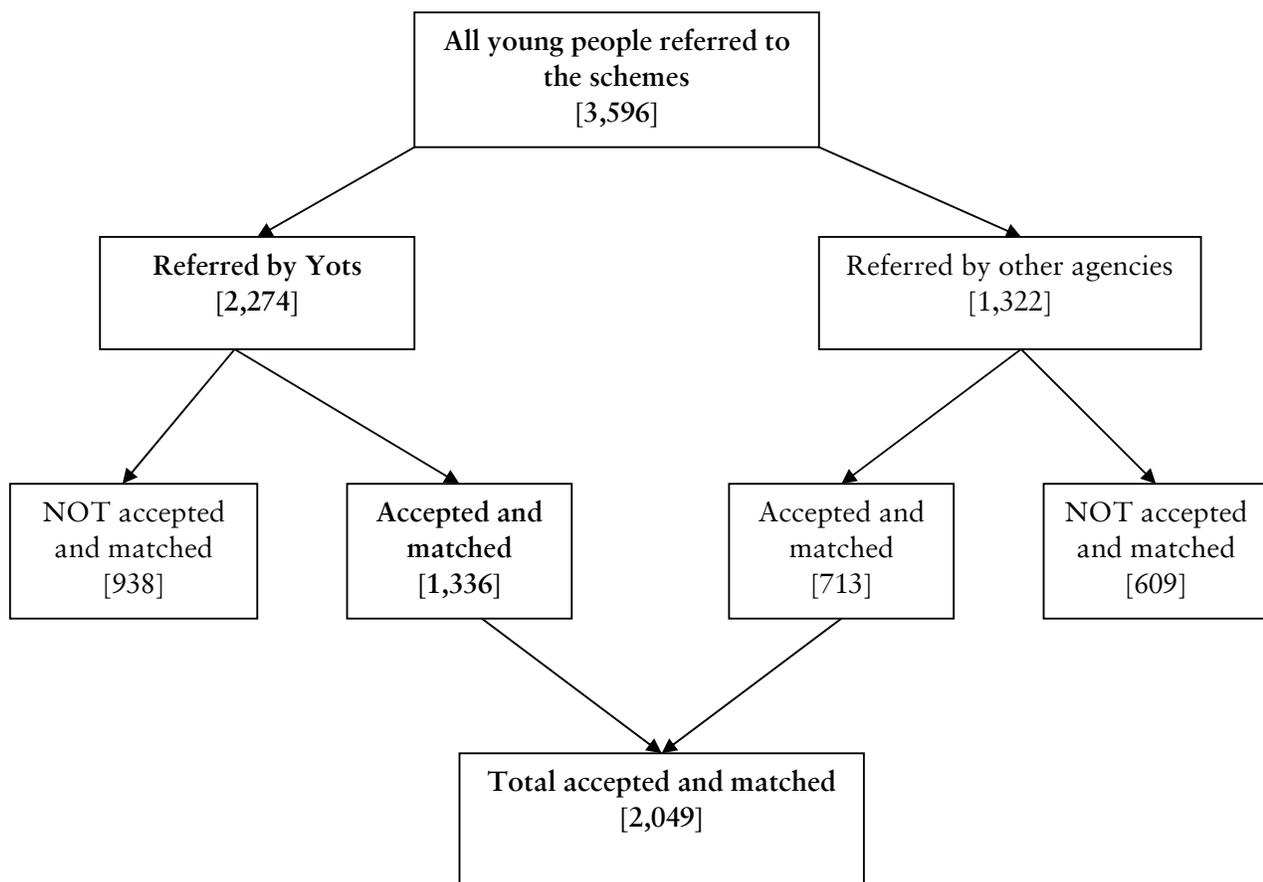
STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

In the next section, we provide some basic background information regarding the mentoring schemes that formed the basis of this evaluation. This is followed by section 3 describing the general characteristics of those young people referred to the schemes between April 2000 and September 2001. For young people referred by Yots, there is additional information on their criminal history. Section 4 focuses on volunteer mentors and their experiences of the mentoring process from recruitment through to the end of the mentoring relationship. Section 5 considers outcomes in terms of successfully completed mentoring relationships, changes in behaviour and the incidence of reoffending. The final section comments on the main conclusions.

2 THE MENTORING SCHEMES

In order to provide opportunities for mentoring young offenders and young people at risk of offending, the Board supported 43 separate schemes located in all parts of England. The majority (30) were in largely urban environments, five in rural settings and eight served areas encompassing both rural and urban populations.

The total cost to the Board of funding these 43 schemes for three years was £4.5 million (or on average of £107,000 per scheme or £3,000 per scheme per year). However, the Board did not meet all costs. The arrangement was that the Board would provide 100% of the funding for the first year (to enable the schemes to concentrate on becoming operational). By the second year, schemes were expected to raise part of their costs from alternative sources. The Board contributed 60% towards the costs of the second year and 30% towards the costs of running the schemes in the third year. Taking into account funding from other sources, the cost of the mentoring initiative was £8.4 million (or £195,000 per scheme or £65,000 per scheme per year).

As mentioned earlier, after we had been appointed as national evaluators, a separate evaluation of Crime Concern's 'Mentoring Plus' projects was commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. As four of the 43 Board funded projects were 'Mentoring Plus' projects, it was decided to drop them from our study so as to avoid the four schemes being subjected to two separate evaluations simultaneously. What follows, therefore, is based on an analysis of 39 schemes.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

Board policy was to encourage partnerships between agencies in developing innovative programmes, so it is not surprising to find that all 39 schemes involved inter-agency working. In most schemes four to six organisations were partners; some had more - up to 12 in one scheme. Official agencies normally involved in dealing with offenders or at-risk young people were represented among the partnerships, for example:

- ❖ Yot
- ❖ police
- ❖ probation
- ❖ social Services
- ❖ education
- ❖ local authorities
- ❖ drug action teams
- ❖ youth services

However, it was interesting to note that a number of other official agencies, which are not usually directly associated with these issues, were represented. Also, there was input from a variety of national charities and a number of local voluntary organisations.

With so many organisations involved, management structures varied. But in most cases, the voluntary sector partner had direct responsibility for running the project and day-to-day

oversight of it. However, in virtually all schemes, all organisations were represented on the steering committee, advisory group or similar body.

Within the context of multi-agency working, the relationship between the Yot and the mentoring scheme was of paramount importance. To a large extent, schemes relied on Yots for their referrals and, because of this, they needed to develop close working relationships. Establishing good working practices and ensuring effective communication were both facilitated, where individual Yot personnel and scheme staff shared the same working environment. Furthermore, where project co-ordinators had previous experience of working in the criminal justice system and/or working with young people, they seemed better placed when it came to setting up effective working arrangements with Yots.

In the summer of 1999, the Board commissioned Crime Concern to provide an implementation support service to assist schemes in establishing and running mentoring projects. As part of their role as designated national supporters for the mentoring interventions, Crime Concern facilitated communication between schemes, provided project managers with guidance notes on designing, organising and delivering mentoring support, and offered advice regarding the setting up of local monitoring systems. Most of the projects drew inspiration from existing mentoring schemes when planning local programmes; the one most often mentioned in this context was the Dalston Youth Project, based on the Mentoring Plus model (Benioff, 1997). Other examples referred to included Breaking the Cycle (RPS Rainer), Lifting the Exclusion Zone (The Divert Trust) and the model developed by the National Children's Bureau.

Eleven of the 39 mentoring schemes were already established and operational before receiving funding from the Board, while the remaining 28 schemes were newly set up using Board funding. Because of the time involved in establishing a new scheme, about 24 had only just become fully operational and had begun matching mentors and young people by the summer of 2000.

SIZE OF SCHEMES

Schemes varied in size - although size could be measured in different ways, according to the number of young people referred to the schemes, the number of mentors, the number of project staff and cost. The first two of these are, to some extent, dependent on when the scheme started and became operational.

The average number of referrals per scheme was 95, but the number of those referred differed greatly between schemes (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Number of referrals by scheme

Number of referrals	Number of schemes
0 < 25	3
25 < 50	8
50 < 75	5
75 < 100	8
100 < 150	6
150 < 200	5
200 or more	3
Unknown	1
Total	**39**

One scheme had only 12 referrals whereas, at the other extreme, one had 278.

Table 2.2 shows the variation between schemes in the number of trained mentors.

Table 2.2: Number of trained mentors by scheme

Number of trained mentors	Number of schemes
0 < 25	8
25 < 50	16
50 < 75	8
75 < 100	2
100 or more	3
Unknown	2
Total	**39**

There were, on average, 45 trained mentors per scheme, but one scheme had as few as seven, compared with one that had as many as 121.

Schemes usually had one full-time co-ordinator (the person often having had previous experience in youth work, social work, education or probation) and one part-time administrative assistant. A small number of schemes had significantly more staff; sometimes up to five or six (although not all of them were full-time). The additional members of staff were employed to provide ongoing support to mentors.

Costs of running the schemes differed considerably. In terms of the amount the Board paid out to schemes over the three-year period, one scheme received only £19,000, whereas, at the other extreme, one scheme received £277,000. Further details are shown in Table 2.3

Table 2.3: Board financial support to schemes: 1999-2002

Board funding to schemes (£ thousands)	Number of schemes
0 < 50	4
50 < 100	18
100 < 150	7
150 < 200	5
200 or more	5
Total	**39**

The average amount paid per scheme was £104,000, although the majority of schemes were given less than this - the average being influenced by the small number who were given significant funding. In part, funding reflected the size of the scheme, but the figures given above can be somewhat misleading as a reflection of the costs of running schemes. Leaving aside the fact that schemes had to find additional funding in years two and three, from examining the itemised returns from schemes, it is obvious that some schemes were supported in other ways. Some schemes did not incur any accommodation costs - this obviously being provided by one of the partners or being met from other sources. Where accommodation was not an issue, most of the expenditure (as much as 70 to 80%) went on staff salaries and staff and mentor travel expenses. Little was required in terms of capital expenditure.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Invariably the main aim stated by the individual schemes was to reduce or prevent offending and the risk of offending. Where additional aims were specified, these included preventing the social exclusion of young people at risk, and promoting the social reintegration of disaffected youth.

Despite the commonality of purpose in the stated general aims, there were differences between schemes when it came to specifying project objectives. On average, schemes generally itemised three to five objectives. In the main, these objectives were focused around intended outcomes such as reducing offending, increasing the self-esteem of young people, improving school attendance and tackling exclusion from school. However, in only five cases were actual target figures quoted as potential outcome measures.

Reflected in the aims and objectives of the schemes was a clear recognition of the importance of targeting those factors seen as contributing directly to offending behaviour. Given the well-documented correlation between poor school attendance and involvement in youth crime (Graham, 1988; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998), even though the causal nature of the relationship may not be so clear cut (Berridge, et al., 2001), it is not surprising that 27 schemes listed tackling education issues as one of their primary objectives. Twelve of these specified reducing the incidence of truancy and improving school attendance rates; this included four schemes that set additional objectives in the form of improving educational performance. A further two schemes mentioned reducing the number of school exclusions.

Many schemes also targeted the personal development of young people as part of their intervention strategies. For example, two-thirds of the schemes regarded mentoring as a way of improving young people's self-esteem and self-confidence. It was assumed that increasing self-esteem would lead to improved behaviour and better decision-making, which ultimately would reduce the risk of offending. Although this view was enthusiastically endorsed in a number of quarters, it is not one for which there is much supporting evidence from empirical research. Indeed, studies of the link between self-esteem and delinquent behaviour have produced largely inconclusive findings. For example, not only has it been suggested that low self-esteem may be both a cause and effect of delinquent behaviour, but research also shows that engaging in delinquent activity may actually enhance feelings of self-esteem (Jensen, 1972; Kaplan, 1978: Edwards, 1992). Furthermore, in a recent review of research into the causal influence of self-esteem on behaviour, Emler (2001) notes that in longitudinal studies of young people relatively low self-esteem is not a risk factor as far as delinquency is concerned.

In promoting youth mentoring initiatives, a few schemes referred to this type of intervention as a way of combating social exclusion. Mentoring relationships were perceived as having the potential to assist in the social reintegration of disaffected and marginalised youth. While there is evidence that young people are exposed to 'exclusionary processes' (Carlen, 1996) and young offenders encounter a variety of forms of exclusion (Stewart and Stewart, 1993; Smith and Stewart, 1997), the problem of social exclusion is a complex one. In its widest sense the concept refers to 'the dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which determine the integration of a person in society' (Walker, 1997: 8). Consequently, it

is perhaps unrealistic to expect mentoring interventions alone to mitigate the exclusionary pressures experienced by vulnerable young people.

TARGET-GROUP AND SELECTION CRITERIA

While some schemes included both young people who were known offenders, as well as those deemed to be 'at risk' of offending, other schemes had a more focused recruitment policy and targeted specific groups of young people. For example, some schemes concentrated on young people who were at the start of a criminal career, whereas others targeted persistent young offenders. Two schemes were unique in only targeting young people of African-Caribbean ethnic status.

Where schemes specified a particular target age range as part of their recruitment policy, this was most commonly from 10 to 17 years. Outside this range, one scheme accepted young people between 10 and 21 years of age. Four schemes did not accept young people below the age of 13. However, towards the lower end of the age distribution, one scheme targeted 11 to 14-year-olds.

In setting selection criteria, most schemes tended to focus on severity of offending - although this was not precisely defined. Schemes' attitudes to accepting young people with substance abuse problems varied. For most, substance abuse would be a criterion for acceptance, although a few others stated that substance abuse would lead to rejection. In fact, some schemes were more specific than others when it came to setting selection criteria, in particular on the types of young people to be excluded. One scheme was unlikely to accept young people who had severe mental health problems, a high risk of serious drug/alcohol problems, a history of violence and a high risk of committing sexual offences. Similarly, one considered that some young people with histories of violent crime or past abuse were unsuitable for matching with female mentors in particular, but also male mentors, until other support was given. Another scheme considered the safety of mentors and also exercised caution over accepting referrals of young people who had committed sexual offences, as they felt that this could lead to allegations against the mentors.

MENTORING SUPPORT

Although, as outlined earlier, schemes shared a number of key aims or common goals, a review of the local evaluators' reports reveals important differences around the provision of mentoring support. In particular, there were differences in terms of the organisation, duration and intensity of the mentoring intervention.

All the schemes subscribed exclusively to what has been referred to as the 'classic' model of mentoring (Philip and Hendry, 1996); a one-to-one relationship between an adult mentor and a younger person, in which the adult is a source of advice, guidance and support. The relationship is inherently a voluntary one, with meetings often organised around recreational activities and social outings. Ideally, these informal settings allow mentors to build up a trusting relationship in which young people can be encouraged to discuss their problems and concerns. As the relationship develops, the mentor is able to help the young person reach goals in relation to their educational, social and personal development.

In the majority of schemes, mentoring took the form of an individualised response to a young person's needs and did not represent an element in a structured programme at the scheme level. However, several schemes did have a structured component to the mentoring

intervention. Croydon arranged a programme of intensive group work for those engaged in auto crime. Hartlepool organised a 12-week programme; the first part focused on the offence committed by the young person, while the second part addressed preventative measures. This included a session on drug education and a visit to Durham Prison. The Knowsley scheme ran a course entitled Getting Connected designed to improve self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation, as part of its mentoring initiative, and also developed a Summer Activities Programme. South Manchester offered a formal timetable of sessions based in a local youth and community centre and one-to-one sessions with project staff (which, for some, included an education component or preparation for further – post-16 training). Interestingly, in this scheme, young people appeared to be more attached to the project, as a whole, than to their individual mentors.

Schemes varied in terms of the planned duration of the mentoring period. As can be seen from Table 2.1 below, 15 schemes (38%) did not stipulate the length of time the mentoring relationship was to run. In the remainder, a time limit was indicated and this ranged from 12 weeks to two years. Of these 24 schemes, just over one half offered mentoring support for up to 12 months, while five schemes set the limit at six months and two schemes favoured a period of two years. One scheme, included in the 'other' category of Table 2.4, initially set the period of mentoring support for convicted offenders to match the length of the court order. However, mentoring support was offered beyond this point, if required.

While there were differences between schemes in terms of the planned duration of mentoring interventions, there were also variations regarding the recommended frequency with which mentors were expected to make contact with their young people. However, where schemes did refer to contact time, the most frequently cited recommendation was for weekly meetings. Of the 23 schemes recommending this frequency of contact, the majority favoured meetings lasting on average between two and three hours.

Table 2.4: Proposed length of mentoring relationship

Maximum length of mentoring relationship	Number of schemes
3 months	2
6 months	5
1 year	13
2 years	2
No limit stated	15
Other	2
Total	**39**

Although mentoring is essentially voluntary, four schemes did permit some meetings between mentors and young people to be counted as significant contacts in enforcing orders or in meeting National Standards.

3 YOUNG PEOPLE REFERRED TO THE SCHEMES

In total, 3,596 young people were referred to 38 schemes (one scheme did not provide information) during the period April 2000 to September 2001 inclusive.

Referrals came from a number of different sources, but the main source was the Yot, which accounted for 2,274 (63%) of the referrals (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Referrals from 1 April 2000 to 30 September 2001: source of referrals

Source of all referrals	Number	%
Youth Offending Team	2,274	63
Social Services	519	14
School	213	6
Education Welfare Service	189	5
Self-referral	126	4
Youth Work Agency	46	1
Voluntary Organisation	15	<1
Other / Not Known	214	6
Total	**3,596**	**100**

From Table 3.1, it can be seen that referrals also came from social services (519) and schools (213) which, between them, accounted for a fifth of the referrals (20%). There were a small number of self-referrals (126) and over half (67) came from just one scheme[5].

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[5] One scheme was organised in two parts - one which lasted for 10 weeks and was a programme of intensive group-work for those engaged in auto crime (CABS) and the other which was the mentoring side and lasted for six months. It is not known how many of the self-referrals went to CABS and how many went to mentoring.

Not all young people referred to the schemes are accepted. Overall, 2,049 (57%) were accepted and subsequently matched with a mentor (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Referrals to the schemes from 1 April 2000 to 30 September 2001

Referral outcome	Number	%
Referrals accepted by the scheme and matched with a mentor	2,049	57
Referrals accepted by the scheme and waiting to be assessed or matched	342	10
Referrals who wanted to be matched but for whom a match was never found and who subsequently left the scheme	187	5
Referrals rejected by the scheme	139	4
Referrals who themselves rejected the scheme	617	17
Unknown	262	7
Total	**3,596**	**100**

In total, 756 (21%) were rejected. However, four-fifths (617) of these arose because the young person declined the opportunity to participate in the programme. A smaller number of individuals (139) were rejected by schemes because they were felt to be inappropriate, their circumstances had changed, or they showed a lack of commitment. In addition to this group, 187 referrals were accepted and would like to have been matched with a mentor, but left the scheme when a match could not found. For 342 young people, the final outcome following their referral had not been determined at the time the data were collected.

Basic biographical information was collected on all young people referred to the schemes and more detailed information was collected on those who were subsequently accepted and matched with a mentor. In particular, information was available for the latter group on the nature of their relationship with their mentor - details of which are presented in the next section of this report.

The age of the young people referred to the scheme and those who were subsequently accepted and matched with a mentor is presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Age of young people referred to the schemes and accepted and matched between 1 April 2000 and 30 September 2001

Age	All Referrals		Accepted and Matched	
	Number	% of known	Number	% of known
8	4	0.1	0	0
9	6	0.2	4	<1
10	57	1.8	37	2
11	138	4.5	81	5
12	258	8.4	143	8
13	410	13.3	263	15
14	638	20.7	389	22
15	718	23.3	400	22
16	495	16.0	282	16
17	292	9.5	148	8
18	70	2.3	33	2
Unknown	510	-	269	-
Total	**3,596**	**100%**	**2,049**	**100%**

It can be seen that young people of all ages were referred to the schemes and matched by the schemes, but the majority, around three-quarters, were between 13 and 16 years of age. The distribution of ages of those referred and those accepted and matched were not significantly different. This suggests that schemes did not, in general, favour a particular age group from among those referred.

Table 3.4 reveals that about a quarter of those referred and those being matched with a mentor were girls.

Table 3.4: Gender of young people referred to the schemes and accepted and matched between 1 April 2000 and 30 September 2001

Gender	All Referrals		Accepted and Matched	
	Number	%	Number	%
Male	2,764	76.9	1,482	72
Female	818	22.7	488	24
Unknown	14	0.4	79	4
Total	**3,596**	**100**	**2,049**	**100**

The relatively high proportion of girls compared with what might have been expected from statistics on offending indicates that mentoring, for the most part, was targeted at less serious offenders, where there is less inequality between boys and girls. The fact that the proportions referred and selected and matched were virtually constant suggested that girls were not more likely to be favoured or selected by the schemes.

The overwhelming majority (85%) of young people referred to the schemes and accepted by them were white, as described in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: Ethnic background of young people referred to the schemes and accepted and matched between 1 April 2000 and 30 September 2001

Ethnicity	All Referrals		Accepted and Matched	
	Number	% of known	Number	% of known
White	2,585	85	1,579	86
British	2,520		1,507	
Irish	28		20	
Any other white background	37		52	
Black or Black British	220	7	128	7
Caribbean	123		80	
African	53		26	
Any other black background	44		22	
Chinese or other ethnic group	16	1	3	<1
Chinese	1		0	
Any other	15		3	
Asian or Asian British	51	2	27	1
Indian	17		7	
Pakistani	9		8	
Bangladeshi	11		5	
Any other Asian background	14		7	
Mixed	169	6	95	5
White and Black Caribbean	96		57	
White and Black African	14		3	
White and Asian	16		7	
Any other mixed background	43		28	
Unknown	555	-	217	-
Total	3,596	100	2,049	100

YOUNG PEOPLE REFERRED BY YOTS

At the beginning of this section, it was pointed out that, of the 3,596 referrals to schemes, almost two-thirds (2,274) came from Yots. Of the 2,274 Yot referrals, 1,336 (59%) were matched. This is an almost identical acceptance rate to that for all referrals to the schemes (57%) - so it would appear that young people referred by Yots were not given any preferential treatment by the schemes.

Detailed information on offending behaviour was obtained from *Asset*. Yots were required to complete an *Asset* form on all young people they dealt with, although, in practice, *Asset* forms were not completed in every case and not all mentoring schemes routinely requested a copy of the young person's *Asset* at the referral stage. For these reasons, *Asset* forms were not available in every case, especially for those who did not join the mentoring programme. The analysis that follows is thus confined to the 1,336 Yot referrals which were accepted by the schemes and matched with a mentor.

Table 3.6 shows the disposal that preceded referral to the scheme for matched Yot referrals.

Table 3.6: Orders given to Yot referrals accepted and matched by the scheme from 1 April 2000 to 30 September 2001

Order	Number	% of known
Final Warning	463	42
Supervision Order	255	23
Action Plan Order	112	10
Reparation Order	48	4
Attendance Centre Order	31	3
Probation Order	13	1
Community Service Order	6	1
Other	175	16
Unknown	233	-
Total	**1,336**	**100**

In 42% of known cases, a Final Warning preceded referral to the scheme. As far as court orders were concerned, Supervision Orders accounted for 23% (255) and Action Plan Orders accounted for 10% (112). 'Other' accounted for 16% (175) of orders and included Reprimand/Caution, bail support, conditional discharge and Detention and Training Orders.

Table 3.7 presents information on the main offence committed by Yot referrals before being matched by the schemes. Not surprisingly, a large proportion of offenders had committed less serious property offences (theft and criminal damage accounted for 43% of offences where information was available). However, a third had committed more serious crimes including violence, burglary and sex offences; these accounted for 17%, 14% and 3% respectively.

Table 3.7: Main offence committed by Yot referrals accepted and matched by schemes from 1 April 2000 to 30 September 2001

Main offence	Number	% of known
Violence	169	17
Sex Offence	27	3
Burglary	139	14
Theft	291	30
Fraud/forgery	3	<1
Criminal damage	136	14
Motor offence	79	8
Drugs	26	3
Other	119	12
Unknown	347	-
Total	**1,336**	**100**

CRIMINAL HISTORY FOR YOT REFERRALS ACCEPTED AND MATCHED

Many of the matched Yot referrals had extensive criminal careers. Having started committing offences at an early age, many had amassed many Cautions/Reprimands or convictions as Tables 3.8 and 3.9 reveal.

Table 3.8 shows that more than a third of young people had started their criminal careers before their 13th birthday, and more than a half by their 14th birthday.

Table 3.8: Age at first reprimand/caution for referrals matched by the scheme from 1 April 2000 to 30 September 2001

Age at first reprimand/caution (for matched Yot referrals)	Number	% of known
10	37	7
11	63	12
12	77	15
13	80	16
14	93	18
15	76	15
16	40	8
17	39	8
Not known	831	-
Total	**1336**	**100**

Unfortunately, information on *Asset* does not indicate the full extent of a young person's criminal history, as it only gives the number of previous convictions and not the number of previous Reprimands and Cautions. Table 3.9 shows that, while the majority (63%) had had no previous convictions (although many of them will have had previous Reprimands and Cautions), more than 10% had received five or more convictions at court.

Six schemes accounted for 104 young people who had three or more previous convictions.

Table 3.9: Number of previous convictions of referrals matched by the scheme from 1 April 2000 to 30 September 2001

Number of previous convictions (for matched Yot referrals)	Number of young people	% of known
0	478	63
1	85	11
2	61	8
3	37	5
4	24	3
5	18	2
6-7	19	2
8-9	10	1
10+	33	4
Not known	571	-
Total	**1,336**	**100**

As a further indication of their involvement in crime, about 5% of young people had received at least one custodial sentence on a previous occasion. Eight (1%) young people had had two or more custodial sentences, and these young people were with three schemes.

4 MENTORS AND MENTORING

Research shows that it is the actions and attitudes of volunteers that create successful mentoring relationships (Morrow and Styles, 1995; Tierney, et al., 1995). This section focuses on mentors and mentoring, looking at the whole process from recruitment through to the end of the mentoring relationship, as well as providing a socio-demographic profile of those people who volunteer to be mentors.

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND TRAINING

Attracting volunteers

To attract volunteers, many schemes appealed to people's altruistic nature, with a 'come and help vulnerable young people' message. Other schemes emphasised the ways in which volunteering could help the volunteer in terms of valuable training and experience. Many responded to those messages expressing their motivation to volunteer in the following ways:

I was brought up in care, and have been through a lot of difficulties, which I have overcome and am still overcoming. I feel I have a lot of experience I can share and relate with young people. I have always been interested in working with young people and feel I can be a suitable role model.

I felt I had something to offer. I'm a parent. My kids are a little older and I wanted to do something.

I enjoy spending time with young people and helping them realise their potential, I work for myself and have the time.

I am doing a criminology course. We had to do a project on young offenders. I thought this experience would give me more insight.

Schemes used a variety of advertising and other promotional methods. These included:

- ❖ posters, flyers, advertisements in national and local newspapers, press releases, interviews with the media, articles in relevant newsletters/journals/magazines;[6]
- ❖ word of mouth and recommendation from other volunteers;
- ❖ advertising in council wage packets and internal council email;
- ❖ promotional video of the scheme;
- ❖ distribution of posters and leaflets - for example, in job centres, volunteer bureaux, community centres, religious groups, doctors' surgeries, barber shops, police stations; through other local agencies; university freshers' fairs; shopping centres; libraries; tube stations; public buildings and service areas for young people;

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[6] Publications, such as the *Asian Times*, *Eastern Eye*, *Caribbean Times*, *The Voice*, *New Nation* and *Pride Magazine*, were used to advertise to diverse groups of volunteers.

❖ meetings with Community Service Volunteers and other voluntary organisations, local agencies, community and church groups, professional groups, informal meetings at the scheme.

The two most effective methods of recruitment for volunteers were advertising in newspapers and word of mouth. Interestingly, although not surprisingly, one scheme found that, although for the first intake of volunteers, 18 had responded to a newspaper advertisement and seven had heard via word of mouth, in the second intake, word of mouth from existing mentors became a more effective method of recruitment.

Although there was no stereotypical volunteer in the North, Northern schemes, in general, seemed to have less difficulty in attracting volunteers. It was more difficult to attract volunteers in affluent, middle-class areas where there were more possibilities for voluntary work and where volunteers were perhaps drawn to more attractive areas of volunteering. Volunteers wanting to work with young offenders had quite a choice of schemes in some areas because there was a range of interventions for young people, all of which required volunteers.

It appears that the main source of the young person hearing about the scheme was the Yot.

Selecting volunteers
After volunteers had expressed an interest in mentoring, checks were carried out to ensure their suitability for working with young people. Schemes varied in the degree and stringency with which they checked their volunteers. The following list indicates the variety of checks that were made:

❖ police check (including PO39 - protection of children and vulnerable people; checks for cautions and convictions - Criminal Record Check Form VCRC; whether on Sex Offender Register);
❖ social services check;
❖ Child Protection Register check;
❖ Department of Health check, medical and occupational health checks;
❖ Department of Education and Employment check;
❖ contact or written references from current or previous employer;
❖ Form M check (Form M – an intrusive interview – is modelled on Form F which is a national process for approving foster carers).

In order to carry out the checks, some schemes asked for proof of identity, for example a driving licence, insurance certificate, birth certificate or passport.

In addition to formal checks, volunteers would be assessed in other ways. Applicants would be interviewed, and in some cases, invited to a group selection day where they would participate in discussions and debates on a range of issues. Volunteers' performance during training sessions was another way in which their suitability to become mentors was assessed.

There were often delays in obtaining police checks, but experienced co-ordinators were able to circumvent these problems as they knew how to work the system and who to contact at the police station. Crime Concern provided some practical advice on police checking.

Delays in police checking caused real problems for the schemes. Mentors could not begin working with young people until they had been cleared, and the intervening delay led some mentors and young people to leave the scheme. Some schemes soon found ways of minimising delays; for example, by requesting checks very early on in the recruitment procedure. One scheme placed its volunteers on a temporary work register which had the effect of speeding up the police checking process.

While attention was given to protecting young people from inappropriate mentors, schemes also considered the safety of their mentors and the need to protect them from some young people. Guidelines were prepared to ensure that young people who might be a danger to the mentors were not referred to the schemes.

An example of one scheme's selection process is given in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Selection process
Those who make an initial enquiry are sent an information pack which tells them just enough to know what it is about, but is designed to leave them wanting to know more.

Communication is sustained throughout the recruitment and training process, and this helps to maintain interest and make the prospective mentor feel wanted. This starts the day before the introduction session, with a phone call from the scheme to remind and encourage the prospective volunteer. The scheme ran four sessions in January 2001, and around 40 people turned up on each evening.

The introduction session is made into an event through the provision of a good venue and refreshments. Inspiring music is played to set a positive atmosphere. As well as giving more information about the scheme, the presentations contain real examples of how young people can be helped by having a mentor. The realities of mentoring, including the difficulties, are also covered.

The scheme has an arrangement to carry out police checks via social services. Replies are received within three weeks, which cuts down the delay between the volunteers' application and training.

The team leaders act as communicators and keep in touch with the volunteers during this period to check if they are still interested and to answer any further questions. This communication is maintained through the period of training and prior to matching.'

Training volunteers
Training was thought to be extremely important and schemes spent a lot of time ensuring that their volunteers were equipped for dealing with the young people with whom they were to be matched. There were, however, a variety of approaches to training. Schemes developed their own training packages, based their training on an external package, (for example, the programme devised by the National Children's Bureau), purchased their training, sent volunteers on college courses or used a combination of approaches.

The length of training and the method by which it was delivered varied. One scheme had 10 evening sessions during a 12-week period. Another scheme had a 30-hour initial training course with ongoing monthly training sessions. Other schemes concentrated their training programme into a short period - for example, one scheme trained during a non-residential weekend. Training programmes could be set for certain months of the year or they could be rolling programmes where volunteers could join at any point. In all, 18 schemes offered their mentors accredited training and one scheme was in the process of seeking accreditation for its training. In 14 instances, accreditation was through the Open College Network. Part of the training programme could be mandatory, while other parts could be optional.

Topics covered in training programmes varied and some examples are given in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

Examples of training topics for mentors

- ❖ the mentoring process, difference between mentoring and friendship, establishment of ground rules, boundaries, relationships and goal-setting;
- ❖ violence and personal safety, child protection, appropriate-adult work, working with adolescence, prejudice and discrimination, communication skills, moral dilemmas and managing conflicts;
- ❖ maintaining records, supervision and support, privacy and confidentiality, learning and educational cycles and case studies;
- ❖ peer pressure, substance misuse, safe sex, sexual health, aggression and self-harming;
- ❖ visit to penal institution with opportunity to talk with inmates, courtroom scenario, Crime and Disorder Act, legal boundaries, police checks and victim awareness.

Mentors' comments on the training they received were generally favourable, but mentors were encouraged to think of ways in which training could be improved. Obviously, any comments or shortcomings that they identified were in relation to the training they had received from their own scheme. Nevertheless, the suggestions made were an indication of what mentors felt they needed.

Many mentors requested further training on specific social problems that they might confront or need to address. These included drugs, child protection, sexual health, dyslexia and other learning difficulties. On the whole, schemes tended to respond positively to the expressed needs of mentors. Mentors also wanted to be clearer about the legal basis of their relationship and the boundaries within which they were operating. Issues raised here were children's rights, privacy and safety procedures. Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of other agencies was a related issue.

Often mentors wanted practical advice - for example, what to do if the young person swears or smokes in front of the mentor. One mentor was confident in how she had been prepared for such issues, but when her 14-year-old young person jumped off the bus they were both on, she did not know what to do: 'I let him go, because that is what I would have

done with one of my own, but then I worried whether I should have. What was my responsibility?'

Volunteers that were recruited and trained to be mentors
While a large number of people responded to initial advertisements and other promotional material, not all completed the training and became mentors. Table 4.1 sets out the stages between expressing interest and taking up mentoring, and the attrition that occurred between these stages.

Table 4.1: Attrition of volunteers

Volunteers (from 1 April 2000 to 30 September 2001)	Number of volunteers
Volunteers expressing some interest in mentoring, e.g. asking the scheme for information on mentoring	6,104
Volunteers going on to complete an application form for the scheme	2,278
Volunteers completing the training courses	1,712
Matched with young person	1,576

Of the 6,104 potential volunteers who expressed an interest, only 2,278 (37%) went on to complete an application form. However, of the 2,278 who completed an application form, 1,712, or three-quarters, went on to complete the training course (representing 28% of those volunteers who originally expressed an interest). However, 136 or 8% of those trained, left before being matched. Their reasons for leaving at this stage included illness, in some cases, but also the excessive time to wait for police checks to be completed and for them to be given clearance to begin mentoring.

Thus it would appear that most volunteers who get to complete an application form are committed and go on to become mentors. The main attrition occurs before that stage; many who express initial interest do not maintain their interest. However, some attrition occurs after training and, while some is inevitable (people fall ill or move from the area), it is wasteful if delays in procedures lead some to give up.

PROFILE OF MENTORS
Biographical information was collected on the 1,712 volunteers who were trained to be mentors.

Previous studies of mentoring have found that women are much more likely than men to take up the role (Philip and Hendry, 2000; St. James-Roberts and Samlal Singh, 2001; Tarling et al., 2001). Findings in this study were no different. As illustrated in Table 4.2, twice as many women (1,096) as men (535) trained to be mentors, and there was little difference in this ratio when comparing regions of the country. Thus, while most young people were male, the reverse was the case for mentors.

Table 4.2: Gender of mentors

Gender	Number of mentors	% of known
Male	535	33
Female	1,096	68
Unknown	81	-
Total	**1,712**	**100**

It is not clear why women are more likely to become mentors, but it may be interesting to note that studies of volunteering (e.g. Prime, et al, 2002) reveal that, while men and women are equally likely to volunteer, women are more likely to take up positions that involve caring, social work or education, which are more akin to mentoring.

Table 4.3 shows the ethnic background of mentors. There was a greater ethnic minority representation among mentors than among young people. Overall, nearly a quarter of mentors were from non-white ethnic backgrounds (a figure that rose to more than half in the London-based schemes). Nationally, some 14% of young people were of non-white ethnic origin.

Table 4.3: Ethnicity of mentors

Ethnicity of mentors	Number of mentors	% of known
White	1,114	77
Black or Black British	223	15
Chinese or other ethnic group	14	1
Asian or Asian British	52	4
Mixed	38	3
Unknown	271	-
Total	1,712	100

Interestingly, the Home Office Citizenship Survey (Prime et al, 2002) reveals that black people (and black women more than black men) are more likely than others to be formal volunteers.

People of all ages trained to become mentors, but the majority (just over 60%) were between the ages of 26 and 45 (see Table 4.4). Perhaps volunteers of this age felt that they were sufficiently mature and experienced to take on the role, but also sufficiently young to be able to engage with and relate to young people. However, there were some regional differences. For example, volunteer mentors in the more urban areas of London and in other conurbations tended to be younger (45 years of age or less), compared with mentors in the less urban parts of the south-east and south-west of England.

Table 4.4: Age of mentors

Age	Number of mentors	% of known
18-20	69	5
21-25	252	17
26-35	499	34
36-45	408	27
46-55	202	14
56-65	45	3
66-65	12	1
Unknown	225	-
Total	1712	100

Perhaps not surprisingly given the age distribution, about 40% of mentors were single and had never married and 48% were either married and living with their spouse or living with a partner (see Table 4.5). Regional differences in the proportion of single mentors reflected the regional differences in the age distribution of volunteers. For example, mentors in urban areas tended to be younger and thereby more likely to be single.

Table 4.5: Marital status of mentors

Marital status	Number of mentors	% of known
Single, never married	302	40
Married and living with husband/wife	257	34
Married and separated from husband/wife	26	3
Divorced	54	7
Widowed	8	1
Living with partner	107	14
Unknown	958	-
Total	**1712**	**100**

Mentors were also asked if they had children of their own, and 53% (269) said that they had. This seems surprisingly high as parenting, caring and family commitments are often cited, along with lack of time and work commitments as reasons for not volunteering.

Information on educational background was available for 648 of the sample of mentors. As shown in Table 4.6 below, a third of these were graduates. In the London schemes, as many as 58% of mentors were graduates.

Table 4.6: Educational qualification of mentors

Highest educational qualification	Number of mentors	% of known
Higher degree	36	6
First degree	179	28
GCE/A Level	87	13
GCSE/O Level	241	37
Teaching or nursing qualification	26	4
No qualifications	24	4
Other (specify)	55	8
Unknown	1,064	-
Total	**1,712**	**100**

Finally, the majority of mentors (78%) were in paid employment, either full-time or part-time (see Table 4.7). Unfortunately, no detailed information was available on the quarter or so who were not in paid employment, but they would include students, homemakers, as well as those unemployed and seeking work. There appeared to be little difference between parts of the country in the proportion of mentors who were not in paid employment.

Table 4.7: Employment status of mentors

Employment status	Number of mentors	% of known
Yes, mentor in full-time paid employment	663	56
Yes, mentor in part-time paid employment	263	22
No, mentor is not in paid employment	256	22
Unknown	530	-
Total	**1,712**	**100**

Also of interest is that about 50% of mentors had previous experience of voluntary work, not always as a mentor, although some had experience of working with young people. Types of voluntary work included:

❖ work with young people/youth-based organisations (for example, running a youth project, work in schools, appropriate-adult work);

- ❖ work with offenders/crime prevention (for example, mentoring, victim support, police special constable, neighbourhood watch);
- ❖ serving on committees, undertaking charity work, counselling, fundraising, work with the elderly, work with the church.

Although most mentors were part-time mentors, that is, volunteers who were able to give perhaps a few hours a week to meet their young person, a few schemes had full-time mentors. These volunteers were able to mentor more than one young person at a time and worked many hours a week, perhaps as a community service volunteer. Of the 1,712 mentors that were trained, 36 were described as full-time mentors.

MATCHING MENTORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In general, matching was carried out in one of two ways. The first was where the young person and mentor did not meet before being matched, but were matched 'on paper'. The second was where they did meet beforehand and got to know each other, perhaps during a residential weekend, before a match was suggested. Whichever procedure was followed, the co-ordinator would take into account shared interests, ethnicity and geography (some schemes had a policy of not matching two people who came from the same town). The sex of the mentor and of the young person was also important. Some schemes stated that they would not match a young woman with a male mentor, as this could lead to allegations of impropriety.

Information was available on the time mentors had to wait to be matched with a young person after they had been trained. The information, on nearly 1,000 mentors, is presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Time between end of training and matching for the mentors

Number of weeks/months between the end of mentor training and matching (first mentee)	Number of mentors	% of total
Within 1 week	37	4
More than 1 week, but less than 1 month	331	34
Between 1 and 2 months	225	23
Between 2 and 3 months	164	17
Between 3 and 4 months	84	9
Over 4 months	134	14
Total	**975**	**100**

Table 4.8 clearly shows that some mentors had to wait a considerable time before being matched with a young person. In fact, more than 60% had to wait over a month, and about 40% over two months. Some delays in the early stages of the programme may have been a consequence of projects not being fully operational and unable to receive referrals. But even after making such allowances, these delays seem excessive and did (as was shown earlier) lead to some mentors leaving before they had begun mentoring.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE MENTORS

Few mentors gave feedback on their expectations regarding their relationship with the young people. Of those who did, some preferred to go into the relationship with an open mind. Where expectations were voiced, they tended to fit into one or more of the following categories:

- ❖ The young person would begin to trust the mentor and rapport would be established.
- ❖ The mentor would act as a positive role model.
- ❖ The mentor would be there for, listen to and encourage the young person.
- ❖ The mentor would help the young person in a time of transition - for example, to adulthood, from school to college, or from home to independence.
- ❖ The mentor would help the young person improve their situation, to encourage a return to school, to build their confidence and self-esteem, or to give advice on education and careers.
- ❖ The mentor would discuss the issues surrounding the young person's offence.
- ❖ The mentor would introduce the young person to new affordable activities that could be continued after the mentoring relationship.
- ❖ Personally, mentors would gain experience through mentoring; which might be useful in future employment with young people, or could just be something that would enrich their lives.

A number felt that the role was more demanding or challenging than they had anticipated, for example:

He (the young person) *knew how to manipulate me and I wasn't quite prepared for that.*

A number reported being shocked to hear of some of the experiences of the young people, having thought that the examples given during training were just extreme cases.

One local evaluator found that those with little or no experience of disaffected young people had a more optimistic view of what they could achieve in their relationships. Those who had prior experience were less sure of the impact they would have.

The advice that schemes gave to mentors (and reinforced during training) was for them to persevere at the beginning of the relationship, not to become discouraged and not to expect too much at the outset. In addition, mentors were told that they should 'be there' for the young person and establish trust, but not get too involved. They should listen to the young person and try to understand them without being judgmental. Furthermore, they were encouraged to be themselves, have an open mind and be committed. On a practical level, they were advised to ensure that their car insurance provided the appropriate cover for this type of voluntary work.

MENTORS' VIEWS ON THE MAIN PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THEIR MENTEES

Some schemes discussed the young person in detail with the mentor; others preferred to give the minimum information, more on a need-to-know basis. The general picture of the problems faced by the young person, as seen from the mentors' perspective, was bleak and, in some cases, quite disturbing. The most frequently mentioned problems centred on schooling, parenting, peer groups and a lack of basic coping skills. For example:

- ❖ educational learning difficulties including dyslexia, problems at school, exclusion from school, truanting;
- ❖ inadequate parenting, no parental guidance, instability in the family;

- ❖ inappropriate peer groups, peer pressure;
- ❖ no skills to cope with life, poor communication skills, inability to control anger, poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, emotional problems.

Other problems were myriad and could be roughly grouped into how the young person felt or reacted to certain situations, or internal problems - for example:

- ❖ isolation, boredom, limited interests, insecurity, lack of motivation;
- ❖ attitude to authority.

And those problems that 'landed' on the young person - for example:

- ❖ sexual or physical abuse;
- ❖ placement in a children's home or in foster care;
- ❖ homelessness
- ❖ lack of adults to trust, rejection;
- ❖ financial hardship, poverty;
- ❖ unemployment;
- ❖ racism, problems with identity (minority ethnic groups);
- ❖ pregnancy;
- ❖ bereavement.

There was also the problem of the young person's actual or potential criminal behaviour.

The problems described above were likely to be interrelated.

As part of their training, mentors were given an insight into the impact these life events and problems could have on the lives of vulnerable young people. They were also encouraged to develop a realistic view as to how much help they could provide as mentors.

THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP
The first meeting
First meetings provided an opportunity for the young person and mentor to be introduced and to start the process of getting to know one another. Sometimes, the meeting would be with others present (for example a parent, co-ordinator, caseworker) for the whole or part of the meeting; sometimes, the mentors and young people would be by themselves. Participants experienced a range of emotions from nervousness and anxiety to enjoyment. Venues for first meetings varied; for example, the scheme or Yot office, the young person's home, MacDonald's, an activity such as going for a walk or playing bowls might take place. The meeting would probably not be too long, half an hour perhaps, and conversations might be quite superficial, centring on common interests, what would take place in future meetings, the purpose of the mentoring scheme, ground rules and confidentiality. At this meeting, a contract/agreement between the young person and the mentor may also be signed. Comments from mentors about the first meeting varied:

Seemed lots of people in the house at the time. The young person was annoyed because he had to get out of bed to meet me…telly on quite loud…The young person sat huddled on a chair, never stood up. After 20 minutes or so, the young person relaxed and started to talk about school, how bored he was and how he needed to get out of 'this house.

Activities

Mentors and young people participated in many different types of activities. Going to MacDonald's was a firm favourite, being seen as an anonymous, safe place where they could have a drink and something to eat while talking. Physical activities were mentioned by young people as being enjoyable, such as bowling, biking, snooker, walking dogs and playing squash. Going to the cinema, and even doing school work proved popular.

Certain schemes gave guidance on activities, some providing a book of activities in the area and money-off vouchers for certain activities provided by the council. Recommendations and advice from schemes included not going to arcades, not going to public houses or consuming alcohol, arranging to meet in public areas and ensuring that other people knew when and where they were going to meet their mentees. Advice was also given on health and safety, child protection issues and the financial implications of arranging various social activities. One scheme suggested that swimming was not an appropriate activity because of the possibility of potential allegations of impropriety.

Simply the opportunity to talk to mentors was valued by many young people, although this was not universally the case. Seventeen young people, when asked what they did not like doing with their mentor, said that they found talking 'awkward'.

The number of times the mentor met the young person during the period of their relationship is given in Table 4.9. Information is based on those relationships that were successfully completed.

Table 4.9: Number of meetings between the young person and the mentor where the match was completed and did not breakdown

Number of meetings where the match was completed and did not breakdown	Number of young people	% of known
1-4	82	12
5-10	124	19
11-20	121	18
21-30	111	17
31-40	182	27
41-50	39	6
51-60	6	1
Over 60	2	<1
Not known	64	-
Total	**731**	**100**

Table 4.9 shows that the majority of mentoring relationships (414 or 62%) were terminated after between 11 and 40 meetings, and that very few matches continued for more than 40 meetings (47 or 7%). Obviously, the distribution in Table 4.9 will be determined by the length of the mentoring relationship. It was pointed out earlier (see Table 2.1) that most relationships were planned to last for between six months and a year, and that mentors and young people were expected to meet once a week. On this basis, 26 to 52 meetings would be

the norm. It would appear that this was achieved in about half of the matches, but many did not manage weekly meetings.

In addition to meeting and spending time with the young person, it was evident that one or more mentors from each of the schemes had met with other people associated with the young person - for example, parents, friends or professional workers. However, the amount of contact varied. Mentors may have met with the parent or guardian at the initial introductory meeting and then ceased contact. Mentors may have met family members while arranging meetings or when picking up the young person for the visit, but other than that, had no contact. Other mentors may have tried hard to establish a relationship with the family and to work with them while others may have thought it preferable to keep the mentor/young person relationship separate from the family. There were examples of each scenario and, although schemes could advise mentors to link with the family or not, it was possibly the mentors who finally made a decision based on the young person's individual situation.

One scheme felt that if relationships had been ongoing for a number of months, the mentors were more than likely to have met friends and family of the young person. The local evaluator felt that the attitude of the parents was very important; in one case study, the parent's enthusiasm for the young person to have a mentor was key to getting the relationship started. Conversely, there were a number of cases where parental reluctance had been a factor that prevented matches from being successful.

Another scheme reported that mentors gained a better understanding of the young person and felt more supported in their role when they met other professionals working with that young person.

Support to mentors
Schemes, not to mention mentors themselves, stressed the importance of ongoing support during the course of a relationship. While training was needed to prepare the mentor for his or her role, not every eventuality could be anticipated. Furthermore, mentors wanted contact, if only to avoid feeling isolated or to be given confidence that what they were doing was appropriate. Other advice was welcome on what activities were available for the young person locally.

Support that was considered valuable included individual supervision/appraisal meetings or just regular contact with the co-ordinator (which could be by telephone). Group meetings with other mentors to share and draw on each others experience were valued, and this might be extended to a more formal peer support or buddying system (where more experienced mentors individually support newer or less experienced mentors). Communication with the scheme could be increased by circulating regular newsletters. Finally, it was also important to provide back-up such as an emergency contact number (with the Yot or social services emergency duty team) if the co-ordinator was not available.

End of the relationship
The mentoring relationship could end in one of a number of ways. It could break down - that is, either party could decide that they no longer wished to continue; it could come to a natural end; or the mentor/young person might wish to change the match (this did not seem to happen in many cases). The extent to which relationships were successfully concluded or

not is discussed in more detail in the next section of this report which considers outputs of the programme. Here we look at some of the personal or practical issues involved at the end of the relationship and the procedure schemes put in place.

Endings could be traumatic for the young person who could feel betrayed or rejected, but it could be equally traumatic for the mentor who could feel tremendously responsible for the young person and his or her well-being. It was therefore important that, where endings were expected, they were planned for. It should not be assumed that they would all end naturally.

One of the schemes thought carefully about the ending of the relationship. With the encouragement of the scheme, mentors invested a lot of care and effort into the endings and discussed them with the young person for some time beforehand. If it was appropriate, they put their young person into contact with other people or resources so that they did not feel bereft when the mentor was no longer available. One mentor indicated that she was planning a trip to a football match to mark the ending with her young person even though this was two months away. The scheme also tried to be flexible about the ending, according to individual situations. For example, one young person's situation was so insecure that the mentor was the only constant thing in her life and the relationship continued past its allotted time.

Another scheme managed the ending of the relationship in a final session, with feedback taken from the young person.

Some schemes allowed mentors to continue the relationship after the formal mentoring arrangements had ceased. However, these relationships were potentially a cause for concern to both the young person and mentor regarding child protection issues and allegations if they continued outside the remit of the scheme.

Mentors, for their part, said that they would like feedback on the young person sometime after the end of the mentoring relationship.

5 EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES

In this section the primary focus is on providing a collective overview of the impact and effectiveness of the individual mentoring schemes. Given the variation in the quality and quantity of data provided across the 39 schemes, it was not possible to conduct a rigorous comparative outcome evaluation. Nevertheless, from a summative perspective, we are able to draw on various outcome estimates from the multiple schemes in order to reach some conclusions concerning the impact of the mentoring initiative.

DEFINING OUTCOMES

Given that the mentoring schemes under investigation had multiple objectives, a multi-faceted approach was taken regarding the definition and measurement of outcomes. Within this context, it is possible to distinguish between intermediate and strategic outcomes. As reducing or preventing offending behaviour was a strategic aim quoted by all schemes, whether or not young people committed criminal offences was adopted as a strategic outcome measure. Data on offending and reoffending were, where possible, distilled from reports submitted by the local evaluators. In addition, we conducted a preliminary reconviction study based on data from the PNC. Some schemes also had other strategic aims such as increasing the involvement of young people in education and youth training programmes.

Whereas strategic outcome measures assess the impact of an intervention, intermediate outcome measures focus on the mechanisms through which an intervention is thought to have its desired effects. Thus, if mentoring schemes are to achieve their strategic objectives, they need to ensure that mentoring relationships are successfully established and maintained. In this context, the successful completion of a mentoring relationship constitutes an intermediate outcome measure.

Given the lack of any general theoretical clarity about what mentoring actually is, and how it works, it is perhaps not surprising that very little attention has been given in the literature to elucidating the theory behind mentoring as a strategy for combating youth crime. From the descriptions of the schemes in this study it would appear that, at the practice level, a general developmental approach was taken towards mentoring; although this was more clearly articulated by some schemes than others. Emphasis was placed on mentoring addressing the individualised personal and emotional needs of recipients rather than exclusively tackling their offending behaviour.

MEASURING INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Completed mentoring relationships

Given the family backgrounds, social circumstances and personal problems experienced by many young people involved in mentoring schemes, sustaining a mentoring relationship, even for a relatively short period of time, may be regarded as a successful outcome. During the 18-month period from April 2000 to September 2001, a total of 2,049 young people were assigned a mentor. Data were available in respect of 1,928 of these cases. As illustrated in Figure 5.1, at the time of collecting the data, 731 (38%) of these mentoring relationships had been successfully completed; 529 (27%) had been prematurely terminated; and 668

(35%) remained active. Therefore, out of 1,260 mentoring matches for which outcome data were available (i.e. excluding the active cases), 58% were successfully completed and 42% ended prematurely.

Figure 5.1: Status of Mentoring Relationships
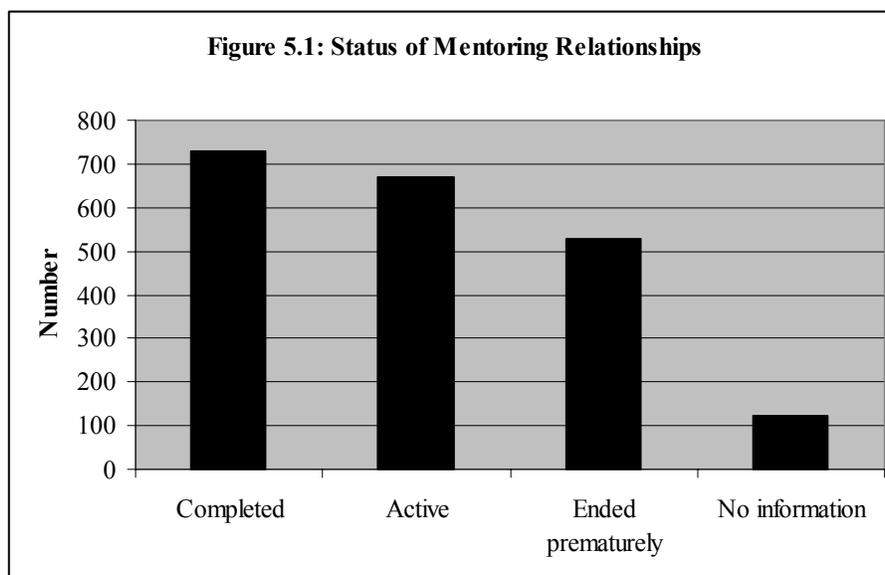
The rate of mentoring relationship breakdowns varied from one scheme to another. Data were available to calculate breakdown rates for individual schemes in 34 cases. In over one third of these schemes (38%), less than one in four matched referrals came to a premature and unsuccessful end. A further 17 schemes recorded breakdown rates between 26% and 50%; of the remaining four schemes, one recorded four breakdowns for every five matched referrals, while in another scheme there were no successfully completed mentoring relationships recorded. However, these figures should not be used to compare the relative effectiveness of individual schemes for two main reasons. First, there were wide variations between schemes in the number of matched referrals actually achieved; these ranged from four to 134. It was the scheme with only four matched referrals that recorded a 100% breakdown rate. Small numbers such as these do not provide a basis on which to make valid comparisons. Second, and more importantly, schemes operated with different selection criteria, and this resulted in variations in the characteristics of the young people they recruited. Consequently, where schemes worked with young people who presented a particularly high risk of reoffending and/or faced multiple social problems and personal difficulties, a high breakdown rate could be anticipated.

For the majority of schemes mentoring was voluntary; however, in four schemes provision was made for accepting young people serving community sentences, which included participating in mentoring support as a conditional requirement. The local evaluators' reports reveal 20 young people subject to such court orders across the three schemes. Information regarding the type of order was available in all but four cases: there were eight Supervision Orders, seven Action Plan Orders and one Drug Treatment Order.

Of the 20 young people subject to court orders, outcome data were available in 16 cases. A total of 10 young people satisfactorily completed the mentoring period, four mentoring relationships broke down and one young person chose to end the relationship prematurely.

Another young person failed to comply with the conditions imposed, was not breached, but returned to court to face charges for other offences and received a custodial sentence. As shown in Table 5.1, the majority of breakdowns (58.1%) occurred before the sixth meeting.

Table 5.1: Number of meetings between the young person and the mentor before the breakdown of the match

Number of meetings before the breakdown of the match	Number of young people	% of known
0	1	<1
1	74	18
2-5	165	40
6-10	58	14
11-20	54	13
More than 20	61	15
Not known	116	-
Total	**529**	**100**

The main reasons given for mentoring relationships ending prematurely are presented in Table 5.2. In nearly three-quarters of these cases (74%), the termination of a relationship was initiated by some event directly related to the young person. For example, in 47% of all relationship breakdowns the primary reason was attributed to the young person having lost interest in the relationship and no longer being committed to the idea of having a mentor. Less frequently cited reasons included changes in personal circumstances, such as moving out of the area or being admitted to a young offenders' institution. Mentors were responsible for relationships breaking down in 10% of cases. Reasons given included loss of interest, moving out of the area and not having enough time to commit to the relationship. A wide variety of reasons are included in the 'other' category, such as: illness; the young person not liking their mentor and there being no suitable alternative; the young person not wanting a mentor when the school holidays started; and the young person being placed or remanded in secure accommodation.

Table 5.2: Reasons given for terminating mentoring relationships prematurely

Reason for relationship ending	Number	%
Young person:		
lost interest/not committed	247	47
moved out of area	54	10
felt they no longer needed a mentor	50	9
admitted to a Young Offenders' Institution	24	5
taken into care	6	1
family objected	12	2
Mentor:		
lost interest/not committed	20	4
could no longer spare the time	20	4
moved out of area	15	3
Scheme:		
terminated the relationship	8	2
Other/not known:	73	14
Total:	**529**	**100**

Some local evaluators explored the reasons behind mentoring relationships ending prematurely. For example, interviews with mentors and project staff in one scheme, which recorded a breakdown rate of 38%, revealed a number of possible reasons for relationships ending during the early stages of the mentoring process. These included the fact that the young person might be unable to relate to their appointed mentor or generally perceive a mentor as 'just another interfering adult'. Relationships could also fail to start successfully, or end prematurely, if the young person's family did not support the scheme. Where mentoring relationships failed because of an unsuitable match, schemes would generally endeavour to allocate the young person to another mentor. How soon this could be arranged varied according to the availability of suitable volunteer mentors.

In one scheme, in which over half (57%) of mentoring relationships ended unsuccessfully before the completion of five meetings, a number of reasons were advanced to explain early termination. In particular, Yot workers and mentoring agencies referred to the chaotic lifestyles and complex socio-emotional needs of the young people on the programme. There was a view that some young people were experiencing such traumatic and disruptive events that they were not in a position to commit themselves to a mentoring relationship. Furthermore, it was also felt that young people subject to court orders could feel overwhelmed by the variety of programmes and schemes on offer, and given the voluntary nature of mentoring, there was a tendency for it to be viewed in this context as a last priority.

In an examination of mentors' logs and diary sheets, one local evaluator noted that most mentors experienced a low period a few months into a mentoring relationship. It was at this stage that they first came to understand fully the reality of the complicated and often chaotic lives led by some of the young people and began to wonder if they were having any real impact. In many schemes, these kinds of issues were addressed at mentor support group meetings and in addition project co-ordinators provided guidance and support as part of the routine monitoring of the activities of individual volunteer mentors.

THE IMPACT OF SCHEMES

Self-esteem

While empirical research has yet to establish a causal link between low self-esteem and juvenile crime (Emler, 2001), and studies reveal that probation intervention initiatives designed to enhance self-esteem fall short of their aim (Minor and Elrod, 1994), the raising of young people's self-esteem was nevertheless mentioned as a planned outcome by 23 of the schemes in this study. Consequently, given the strategic importance schemes attached to self-esteem as a mechanism for change, we felt it necessary to include it as an outcome measure.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was made available for local evaluators to use. The intention was that this instrument would be administered at the beginning and end of the mentoring period in order to ascertain if there was any change in the level of self-esteem, following the intervention. However, we only obtained data in relation to a total of 21 young people from five schemes. Given this paucity of available data, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions, other than to state that a comparison of the individual scores both before and after the mentoring intervention illustrated that, in eight cases, there had been an increase in self-esteem; in seven cases self-esteem had declined; and in six cases there had been no discernible change.

In the case of 10 schemes, although the Rosenberg Scale was not adopted as a research tool, local evaluators did explore issues around self-esteem by means of questionnaires and qualitative interviews with samples of young people, project workers and mentors. These data provide some limited evidence of self-reported improvements in such personal qualities as self-esteem and self-confidence.

Educational performance
Twenty-seven schemes formulated objectives in relation to tackling poor school attendance and encouraging participation in education and training programmes. There is evidence of some success as far as these outcomes are concerned, particularly in those schemes dealing with low tariff offenders or young people at risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour, and also where there is a structured educational component provided. A scheme, which deals primarily with young people who have either a poor school attendance record or have been formally excluded from school, runs a programme of educational activities in association with a local further education college. These sessions are extremely well attended, and there is evidence of improved educational performance. For example, a number of young people obtained City and Guilds qualifications at Entry Level and Level One. Preliminary data from another scheme suggest that, where mentoring relationships ended as planned, there was evidence of a significant improvement in school attendance, a reduction in disruptive behaviour in school and less risk of school exclusion. Case study data from a third scheme illustrate how some young people can be encouraged to re-enter mainstream education, following a period of withdrawal or disengagement.

Reoffending
As reducing youth crime is the principal objective of the individual schemes, reoffending is the primary strategic outcome measure. In determining the impact of the schemes, evidence is drawn from two main sources: the analyses undertaken by local evaluators and the reconviction study we conducted. The work of the local evaluators is based on monitoring data held by the Yots and information collected by means of questionnaires and qualitative interviews. The findings are summarised below. This is followed by the results of our reconviction study.

A total of 19 of the local evaluators' reports provided information on either offending behaviour or young people's attitudes to crime and drugs. Evidence emerging from some schemes would appear to suggest that they are displaying a modicum of success in reducing offending. The following represent a few examples of findings from these local evaluations:

❖ Of 42 young people who joined the scheme, just under a quarter (24%) reoffended while receiving mentoring support, and a total of 40% reoffended overall. As regards intermediate outcomes, it is reported that 61% of young people became involved in education, training or work as a result of their participation in the scheme.
❖ In a sample of 49 young people between the ages of 10 and 17 years who were referred to the scheme, 30 were matched with a mentor. Of these 15 reoffended. Of the 19 in the unmatched (i.e. non-mentored) group, 11 committed further offences. This gives reconviction rates of 50% and 58% respectively.

❖ In the 12-month period prior to receiving mentoring support, Yot data recorded that 18 young people had been arrested in connection with 150 offences. The comparable figure for the 12-month period following the commencement of mentoring was 82 offences.

❖ Of 30 young people with previous convictions who received mentoring, there was no evidence that 23 had reoffended following the termination of mentoring support. Analysis revealed that there was no indication of any relationship between offending behaviour and the premature ending of a mentoring relationship - of the 23 young people who did not reoffend, 12 had continued their mentoring relationship to full term, whereas 11 had seen the relationship terminated prematurely. In a further sample of 35 young people at risk, only two offended after their mentoring relationship ended.

A number of other evaluations reported reoffending rates based on smaller samples. For example, in one scheme five out of nine young people interviewed claimed that they had not offended since starting a mentoring relationship. A random sample of six young people drawn from another scheme revealed that, according to Yot information, three had continued to offend, following the end of the mentoring relationship.

One project worked primarily with young people who were either at risk of offending or low-tariff offenders, and its success seems to be confined to this group. Four referrals were described as persistent offenders and each one continued offending despite their involvement in the scheme. The suggestion that mentoring initiatives might be more effective as an early intervention strategy with low-risk groups features in a number of local studies. For example, mentors in another scheme expressed the view that the best results seemed to be obtained when working with young people at the cautioning stage of the youth justice process. Similarly, the local evaluator's report on a further project noted that mentoring appeared to be more successful at preventing offending by young people at risk than it was at deterring persistent young offenders from committing further crimes. There is also evidence from other schemes that persistent young offenders were seen as being particularly challenging to work with, especially within a mentoring context. In one evaluation, it was noted that the Yot held the view that, because of their chaotic lifestyles, persistent young offenders did not necessarily make the best candidates for mentoring interventions. Over an 18-month period, 13 such offenders were referred to the project and, of these six, were not matched and only one successfully completed the mentoring process.

In contrast to the above, one scheme reported some success in working with persistent young offenders. The project, which provided mentoring support for young offenders between the ages of 11 and 17 years, successfully matched 42 young people with mentors. All but two of these young offenders were serving a court order. In terms of individual offending profiles, a total of 16 had 10 or more previous convictions and four had served a custodial sentence. Many had committed crimes of violence. The local evaluator reported that 69% of this cohort had not reoffended within four months.

NATIONAL EVALUATORS' FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF KNOWN REOFFENDING

In addition to collating the findings of local evaluators regarding reoffending behaviour, we conducted a separate study of reoffending.

In the period July 2000 to March 2001, a total of 505 young people joined the programme by participating in those schemes that were by then in operation. These young people were followed up for one year from the date they started the programme or, if that date was not recorded, the date that they were referred to the programme. Any subsequent offences committed that resulted in a Caution, Reprimand, Final Warning or a conviction at court, were noted. Information on subsequent offending was obtained from the PNC. An advantage of the PNC is that it gives the date of when the offence was committed, which enabled us to classify accurately whether the offence occurred before or after starting the mentoring programme regardless of when the conviction or caution was administered. However, like others of its kind, a limitation of this study is that it was confined to known offending (that is, offences for which the offender was caught). Information was not available on other offences committed by members of the sample for which they were not caught. The phrase known offending is adopted to emphasise the true nature of the study.

Of this group, 146 could not be traced, which left 359 for whom records were available. It is this group that is the subject of the reoffending study. Almost three-quarters of the cohort were male and a quarter female. Very few were from minority ethnic backgrounds (all but 40 were white) and, in view of this, ethnicity did not feature in the subsequent analysis. (In fact there was little difference between ethnic groups on any of the other factors mentioned, including reoffending - 63% of whites reoffending compared with 60% of non-whites.)

Table 5.3 shows that, within one year of joining the programme, 55% had committed a further offence for which they had been dealt with by the police or by the courts.

Table 5.3: Number of young people known to reoffend within one year, by gender

Gender	Number	Number reoffending	% reoffending within one year
Female	85	34	40
Male	274	164	60
Total	**359**	**198**	**55**

It can also be seen from Table 5.3 that females were much less likely to reoffend than males.

In addition to gender, an offender's age and the extent of his or her previous criminal history have been found in all other studies to be associated with reoffending (Tarling, 1993). These factors are considered next.

The age of the offender at the time they joined the programme was found to be important (see Table 5.4). Those aged 10 to 13 were notably less likely to receive a further Caution or conviction for a subsequent offence than those aged 14 to 17. Less than half of 10 to 13-year-olds reoffended, compared with 60% of the older age group. This difference was found to be statistically significant ($X^2 = 7.1$, d.f. = 1, p<.01).

Table 5.4: Number of young people known to reoffend within one year, by age at time of joining the programme

Age	Number	Number reoffending	% reoffending within one year
10 – 13	106	47	44
14 - 17	253	151	60
Total	359	198	55

It is invariably found that the younger the age at which people begin their offending career, the more likely they are to continue offending in the future (see Tarling, 1993). This was true for this group, as is indicated in Table 5.5.

It can be seen that 62% of those beginning their criminal careers between the ages of 10 and 13 reoffended, compared with 42% of those beginning their careers later, between 14 and 17. This finding was found to be highly statistically significant ($X^2 = 12.6$, d.f. = 1, p<.001).

Table 5.5: Number of young people known to reoffend within one year, by age at first Caution or conviction

Age at first caution or conviction	Number	Number reoffending	% reoffending within one year
10 – 13	234	145	62
14 - 17	125	53	42
Total	359	198	55

Of course, those beginning their careers earlier will have more time to amass a more extensive criminal record than those starting later, and it is the number of previous offences that is most strongly associated with subsequent offending. Whether a young person reoffended according to the extent of his or her criminal record is given in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Number of young people known to reoffend within one year, by number of previous offences for which an offender was cautioned or convicted

Number of previous of offences	Number of young people	Number reoffending	% reoffending within one year
0	68	19	28
1	83	36	43
2	38	18	47
3	27	18	67
4 < 10	64	42	66
10 or more	79	65	82
Total	359	198	55

It can be seen that the likelihood of known reoffending increases with the length of a criminal career. Whereas 28% of first offenders reoffend, over 80% of those with at least 10 previous offences do so. This finding is highly statistically significant ($X^2 = 53.7$, d.f. = 5, p<.001; Kendall's tau c = .43, p<.001)

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Finally, the rate of reoffending was examined in relation to the disposal that the young person had received before joining the programme. The results are presented in Table 5.7.

Known reoffending rates were lowest for those who had been given a Reprimand/Caution or a Final Warning (36%) or who had been given a financial penalty (44%). Those receiving other disposals, including community disposals, were more likely to reoffend. As few were given each type of disposal, not too much weight should be attached to individual comparisons; but together they show a consistent pattern - rates of reoffending of between 65 and 78%.

Table 5.7: Number of young people known to reoffend within one year, by disposal received before joining the programme

Disposal	Number	Number reoffending	% reoffending within one year
Caution/Reprimand/Final Warning	158	57	36
Conditional Discharge	23	18	78
Monetary Penalty	9	4	44
Action Plan Order	23	15	65
Community Penalty	27	18	67
Supervision Order	67	48	72
Custody	23	16	70
Other	29	22	76
Total	**359**	**198**	**55**

Extreme care should be taken when drawing conclusions regarding the effectiveness of different disposals. Cautions/Reprimands, Final Warnings and financial penalties are given to offenders at first or second offence, so the low reoffending rates associated with these disposals may be more a reflection of the kinds of offenders given them than the effectiveness of the disposal itself. A slight anomaly is Conditional Discharge. It too is often associated within low rates of reoffending, as it is often given early in a career. However, against this, a conditional discharge is also given at much later points in a career where the offence is considered not serious, or where an offender is already the subject of another order.

Known reoffending rates in context
In order to monitor its own performance in reducing crime, the Home Office routinely produces one-year reconviction rates for successive cohorts of juveniles (Jennings, 2002, 2003). Against the findings from the Home Office studies, it is possible to compare the reconviction rate of the young people participating in the mentoring programme. From the July 2000 and the first quarter 2001 cohorts (which cover the same time period as the subjects of this study entered the mentoring programme), 26% reoffended within a year. This rate is much lower than the rate of those on the mentoring programme (55%). However, the Home Office study included a much greater proportion of first offenders - 65% had 'no previous appearances', compared with only 19% of the young people in this study who were first offenders. Nevertheless, after controlling for the differences between the two groups (by comparing those with the same number of previous offences), those on the mentoring programme fared a little worse in terms of reoffending than the national cohorts.

The comparison with the Home Office sample suggests that offenders deemed suitable for the mentoring programme may be thought of as 'mid range' offenders in that most had begun their criminal careers prior to joining the programme and many had amassed a significant number of cautions or convictions. However, most were, in terms of official sanctions, at the caution, reprimand or final warning stage. In total, 67 had received a Supervision or Probation Order prior to joining the programme and only 23 had received a custodial sentence.

In addition to simply examining whether young people reoffended or not within one year, exploration of offending before and after the intervention was undertaken. It was possible to calculate the average rate at which a member of the sample committed offences in the before period, that is the period between the first offence committed and the offence which led to the young person to join the mentoring programme, and a rate of offending for the one-year follow-up period. The rates were found to be similar in the two periods. On average it was estimated that an offender committed 2.1 known offences in the before period and 2.6 offences in the follow-up period, or after. On this basis, it would appear that the mentoring programme had little effect. However, this analysis does not take into account the fact that the sample was a year older in the follow-up period and at an age when offending is generally higher. The peak age of offending is mid- to late teens and one would expect the sample to be more criminally active in the follow-up period, regardless of the mentoring programme.

In addition to examining the extent of offending, an attempt was made to compare the seriousness of offending in the before and after periods. While the rate of offending increased slightly, consideration was given to whether the programme had the effect of modifying behaviour to the extent that offenders committed less serious offences after joining the mentoring programme. There are conceptual and methodological problems in measuring seriousness of offending, but criminal careers research (e.g. Tarling, 1993) has shown that offenders do not specialise to any great extent but alternate between offences in the type and seriousness of the offences they commit. This proved to be the case for this sample and there was no clear evidence of any change in the seriousness of offending.

SUMMARY
In conclusion, when making summary judgements as to the impact of mentoring interventions, the findings described in this chapter require careful interpretation. Given both the incidence of mentoring relationship breakdowns and the fact that individual evaluations show equivocal outcomes where relationships go the full term, it is difficult to summarise the overall or average effect of the mentoring schemes or the areas of young people's lives where it can make an impact. In quantitative terms, where schemes appear to produce changes in the desired direction, the actual numbers involved can be disappointingly small. This finding does not only apply to mentoring interventions, many other studies of rehabilitative programmes have reported only modest statistical effects. Indeed, as Losel (1995) observes, no matter how well focused or lengthy a particular intervention proves to be, it represents 'only one episode in a long development of criminogenic habits and lifestyles' (Losel, 1995). As many young people who receive mentoring support are facing multiple personal problems and social difficulties, the nature and complexity of these problems may be such that regular mentoring sessions alone cannot be expected to have much of an impact on the pattern of offending behaviour in the

short term. Where young offenders are known to be at high risk of further offending, more intensive mentoring support, in combination with other forms of intervention, may be required in order to produce positive results. Then, from a methodological point of view, in the final analysis, the problem becomes one of separating the effects of mentoring from the those of other interventions.

6 MENTORING: THE WAY AHEAD

The Board initiative, which involved supporting mentoring schemes around the country for a period of three years, was a major undertaking. This final section brings together some of the major findings from the evaluation exercise and identifies the lessons learnt that may inform future practice in this area. Particular attention is drawn to the practical issues highlighted by the process evaluation and to those factors that need to be considered when assessing the effectiveness of mentoring interventions.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

At the practical level, the process evaluation highlighted the problems of setting up and running schemes. First, the initial lead-in time and effort required to establish a scheme should not be underestimated. While eleven schemes were already in operation at the start of the initiative, new schemes took the best part of a year to 18 months before they became fully operational. Premises had to be found, management structures and working procedures needed to be established, and mentors had to be recruited and trained.

As described earlier, recruiting mentors, in particular male mentors, is not without its difficulties, and may be becoming more difficult as the number of opportunities for mentors increases, following the expansion of existing schemes and the emergence of new ones. In addition to this, there is an increase in the demand for volunteers to work within the criminal justice system, such as acting as appropriate adults and as members of referral panels. There is no simple solution, but it is clear that those who do come forward should have their commitment appropriately channelled and suitably supported. As noted in the current study, there were reports of volunteer mentors experiencing delays in obtaining the necessary clearance, having to wait to be matched with a young person and not receiving sufficient ongoing support once matched with a mentee. Situations such as these caused disillusionment and often led to mentors resigning.

Another important issue identified from a process evaluation perspective concerns the relationship of the mentoring scheme with the Yot. In the interests of establishing good and effective working practices, these relationships need to be properly thought through. On the one hand, Yots need to have confidence in the schemes and be assured that the schemes are delivering a timely and effective intervention. In some cases, lack of confidence may have led to the Yot becoming more directly involved in running the scheme. On the other hand, schemes wish to retain their independence as they see the essence of mentoring as an unofficial, voluntary, non-judgemental relationship with a young person in difficult circumstances or at a difficult stage in their life. To make the relationship too formal, or for it to be seen as part of an official sanction or punishment, minimises any chance of success, as the young person may enter the relationship with the wrong attitude.

Resolving this tension and trying to find a balance between what might seem opposing views can only be achieved through trust and respect, brought about by good lines of communication between the scheme and the Yot. Striking the right balance and fostering good relations will have implications for the location of the scheme, its staffing and

working practices. This issue, which has implications for the future direction of mentoring, is returned to later.

Earlier it was described how many schemes operated with small numbers of staff. Given the management structure this imposed, the project co-ordinator occupies a key role in the development and operation of a scheme. The co-ordinator was the person who had day-to-day responsibility for the scheme and its management. The foundation of a good scheme would seem to be a strong co-ordinator who has a clear vision of what he or she wants to achieve. Local evaluators commented that previous experience of youth work and/or the criminal justice system were essential attributes of a successful co-ordinator. This experience, it was found, plays an important part in achieving effective working relations with the Yot. Not only do such qualified co-ordinators win trust and respect, but they are better able to negotiate their way around the youth justice system.

However, in many schemes the co-ordinator is often the only full-time or experienced member of staff and it can be extremely disruptive for a scheme if the co-ordinator leaves, is on long-term sick leave or away from the scheme for a long period for any other reason. For example, one scheme was seriously adversely affected by the co-ordinator being away on jury service. A third of the 39 schemes indicated that, at some point during the three-year period, they had problems due to staff absences.

Insufficient attention appears to have been given to the potential problems caused by shortages of staff. No fallback positions were in place. This problem, which was so evident in many cases, calls into question the viability of small, one-person schemes. To be viable schemes need to be of a minimum size that can support an internal management structure of more than one professional person.

WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF A GOOD MENTORING SCHEME?

In judging what makes for an effective mentoring intervention, attention can be focused on three broad areas: the organisation and administration of mentoring schemes; the attitudes and attributes of volunteer mentors; and the nature of the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring schemes

From an organisational point of view, there are three key elements to the successful provision and delivery of mentoring support. First, mentoring schemes need to establish effective working relationships with Yots and develop links with various local organisations in order to ensure they receive sufficient referrals of suitable young people. Steering groups have an important role to play in both facilitating liaison between the various groups and encouraging multi-agency co-operation. Second, the foundation of a good scheme is a strong co-ordinator who has a clear idea of what she or he hopes to achieve. However, in order to be viable, schemes need to be of a minimum size that can support an internal management structure of more than one experienced member of staff.

Third, mentoring projects need to make suitable provision for the needs of volunteer mentors. In general, this entails providing appropriate training, establishing support systems and acknowledging the contribution volunteers make. These factors are interrelated. From a training perspective, it is important that volunteers feel that they are adequately prepared for taking on the mentoring role. Where training courses provided advice and guidance on practical issues around working with challenging young people, this

was found to be particularly valuable. Also, group training gave volunteers an opportunity to form peer support networks.

While the initial training course represents the start of the support system for volunteers, it is essential that mentors receive ongoing support throughout the mentoring period. Many schemes recognised the importance of further training and support in this context and organised mentoring support group meetings. In a couple of cases, the idea of peer support was formalised; in one project, volunteers with experience of mentoring acted as team leaders for small groups of mentors and, in another scheme, a buddying system was established. Of course, the nature and level of support required by an individual volunteer mentor is, to some extent, contingent upon the personal circumstances of the young person involved. Where particular problems are identified the mentor needs to be able to call on the support of project staff. The project co-ordinator plays an important role in monitoring the development and progress of individual mentoring relationships. Also, it is reassuring for mentors to realise that they have someone to turn to for support when faced with difficult circumstances or an emergency situation.

It is very important that the contribution mentors make is recognised, and that they are treated as volunteers and made to feel that their efforts are valued. In many ways this can be shown through the support they receive from the projects. Individual feedback from project staff is particularly welcomed in this regard. Also, where projects produce newsletters and arrange social events, these can help volunteers identify with a scheme and feel that their efforts are appreciated.

Mentors

Ideally, a scheme's organisational infrastructure and administrative practices should create the necessary conditions to facilitate the formation and maintenance of mutually satisfying mentoring relationships. However, it is the attitudes, actions and activities of the mentors themselves that lead to the actual creation of successful one-to-one mentoring relationships. Essentially, from the outset, mentors need to have a realistic view as to what they can achieve and the impact they can have on a young person's life over the course of a mentoring relationship. Where expectations are too high, this can lead to demoralisation.

Volunteer mentors can lose enthusiasm if, when they have completed their training, there are delays in matching them with a young person. In order to reduce the possibility of such delays, it is important that the process of undertaking criminal-record checks is started at an early stage in the selection process.

Given the nature and complexity of the personal problems and difficult social circumstances experienced by many of the young people receiving mentoring support, mentors need to learn quickly how to cope with disappointments and temporary set-backs. Winning the trust of a young person and establishing a supportive relationship can take time and patience. Evidence that a relationship is having a positive impact may not always be immediately apparent when looking for measurable changes in lifestyle or social behaviour.

Mentoring relationship

It is important that, as soon as matching has taken place, individual mentoring relationships quickly get off to a good start. In this regard, mentors and young people need

to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, in terms of personal commitment and conduct, and what they can be expected to gain from a mentoring relationship. Developing realistic expectations can be facilitated by having a contract or agreement that is recognised by both parties.

The proposed length of the mentoring period, and the frequency and intensiveness of contact between the mentors and the young people varied between the schemes in the study. In terms of duration, mentoring matches were planned for periods ranging from 12 weeks to two years. As regards meetings, weekly meetings of around two to three hours were the norm. It is not really possible to identify an optimum length of time for a mentoring intervention or establish what is most effective in terms of duration and frequency of contact, as, ultimately, these are, in many ways, determined by the nature and extent of the needs of the individual young people concerned. However, the mentoring period and frequency of contact need to be sufficient to give both parties time to adapt to each other and establish a comfortable and mutually satisfying relationship.

Mentors need to create an atmosphere of trust and respect before they can begin to address some of the issues and problems facing individual mentees. Mentors can find themselves involved in trying to achieve a variety of objectives such as helping disaffected young people build positive relationships with peers and adults, tackling truancy and encouraging young people to pursue constructive social and recreational activities. Given that this all takes time, a period of at least 12 months would appear to be necessary in order to form a relationship and negotiate personal goals with the young person.

It is not only the initial setting up of mentoring relationships that needs to be carefully planned; best practice would suggest that project co-ordinators also need to give some thought as to how successful mentoring relationships can be naturally terminated. There is a general recognition that endings need to be planned and mentors and young people suitably prepared.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MENTORING

The Board initiative will also contribute to knowledge and understanding of the effectiveness of mentoring as a response to dealing with offenders.

To date, only two studies have been undertaken in this country into the impact of mentoring support for young offenders or young people at risk of offending or being excluded from school. Porteous (1998) was essentially a preliminary qualitative study of the CSV On-line Mentoring Scheme in East London. The evaluation was primarily based on 10 case studies and the measurement of outcomes relied on the assessments made by agency workers and mentors. A number of positive outcomes were reported, including a reduction in offending behaviour, a reduction in problems experienced at school and an improvement in the self-confidence and self-esteem of the young people.

Tarling et al (2001) measured the outcomes of three cohorts of young people aged 11 to 14 participating in the Dalston Youth Project. Each of the 80 young people spent a year on the project, which also involved an educational component (in which young people attended after school classes two or three afternoons per week), as well as being paired with a mentor. Unfortunately, it was not possible in that study to obtain a control group (who did not take part in the project), and the best that could be achieved was to compare those who

participated with those who were allocated to the project, but who declined or opted out of the project at an early stage. About half (40) fell into each category. Obviously, comparing these groups has its limitations, as one can never rule out a selection effect. For example, those young people who did not participate in the programme may have represented the more difficult cases, in that, before the intervention, they had a comparatively poorer prognosis in terms of successful outcomes. Nevertheless, those who participated in the programme did do better in terms of schooling, and were less involved in subsequent offending. However, differences between the groups were not always marked and did not attain statistical significance, but then the numbers were very small.

Two findings from the Tarling et al study are particularly relevant in the current context. First, mentoring alone may not be sufficient for redirecting young people at risk of offending. The Dalston project was successful for those individuals who also attended the educational component of the programme. Second, mentoring interventions need to be targeted appropriately. Many young people initially accepted by the project rejected the opportunity of having a mentor and never really participated in the programme.

Establishing the effectiveness of youth mentoring in a youth justice context must involve some analysis of reoffending rates. The follow-up data presented here on 359 young people who participated in the initiative in its early stages shows that just over half (55%) were known to have reoffended within one year. At first sight, this appears disappointing, but the rate of known reoffending has to be set in context, as it will to a large extent depend upon the types of young people joining the programme. Comparison with the Home Office cohorts suggests that offenders deemed suitable for the mentoring programme may be thought of as mid-range offenders, in that most had begun their criminal careers before joining the programme, and many had amassed a significant number of cautions or convictions. Nevertheless, after controlling for the differences between the two groups those on the mentoring programme fared a little worse in terms of reoffending than the national cohorts.

In evaluations of mentoring, outcomes are invariably measured in terms of the impact the intervention has on young people - for example the extent or degree to which it leads to improved school attendance, enhanced self-esteem or a reduction in offending behaviour. However, sight should not be lost of the effects of the initiative on the mentors themselves, or the wider agendas that the schemes might be seen to address.

As noted by Philip and Hendry, mentoring involves 'a highly reciprocal set of processes in which both sets of partners can benefit from the relationship' (2000: 213). In this context, mentoring is viewed as a form of 'cultural capital'. As far as young people are concerned, it helps them to develop interpersonal skills and coping strategies for dealing with the transitions to adulthood. From a mentors' perspective, engaging in the mentoring process gives them an insight into the lives of young people and provides them with opportunities for reassessing their own personal life experiences.

A total of 1,712 volunteers underwent mentor training and 1,576 actually became mentors. Mentors gave multiple reasons for volunteering; most of these were altruistic. However, some volunteers also remarked that their involvement in mentoring had provided them with valuable experience that was relevant to them in developing their careers. Thus, mentoring is an activity that has the potential to provide rewards for both the young person and the

mentor. At a societal level, it can be seen as a way of promoting active citizenship by enabling individuals to make a tangible contribution to forwarding the aspiration of engaging the local community in addressing the problem of youth crime.

THE FUTURE OF MENTORING

In the course of the evaluations, Yots and other agencies were interviewed about their perceptions of mentoring and of the performance of the schemes. There were mixed messages from the Yots, and a number of not-unexpected problems were identified. A few reports mentioned failure in communication between the Yot and the scheme. Some local evaluators mentioned the long time between referral and the young person being matched with a mentor as a problem. In some cases, there was a shortage of mentors, which meant young people could not be referred to the scheme. Some Yots wanted more feedback on the performance of the young people while on the scheme. Frustration was expressed over the staffing difficulties that occurred, and some Yots felt that the scheme was not providing the service that it had expected. To counterbalance this, many Yots were very positive and considered communication to be good, and the scheme to be providing a positive intervention.

As to the continuation of the schemes themselves, 20 schemes had secured additional funding and were set to continue after March 2002 (when Board funding came to an end). A further 11 schemes were either in the process of securing additional funding or had a commitment to do so, with some being far more advanced than others in this respect. Five schemes did not having funding to continue and were closing. The situation with three schemes was not known.

Examining in more depth the circumstances of those schemes that are set to continue, most had secured their immediate future by being incorporated or embedded within the Yot or mainstream services provided by the local authority. Although funds were obtained from other sources (in two cases schemes had secured additional money from the Board's later initiative to support black and minority ethnic young people), in most cases, core funding was provided by the Yot and/or the local authority. Funding arrangements such as these ensured that schemes became more closely involved with the education department, the youth service, social services or other local authority departments. One local authority appointed a full-time, dedicated, mentoring development officer. Another local authority combined mentoring with remand management and bail support, and contracted one large organisation to provide all three services.

Looking at the schemes that had not secured continuation funding, it appeared that their fate was determined by either a breakdown in relations with the Yot or the Yot not being convinced of the value of the scheme. In at least two cases, a Yot approached another scheme as a possible source of future mentoring provision.

While schemes themselves will be more integrated with other services in a structural sense, the future development of mentoring as a response to offending is less clear. How far will mentoring be incorporated within the provisions and options available for young offenders? It was found in this study that four schemes had begun to consider mentoring as part of the official response to offending. Furthermore, two schemes provided mentoring support for young people detained in young offenders' institutions. In this institutional context, mentoring can almost become an aspect of through-care, as mentors help young offenders

to plan for their release. Such developments can only challenge the essential view of mentoring as a voluntary and unofficial intervention.

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