

The Role of Non-Government Organisations in Diverting Young People from Crime



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Western Australian
Council of Social Service Inc

*Ways to make
a difference*

By the
Western Australian Council of Social Service Inc

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WACOSS acknowledges and thanks the individuals and organisations who contributed as research participants (See Appendix Two).

Preface

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) is the peak body of the non-government social services sector in Western Australia. Since 1956 WACOSS has been positively influencing social policy, helping develop non-government agencies with useful, practical education and training, and providing a range of member support services.

While WACOSS has a long history of involvement in the poverty and non-government sector viability areas of social policy, crime prevention as an explicit agenda has not previously been a focus for specific work. The concept of this project was initiated through the recognition of the substantial contribution that non-government organisations (NGOs) make to society in the context of increasing client demands and ongoing funding restrictions. Given the well-established link between poverty and crime, WACOSS recognises that concerted action is needed to address poverty in terms of both its systemic causes as well as its symptoms. The engagement of individuals in criminal activity is viewed by WACOSS to largely be a symptom of their poverty or social exclusion.

This project, funded through the Office of Crime Prevention, represents part of WACOSS' commitment to building the capacity of NGOs and to raising awareness of the valuable contribution that such organisations make to the Western Australian community. It is also closely aligned with WACOSS' vision of a socially just and sustainable West Australian society where people care for each other and have access to the resources and opportunities required for their wellbeing.

This report has been produced in conjunction with an information kit for NGOs assisting young people. The kit aims to raise awareness amongst the youth sector of the contribution such agencies already make to preventing crime and disperse information of how this function can be enhanced.

Executive Summary

The present study was concerned with how the work of non-government organisations (NGOs) assisting young people in metropolitan Perth, Western Australia, contributes to crime prevention and what may be done to enhance that contribution. The study sought to examine in more detail how the connection between aid and assistance to young people has a crime reducing effect by talking directly to NGO service providers.

The first chapter explains the purpose and structure of the report, its goals and its fundamental parameters. The methodology, in Chapter Two, outlines the approach taken to uncover the views held by youth agencies in the NGO sector. The research involved interviews with 51 key service providers. These service providers were interviewed face to face in an intensive interview using a semi structured interview schedule (Appendix 3). The interview was designed to tap into five key issues in relation to how the work of NGOs contributes to crime prevention. These themes are:

- the relevance of crime prevention to NGOs
- the understanding of providers of the causes of offending by young people
- perspectives on the impact of services in diverting young people from crime
- views on what works in diverting young people from crime
- views on what doesn't work in diverting young people from crime

The results were then collated and a forum was convened with a select group of experts and leaders in the youth service sector to provide further insight into key findings. This report represents the outcome of both levels of discussion.

The basic rationale as to why we should work with disadvantaged young people to prevent crime is well known. The underlying literature on the connection between young people, disadvantage, poverty, social exclusion and crime is reviewed in the third chapter of this report. Also reviewed in the third chapter is what is known about the impact of service provision on offending behaviour of young people and what may be considered key points of influence as well as good practice principles in this regard.

The key findings from both the interviews and focus groups were:

- Crime prevention is highly relevant to NGOs assisting young people. Most interviewees pointed out that their clients experienced a number of risk factors known to influence offending
- A central paradox was that to be effective many services did not want to be associated with, or known as, crime prevention based agencies. Crime might be an outcome of social disadvantage but should never be a reason for helping a young person who is disadvantaged as by so doing, they are robbed of an identity other than “potential offender”
- The general merit of early intervention was widely endorsed by the interviewees
- Service providers saw the development of positive, trusting relationships between the young person and the youth worker as central in diverting the young person from crime
- The provision of accommodation and other basic necessities was also considered a key component in diverting young people from crime with the recognition that much crime is committed out of necessity
- Lack of funding and government support were cited as the main obstacles agencies experienced in the youth sector
- In terms of ways that the crime prevention function of services could be enhanced, greater collaboration, more realistic funding models, more culturally appropriate services as well as enhanced access/facilities stood out as the main suggestions

In the final chapter, good practice principles and recommendations emerging from the research are reported. Integrally linked to the discussion in Chapter Four, the ten good practice principles when addressing the needs of young people accessing NGOs were identified as:

1. The relevance of crime prevention to the work of NGOs is recognised at an individual agency level, a youth services sector level and a government level

2. NGO services should be designed, promoted and delivered in an appropriate and accessible manner
3. That the causes of offending are recognised as being inextricably linked to social, economic and environment factors affecting young people
4. Positive relationships between young people accessing services and youth workers can provide an invaluable reason for young people not to get involved in criminal behaviour
5. As far as possible, services should be accessible, respectful, comprehensive, and based on forming meaningful relationships with the young person
6. Services should provide something substantial to, and valued by, the young person such as responsibilities, training and/or skills
7. The provision of basic services such as accommodation and emergency relief should not be overlooked in terms of the contribution this makes to crime prevention
8. Services or programs that facilitate self expression of young people and offer alternative experiences for them are vital as they encourage the development of positive self identity
9. Critical transition points such as the onset of adolescence and the move between primary and secondary school should be recognised as important in the development of a young person and have the capacity to influence decisions to offend
10. 'Whenever' is a good time to offer services to disadvantaged young people. If an opportunity presents itself to make a difference in the life of young person, this opportunity should be grasped

The key recommendations identified were:

1. Further the development of programs and strategies to recognise and enhance the **role of NGO's in crime prevention**
2. Greater recognition in policy and practice of the role of **early family relationships** in placing young people at increased risk of offending through responses such as increasing capacity of services able to focus on addressing these problems

3. Facilitation of **young people reporting victimisation against** them and enhancing the support provided to them in recognition of the link between being a victim and being a perpetrator of crime
4. Establishment of **a co-ordination centre for youth services** with the aim of maintaining the knowledge of available services and programs with a particular focus on highlighting and responding to current gaps in the provision of services to young people who may be at risk of offending
5. Recognition in policy and planning of the importance of:
 - Appropriate, safe, and affordable **housing for young people**, and
 - Services to assist young people with **mental illness and/or drug misuse** issuesas being key priority areas in efforts to tackle offending by young people
6. A recognition in policy and planning of the importance of culturally appropriate services both to **Indigenous and CALD** young people in efforts to reduce offending by these young people
7. Enhance the existing **mentor role** played by workers in NGOs to at risk young people through increased funding and support to services and the effective dissemination of good practice mentoring models
8. Provide further **information and training on “what works”** in diverting young people from crime to non-government youth service organisations
9. Commit to maintaining an **up-to-date website** and on-going information sessions and resources to NGOs on issues and services of relevance
10. Develop strategies to enhance the **role of schools** in diverting young people from offending with a focus on the development of a framework to facilitate partnerships between schools and NGOs
11. Renew the focus on **multi agency collaboration** in funding guidelines
12. Facilitate the development of meaningful, on-going and helpful **performance monitoring** for agencies in partnership with other funding bodies

13. Work with other funding bodies to address the current problems in the **discipline on funding** across and within different providers especially in regard to the preponderance of short-term program based funding
14. Work in partnership with other stakeholders in the development of a program to provide **ongoing assistance and mentoring for Youth Workers**
15. Fund **further research** into the use of multiple services by young people at risk of offending

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DAO	Drug and Alcohol Office
DCD	Department for Community Development
DET	Department for Education and Training
DOJ	Department of Justice
FACS	Family and Community Services
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NYARS	National Youth Affairs Research Scheme
OCP	Office of Crime Prevention
WACOSS	Western Australian Council of Social Service
YACWA	Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

1. Introduction

1.1. *Crime and Crime Prevention in Western Australia*

It is now widely recognised that traditional methods of crime prevention such as increasing police numbers and implementing harsh penalties are of limited value in further reducing crime after a certain level of coverage has been reached (Weatherburn 2004). This is a disturbing fact especially given that Western Australia spends more on police and imprisonment per capita than any other Australian State¹. As Homel cited in a National Crime Prevention report (National Crime Prevention 1999:3):

...Scientific research conducted over many decades strongly suggests that criminal justice approaches that emphasise increased police numbers and punishment must in most cases fail to effect significant reductions in crime. They will be enormously costly if pursued with the vigour evident in some other countries, and they may even increase crime rates...

The evidence thus suggests that for significant advances in crime prevention to be achieved, more fundamental and effective steps must be taken.

Over the last decade, there has been growing awareness of effective practices and interventions in diverting young people from offending. In Australia, reports sponsored by a range of State and Federal agencies such as National Crime Prevention and the Australian Institute of Criminology have investigated and commented on the evidence in this area². Stated very broadly, the preponderance of evidence points to the value of early and grass roots interventions that address the social and economic reasons closely linked to offending behaviour³.

In Western Australia, the Government has recently adopted a State Community Safety and Crime Prevention Strategy. The vision behind this is *"to make Western Australian communities safer through targeted and coordinated crime prevention and crime reduction programs"* (Office of Crime Prevention 2004:2).

The adoption of this strategy enhances the community's and the government's ability to appropriately respond to the recognised systemic causes of offending and make concerted efforts to address these in ways that can prevent crime from occurring.

Non-government organisations (NGOs) assisting young people are likely to be able to play a central and highly effective role in crime prevention in partnership with government and other stakeholders. Primarily, this is because they are often already involved at a grass roots level with those young people who could be considered to be most at risk of offending. For centuries, these services have been working to address the social and economic problems of individuals, now known to influence offending. Traditionally, however, such interventions have not been labelled as crime prevention.

There is a lack of detailed knowledge concerning the crime prevention impact of the work of the NGOs. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to know how this impact could be enhanced. This concern with understanding more about the role of NGOs in serving a crime prevention function provides the impetus for the present research.

1.2. Poverty, Young People and Crime

Like the rest of Australia, the face of poverty has been changing dramatically in Western Australia in recent years. Community services such as emergency relief providers and family support services have witnessed a massive increase in demand. To illustrate, between 2000 to 2001 and 2001 to 2002 the number of people accessing these agencies increased by approximately 30,000 people (WACOSS 2003). Further, changes to the nature of employment have led to a dramatic growth in the number of 'working poor'. Other issues such as changes to the traditional family unit, personal debt - particularly associated with the growing number of Centrelink breaches, as well as intergenerational problems of poverty and disadvantage are bringing with them a wide range of problems both for those experiencing poverty and for the broader society (Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee 2004).

Young people are particularly vulnerable to experiencing poverty due to a number of factors. In particular, the persistence of casual and part-time work as opposed to permanent full time employment and relatively high levels of youth unemployment are well-recognised issues⁴. Homelessness, or risk of homelessness, remains a significant problem around the country as young people continue to be overrepresented in these figures. Disturbingly, young people under the age of 14 make up one third of the 16,000 homeless people in Western Australia (Anthony 2005). Further, family breakdown and family relationship problems continue to increase in number and complexity, often considerably affecting the children of these families⁵. Currently, a conservative estimate is that 145,000 or 15 per cent, of all young people in Australia live in poverty (Mission Australia 2003).

There is evidence to suggest that rates of problem behaviour in young people are likely to increase as a result of continued rapid changes in society⁶. These rapid changes, linked to factors such as the nature of employment, family, and technology are noted as generating less stable living environments and more uncertainty about life chances (Rutter et al 1996⁷).

Integrally related to the problem of poverty, is the increased risk of those in this predicament becoming caught up in the criminal justice system. Following from this, the causes of offending are now recognised as a complex amalgam of social, economic and situational factors. Many researchers have concluded that the experience of poverty and associated problems are implicated in a young person's initial decision to offend and decisions to continue along a path characterised by such behaviour⁸. The concept of social exclusion is central to this understanding.

Given the close link between poverty and crime, considerable recognition needs to be given to the potential outcomes of addressing or failing to address poverty in terms of the impact of these responses on offending rates. Weatherburn and Lind (1997) found that, assuming other factors remained unchanged, an increase of 1000 families living in poverty would result in an additional 141 young people becoming formally involved in the criminal justice system. Following from this, the increase in juvenile court appearances as a

result of this increase would be 257 for each additional 1000 families. In relation to child neglect, also claimed to be closely linked to poverty, it was found that an increase of 1000 neglected children would result in an additional 256 juveniles involved in crime and 466 additional juvenile court appearances.

1.3. Purpose of this Research

This project builds on existing research on crime prevention by investigating the extent to which NGOs assisting young people in the Perth metropolitan area are able to play a role in crime prevention.

NGOs work at a grass roots level with young people on a variety of social and economic issues. While many young people accessing services could be considered at-risk of offending, the assistance provided by NGOs is usually not related to the young persons contact with the criminal justice system. NGOs can have a range of possible influences on decisions of young people around offending by virtue of the services they provide. These include (but are not limited to):

- the provision of financial and material assistance,
- the provision of crisis and short term accommodation and assistance with securing long term accommodation,
- providing a safe place to wear off the effects of alcohol and drug misuse
- giving assistance in reconciling family disputes,
- facilitating the development of positive relationships, and
- providing mentoring and counselling services.

Importantly, NGOs offer services that may not be able to be accessed by the young person through other, fee based avenues and youth workers are able to engage with clients in a way that facilitates the building of trust. The contacts and relationships of NGO service providers with at risk young people are likely to be central in the possible influence such agencies could have on the decisions by young people to offend. A likely reason for this is that the formation of a bond with the young person could essentially provide them with a reason not to offend. From the perspective of control theory⁹, the establishment of social

bonds act to block the thinking that provides the internal “permission” of the young person to offend. This bond is also likely to be important to young people who are socially excluded by providing an in-road into mainstream society. This connection with the young person may occur at a crucial time, a time when the young person is making critical decisions about offending or finding alternatives to offending.

Given that crime prevention is likely to be, in many cases, an unintended and possibly unrecognised outcome of services provided by NGOs working with young people, some important questions arise.

Perhaps most importantly from a crime prevention point of view is, if the work of NGOs has a positive impact on reducing crime then how can this work with young people be enhanced and supported to derive further crime reduction benefit. Through developing a better understanding of how the work of NGOs diverts some young people from offending offers the prospect of gaining significant ground in the effort to reduce crime in Western Australia. An examination of what external support to the agencies may be lacking is also vital.

From a slightly different perspective, youth service providers themselves are also likely to have valuable contributions to make to our understanding of preventing crime through working with young people. NGO service providers are at the front line of dealing with many of the young people who come into contact with the justice system and have an intimate understanding of the needs of these young people that are currently not being met. Youth service providers are in this way recognised as invaluable stakeholders in furthering the knowledge on what works in reducing young people’s involvement in crime.

In sum then, the purpose of this research is three fold. Firstly, it aims to ascertain the methods and the perceived effectiveness of the current work of NGO’s that may act to divert some young people from crime. Secondly, it seeks to document the views of service providers on factors affecting crime prevention identified through working with young people. Finally, the research seeks to illuminate good practice principles of service delivery as perceived by NGOs.

1.4. Structure of the Report

This report consists of six chapters, with this being the first. Chapter Two describes the methodology that guided the research. The Chapter includes relevant information surrounding the ethics guiding the delivery of the research tool to service providers, the process of obtaining a viable group of NGOs to participate and the background, purpose and content of the semi structured interview schedule used to collect data from agencies. The Chapter also discusses the use of a focus group to provide additional value and understanding to the findings of the agency interviews.

As a background to the research, an overview of the relevant literature is presented in Chapter Three. The literature review incorporates mostly Australian studies that provide the evidence of the current knowledge on the characteristics and causes of offending by young people as well as background information on crime prevention through developmental and early intervention approaches. The review also briefly documents the existing knowledge on the role of NGOs in diverting young people from crime and outlines some of the features of effective service provision that have been shown to play a role in preventing crime.

Chapter Four presents an integrative summary and discussion of the results from both the interviews of NGOs as well as the results from the focus group. The results are presented and discussed under the five themes of the research:

- the relevance of crime prevention to NGOs;
- the understanding of providers of the causes of juvenile offending;
- perspectives on the impact of services in diverting youth from crime;
- views on what works in diverting youth from crime; and
- views on what doesn't work in diverting youth from crime.

Chapter Four also provides a reflection of the practices and perceptions of service providers in terms of how they compare to international and national literature, including that on good practice models of effective crime prevention as discussed in the literature review.

Finally, in Chapter Six, the report will present the good practice principles and recommendations that have been identified through the course of the research. The good practice principles are those identified in the results and discussion that are recognised as essential elements in efforts to divert young people from offending. The recommendations are those issues that have been flagged as requiring further work or that need attention from Government or other stakeholders. They relate to both support required to assist the youth sector generally as well as other issues that are currently impacting offending behaviours of young people.

1.5. Summary

This research makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of offending by young people as it relates to poverty and social exclusion and builds on existing knowledge of effective ways of diverting young people from criminal pathways. It also represents a component of the vital support needed by the Non-Government sector in Western Australia in effectively assisting disadvantaged members of our community. In addition to NGOs, this research should also be of benefit to current and future governments through facilitating a greater understanding of the needs both of disadvantaged young people in the community and those of the agencies designed to assist them.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Introduction and Research Design

The purpose of the research specified in the Introduction set out the task of exploring the way the work of non-government agencies helps prevent crime. To achieve this goal, a research design was needed that would effectively engage the non-government sector. From the outset, it was important to develop a design that elicited the views of service providers directly. It was also important that the research explore both the programs funded to divert young people from offending¹⁰ and those that are funded for other outcomes in order to get a complete picture of the work of NGOs working with young people in the metropolitan area. The program design and delivery needed to be investigated as well as the underlying philosophy of the agencies. For example, it was important to understand the general views of the agencies on the causes of crime and the kinds of programs viewed as helpful to disadvantaged young people. Given the sensitive nature of the issues addressed in this research, as well as the wide range of practices endorsed by the NGO sector, it was also important to proceed in a way that was respectful, ethical and inclusive. As far as possible, consultation was built into the research to ensure a diversity of views were received.

The research design involved several important preliminary steps. Firstly, a reference group was established to guide the development of a research tool and to consider the best ways of involving NGOs. Secondly, a literature review focused on NGOs work with young people and the related effects on crime prevention was undertaken. Thirdly, a research specialist from the Crime Research Centre of The University of Western Australia was contracted to facilitate the ethical development of a suitable research tool. The procedures adopted to reach out to the youth service sector were fine-tuned and the research instrument was finalised. Finally, in depth interviews were undertaken with 51 suitable NGOs.

Once the results were collated, analysed and briefly summarised the reference group reconvened with additional members as a working focus group to

consider the meaning of the findings and to explore their implications. The focus group also raised further questions, which are discussed in the results and discussion section of this report.

2.2. The Reference Group

A reference group was established to assist in guiding the research. The group comprised of representatives from several key agencies assisting young people, representative bodies and funding providers. Included in this group were representatives from Youth Legal Service, Aboriginal Legal Service, Youth Affairs Council of WA, Anglicare Step 1, the Department for Community Development and Legal Aid. The Reference Group met three times throughout the course of the project (once as part of the focus group discussed below). The group discussed issues of importance to the research including: the design of the research tool, the selection of agencies to approach for participation in the research, identification of other key stakeholders as well as other issues identified through the course of the project.

2.3. Literature Review

A focused literature review mostly of Australian research surrounding the causes of offending and the role of NGOs in diverting young people from offending was undertaken. This literature review was undertaken to inform the project as a whole including the design of the research instrument. The literature review also served to provide a useful point of reference in interpreting and discussing the results.

The bulk of the literature review was completed at the commencement of the project, however it was found that further research needed to be reviewed at different stages throughout the course of the project. The literature review covered a number of topics including: key characteristics and extent of offending by young people, causes of offending, and the role of NGOs, specifically in relation to crime prevention. In addition, the review aimed to provide an overview of the existing evidence of good practice principles in

diverting young people from offending to provide a basis of comparison for the discussion in Chapter Four.

2.4. Procedure for Obtaining Key Informants

The first major task of the research was to establish a group of NGOs that could provide views and insights into the work of the youth service sector that would inform an understanding of the role of NGOs in preventing crime. A mail out or telephone survey was unwieldy, insensitive to the complex work of the NGOs and perhaps most importantly was not likely to elicit the kind of response rate that would allow it to provide a representative sample. Therefore, a different procedure was adopted which combined complementary strategies: outreach and selected approach, as defined below. The number of agencies reached by these methods is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Methods of Recruiting Interviewees

Source / Route of Selection	Number
Agencies that responded to initial mail out	18
DCD funded Agencies	16
DOJ funded agencies	3
Agencies referred	14
Total	51

While there would be considerable benefit in conducting a similar study in regional areas, limited resources and time meant that only metropolitan Perth could be incorporated. Agencies participating stretched from Joondalup in the north to Baldivis in the south to Parkerville in the east. Given the large number of NGOs delivering services to young people in the study area, only a select number could be involved in the research through participating in an interview and/or the focus group. Therefore, the results may not be representative of all the views of the youth sector. A list of agencies that participated in the research is included in Appendix 1.

For larger agencies that had many different programs for different groups in the community operating largely independently of each other, the particular

program, rather than the agency as a whole was focused on. For example, Mission Australia has many different services including Yirra, Youth Withdrawal and Respite Service and U-Turn.

2.4.1. The General Outreach

A mail out to approximately 250 NGOs in metropolitan Perth was undertaken to encourage agency participation in the project and to raise awareness of the research. The mail out was designed to include all metropolitan NGOs who identified themselves as delivering services to young people. A number of directories were consulted to develop the mailing list of agencies in the metropolitan area delivering services to young people. The directories consulted were the Greenlight Youth Resources Directory (DCD n.d.) produced by DCD, the Samaritans' Directory of Youth Services (The Samaritans n.d.) and the youth section of the 2002 WACOSS Community Services Directory (WACOSS 2002).

A letter to agencies provided a brief summary of the aims of the project and invited agencies to nominate to be interviewed. Agencies were only able to nominate themselves to be interviewed due to the focus on canvassing the wide and rich range of views and insights from the NGO sector. Agencies that responded to the initial outreach and who wanted to participate were informally interviewed over the phone to gauge whether their participation was appropriate. A copy of the letter is included as Appendix 2.

The initial mail out to NGOs resulted in 18 agencies responding to express interest in participating in the project. All of these agencies were subsequently interviewed as there was a relatively even spread in the type and geographical distribution of services that responded.

2.4.2. Selected Approach

The selected interviews were achieved through three strategies: by approaching DCD funded services, by approaching DOJ funded services and by approaching specific relevant services not reached by other methods. Concerning services funded through DCD, services contacted were in the

funding categories of: Services for Young People, Homeless Youth, Youth Counselling and Youth SAAP. The DCD group comprised a total of sixteen agencies participating in the research. The majority of agencies contacted were happy to be interviewed. However, a number of agencies could either not be contacted or stated that they did not have the time or resources to participate. Once a sufficient number of agencies of a specific service type had agreed to participate, no further agencies were contacted. DCD funded services were given a degree of priority in the research due to the recognition that they are a major funding body of youth services.

A total of five DOJ funded agencies were contacted to seek their participation in the research. Three were subsequently interviewed. Given that crime prevention is an intimate function of DOJ funded agencies, it was considered necessary that their views be represented in the research.

Throughout the course of the interviews, a number of services were identified that offered a particularly unique service to young people in that they were the only service of that kind. These services were then made the subject of a selected approach for the purposes of obtaining an in depth interview. Ultimately, 14 agencies were interviewed as a result of this follow up process. These agencies were identified, often a number of times, during the course of the other interviews as offering a unique and/or innovative service. The reference committee were also consulted to provide input into services that should be consulted and to review the agency suggestions put forward through the interviews.

2.5. Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

A semi-structured interview questionnaire was developed to provide the data on the work of NGOs relevant to crime prevention. The questionnaire was designed to move from general background questions about the work of the agency to more specific questions about programs that are effective (in the view of the interviewee) in diverting young people from offending.

The 22 questions incorporated in the semi-structured questionnaire cover a range of subject areas including basic demographic details of the interviewee and their particular agency or program. However, in terms of the aims of this research the questionnaire was largely structured around five discrete themes or questions:

- Relevance - The degree to which NGOs providing services to marginalised and/or disadvantaged young people see crime prevention as relevant to them
- Causes of offending - The main understandings or views of service providers in regard to the causes of offending by young people
- Impact - The view of service providers in regard to how they see their work or similar services work as affecting young people in such a way as to prevent crime
- What works - The view of the service providers as to what is working in regard to crime prevention
- What doesn't work - The view of the service providers as to what is not working in regard to crime prevention

Figure 2 provides a guide to the relationship of themes to questions. The questions relating to the five themes were usually (but not always) in the same section of the questionnaire and the themes followed the sequence of the questionnaire.

Figure 2: The Relationship of Interview Questions to Major Themes

Theme	Question numbers
1. Background	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
2. Relevance	5, 6, 7, 8, 9
3. Causes	16, 16b
4. Impact	8, 10a, 10b, 11
5. What works?	12, 13, 13b, 14, 17, 20
6. What doesn't?	15, 18, 19, 21

A copy of the interview questionnaire is included as Appendix 3.

The reference committee was also consulted on the design of the interview questionnaire to provide service provider input into topics or issues of relevance.

The interviews were conducted by the project worker and were undertaken face to face at the site of each participating agency. There was a mix of open and closed questions. However, the majority of the interview was dedicated to allowing time for participants to talk openly under broad direction. Interviews typically lasted approximately 40 minutes to 1 hour and all interviews were conducted during May and June 2005.

2.6. Principles of Ethical Practice in Research Observed

The in-depth interview contained an introduction that provided information about the research and an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions. As part of the routine procedure, the interviewer ensured that the interviewee was freely consenting to be interviewed and had the opportunity to answer questions. In so doing, the fundamental principles contained in the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines for ethical research were adhered to. The confidentiality of interview participants was also expressed and maintained.

2.7. The Focus Group

Following the completion of the interviews, a focus group was held to bring together members of the reference committee as well as other key service providers identified through the interviews. Participants in this session were consulted as an expert group who, due to experience or knowledge in the field, were felt to have valuable insight to contribute to the project.

To optimise both the expertise of the reference group and the results from the interviews with service providers, the results of the survey were collated and summarised. These results were then presented to the reference group and used as the basis for discussion. Key questions arising from the results of the survey were then posed to the reference group for further comment, exploration and elucidation.

The focus group provided the opportunity for ideas and discussion of topics of relevance to the research. These were closely linked to the themes used in the interviews and included:

- The reasons for and against recognising crime prevention as a service objective;
- The effective and ineffective practices of NGOs that may impact on young people's criminal behaviour;
- The obstacles experienced by agencies delivering services to young people who may be at risk of offending;
- The key times to offer services to young people who may be at risk of offending;
- The most urgent needs in terms of services for young people necessary to divert them from offending; and
- Ways that existing services could be altered or enhanced to facilitate a greater role being played in diverting young people from offending.

Input received from the focus group had the purpose of informing the final report and adding a greater depth of understanding to the findings from the interviews.

2.8. Collation and analysis of data

The results summarise the responses to the questions posed to interviewees in the semi-structured questionnaire. These questions generally follow the five themes outlined above. The Crime Research Centre was responsible for the collation and analysis of data obtained through the interviews. The data was collated by coding each of the interview responses and entering this information into a database. This process allowed the grouping of like responses to facilitate the identification of recurring issues and themes from the interviews. The interviews were also examined individually with a focus on picking up other issues of relevance not captured by the coding method.

Apart from the results of the interviews with 51 service providers, the discussion with the focus group was used to support and add meaning to the findings from the interviews.

2.9. Conclusion

The methodology employed was thus conducive in meeting the aims of obtaining the evidence required for the results and discussion in later chapters. The following chapter provides a review of some of the key literature relevant to the research.

3. Literature Review

3.1. *Introduction*

This chapter will provide background to the key themes of the current research. The review aims to contextualise the present research by considering current thinking on the causes of, and responses to, offending by young people. Although policies and practices in the youth sector relating to crime prevention are based on a range of national and international influences, the focus in this review will be on those based in Australia or particularly relevant to Australian conditions. There is little doubt that regardless of the perspectives, the preponderance of evidence points to the value of early intervention.

The key themes relevant to this research are that:

- young people coming from life circumstances characterised by poverty and social exclusion are more at risk of offending than other groups of young people in the community;
- given these life circumstances, it is more effective preventing criminal activity through early intervention and developmental approaches that focus on addressing the causes of offending rather than other responses, such as criminal justice strategies; and
- Non-Government organisations (NGOs) have the capacity to play an integral and effective role in diverting young people from engaging in criminal behaviour through connecting with young people who may be at-risk of offending and delivering a variety of services often indirectly related to offending behaviour.

In affirming these assumptions, this chapter will cover very broadly a number of distinct topics. Firstly, a brief account will be given of the extent and characteristics of offending by young people, with a particular focus on Perth and the Australian context. This will be followed by an overview of the causes and characteristics of offending as understood in developmental criminology¹¹, with particular reference to the intersection of these causes with social exclusion and poverty. Developmental criminology remains the focus of this chapter as this reflects the dominant understanding of young people's involvement in

crime. Reference will, however, briefly be made to a number of other criminological theories and emerging criminological issues as these are considered central to the present research. Following from this, an examination of key literature surrounding the prevention of youth crime will highlight current thinking in terms of linking responses to identified developmental causes of offending. Finally, the literature surrounding good practice concepts of developmental crime prevention strategies will be reviewed as they relate to NGOs.

3.2. A Note about the Use of Language

The literature informing this chapter varied considerably in the terms and meanings used to define young people and offending. As is now well recognised, language can be used as a means of discrimination (AGIMO 1994). Choice of language can therefore serve to reinforce or challenge both negative and positive perceptions about young people (National Volunteers Skills Centre 2004). For this reason, it is necessary to make an initial comment about the language used throughout both this chapter and the rest of the report.

Young people are a heterogenous group with diverse experiences, needs and capabilities. The recognition of this is central in the use of appropriate language. Young people may be termed: youth, children, teenagers, adolescents, young adults and juveniles. While sometimes necessary to group young people together, using the term 'youth', in most cases 'young people' is preferred in recognition of the full array of differences between young people. The term 'juvenile' is avoided as it has come to be regarded as discriminatory.

Age brackets to categorise young people also vary considerably between publications. For example, while the majority of researchers define 'young people' as being 12 to 25 years, others consider this group to be under 18, 10 to 18, or 18 to 25 years. Perhaps the common factor within the definition of 'young people' is the notion of a period of transition - the move from childhood to adulthood. It is essentially this period of transition that is the foci for the present research. While clarifications will be made where necessary throughout this

chapter, the term 'young people' will be used in reference mainly to those between the ages of 10 and 18.

The definition of offending behaviour is also problematic. In this chapter, young people who are stated as being involved in crime or offending behaviour or are 'at-risk' of offending are not necessarily engaged in any formal way with the criminal justice system. In instances throughout this chapter that relate to young people who have had formal engagement with the criminal justice system (either through being cautioned, apprehended, fined, mandated to a Juvenile Justice Team, imprisoned or otherwise) this type of engagement will be clarified.

As a final note, there is also discrepancy in the terms used to describe young people at risk of offending. In the literature, terms such as 'anti-social', 'deviant', 'delinquent', 'at-risk' and others are used to describe varying degrees of engagement of young people in criminal and associated behaviours. While the term 'at-risk' has been identified as a problematic term to describe these young people, it has been used throughout this chapter and the rest of the report as it remains the current dominant term used in the literature and the youth sector and there is no widely accepted suitable alternative. It would be worthwhile to conduct further research with the youth sector on an appropriate term for this group of young people.

The term 'at-risk' in this report refers to young people who are more likely to have formal engagement with the criminal justice system for a number of, not necessarily exclusive, reasons. In the literature, factors such as poverty, inadequate family relationships, being homeless, indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse and/or excessive consumption or misuse of alcohol or drugs have been identified as putting young people at increased risk of offending¹². While the relationship between these factors and offending will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, it is important to note that not all young people fitting into the above categories offend and many would object to being labelled 'at-risk' because of their experience of these problems. Matching one or more of the above categories also may make young people more visible to police and as a result, more likely to have formal engagement with the Criminal Justice System for involvement in relatively minor offences¹³. A further reason

why the term 'at-risk' is problematic is that it is contrary to the strengths based approach commonly adopted by agencies working with young people.

Terms such as 'anti-social', 'deviant' and 'delinquent' have been avoided as much as possible due to an understanding amongst the youth sector that these are discriminatory and non reflective of the reasons why some young people engage in criminal behaviour. Despite this, it has been necessary to use the term 'anti-social' in one section of this chapter. The authors of this report do not agree with the use of this term to define young people who are at risk of offending, rather this terminology was considered necessary in the context of the research referred to.

3.3. Characteristics and Extent of Young People Offending

3.3.1. Number of Young People Formally Involved in the Criminal Justice System in WA

Figure 3: How Young People are Involved with the Criminal Justice System

Source: Fernandez et al 2004.

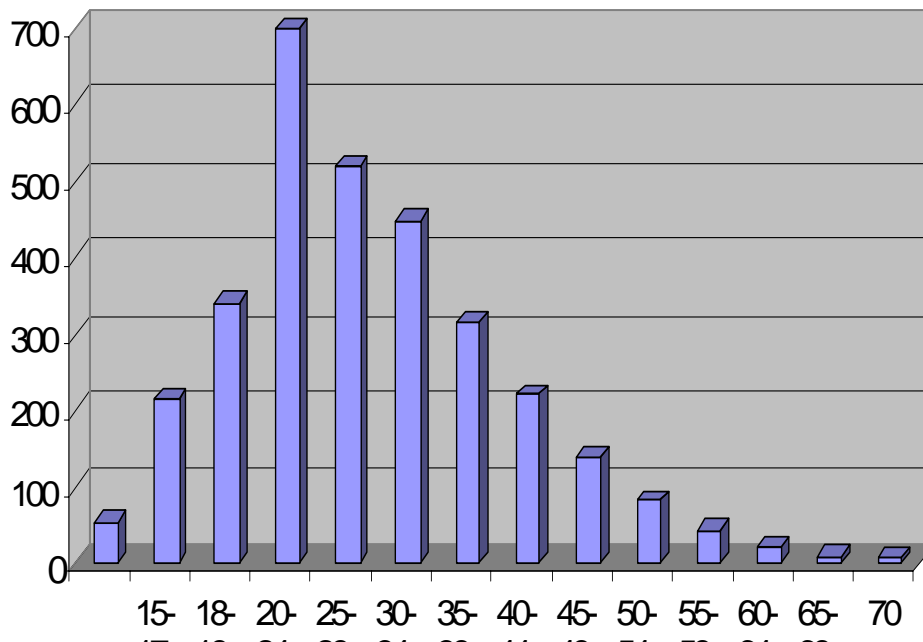
Type of Involvement with Justice System	No of young people
Cautioned	8,259
Arrested and Charged	3,016
Referred to Juvenile Justice Team by Police	1,748
Appeared in Court	3,834
Convicted	2,960
Referred to Juvenile Justice Team by Court	1,112
Incarcerated	105

As shown from the above table, only a very small percentage of all young people get formally involved with the criminal justice system. Despite this, however, young people are at higher "risk" of offending than most other age sectors of the population as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Age Specific Rates of Arrest in Western Australia for 2003

Source: Fernandez et al 2003

(Rates expressed as per 100,000 of the relevant population)



Like other states and territories around Australia, Western Australia has experienced a significant reduction in the number of young people detained in juvenile corrective institutions in recent years (Fernandez et al 2003). To illustrate, between 1981 and 2000, the overall incarceration rate for young people declined from a total of 1351 detainees to 671 detainees (AIHW 2003: 306). This decrease is reportedly due to changes in justice system responses including the introduction of formal cautioning of young people and diversion to juvenile justice teams as preliminary alternatives to detention (Fernandez et al 2004: 106). The wide implementation of these alternatives to incarceration reflects three main points. Firstly, it is substantially more economical to divert young offenders from detention centres to alternative criminal justice services, such as Juvenile Justice Teams. Secondly, incarceration can result in negative social and economic outcomes for young people. Thirdly, in relation to developmental aspects of offending, it has been shown that the majority of young offenders only offend for a short time and then move on. In fact, of all juveniles that are formally involved with the criminal justice system, 61 per cent have no further contact with it within two years (Department of Justice 2005:1)¹⁴. Those that do

are largely serious and repeat offenders, regional and/or Indigenous offenders (ibid: 1).

3.3.2. Number of Young People Offending

It is suspected that considerably more young people are involved in offending or other types of 'antisocial'¹⁵ behaviour than are reflected in criminal justice statistics. Unfortunately however, no broad scale recent studies specific to Western Australia have been published. In fact, only very few Australian studies have investigated this issue on a broad scale and it is therefore problematic to apply these findings directly to the Western Australian context. Despite this, it is of use to pay reference to the existing evidence in efforts to highlight the possibility that some degree of offending behaviour is not uncommon in individual's transition from childhood to adulthood. Of particular note, the Australian Temperament Study has tracked the development and wellbeing of a group of 2443 Victorian children from infancy to young adulthood. A collaborative partnership between the Australian Institute of Family Studies and Crime Prevention Victoria has used this data to examine the development of antisocial and criminal behaviour among these young people. Findings from the study have shown that antisocial behaviour was common from ages 13 to 18, in particular property offences and cigarette and alcohol use. The research found that approximately 10 to 20 per cent of all the participants had been involved in acts such as theft or vandalism over the period. In terms of having contact with police for offending, about one in ten had contact. However, only a very small number had been charged (2 to 3%) (AIFS and Crime Prevention Victoria 2003). Analysis of the same data, undertaken through the Australian Institute of Criminology, added to this by noting that one in five young people displayed high levels of antisocial behaviour at some stage between 13 to 18 years, getting involved in a number of behaviours considered to be antisocial. Twelve percent were involved in persistent and 8 per cent in experimental antisocial behaviour (Smart et al 2004)¹⁶.

In addition, the 1996 Australian School Students' Alcohol and Drugs Survey of 5,178 secondary students in NSW was utilised by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and the NSW Crime Prevention Division and found similar

results. In this study, of the students participating, it was estimated that: 29 per cent had assaulted someone, 27 per cent had maliciously damaged property, 15 per cent had received or sold stolen goods, 9 per cent shoplifted, 5 per cent committed break and enter and 5 per cent committed motor vehicle theft in the 12 months prior to the survey. While the report concluded a large number of NSW secondary students offended, in the most cases they did not offend frequently. Further, this study also found that participation in each type of offence tended to peak around ages 14 to 16 (Baker 1998).

When comparing this information to criminal justice statistics on young people it is clear that there is considerable discrepancy between the numbers of young people offending to the number being involved in the criminal justice system. From a crime prevention point of view, the higher proportion of young people involved in offending than reported in criminal justice statistics means that crime prevention efforts should be focused on the needs and conditions that affect young people as it is this group that produces greater amounts of crime.

3.3.3. Common Characteristics of Crime Committed by Young People

The types of crimes committed by young people often share a number of characteristics. In most cases, they are relatively minor and transient in nature, generally confined to one-off events (Carcach and Leverett 1999). Further, as Cunnen and White note:

... Juvenile crime is often episodic, unplanned, opportunistic, and related to the use of public space in areas like public transport and shopping centres where there is more visibility and surveillance... (2002:96)

During the 1990s, there was a substantial increase in the involvement of young people in offences against the person, such as assault (Mukherjee et al 1997). As shown from the above studies, property offences including vandalism and stealing are also crimes that young people are more likely to engage in (AIFS and Crime Prevention Victoria 2003). Data from the Crime Research Centre also highlights young peoples' increased involvement in driving related offences,

good order offences such as resisting arrest and breaching court orders as well as drug offences (Fernandez et al 2004).

3.4. Causes of Offending by Young People

Researchers have sought to understand the causes of offending by young people for centuries. The breadth of knowledge resulting from these investigations is extensive and can be touched on only very briefly in this chapter. What follows is an overview of the most dominant and emerging trends in the discussion of the causes of offending. Given the present research focuses on young people that access non-government agencies for assistance with problems often not related to offending, this section has also been tailored to reflect, as much as possible, the likely experiences of young people that access these organisations.

3.4.1. Social Exclusion and Multifinality

Developmental criminology is now widely accepted in the criminology field, reflecting the understanding that the pattern of offending by young people is largely determined by social factors and emerges in association with poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation. Further, it is recognised that offending behaviour often results out of the occurrence of a number of complex and interrelated social problems with few or no mediating factors from positive elements in an individual's life. Through this experience, an individual essentially becomes excluded in any meaningful sense from the community. The concept of social exclusion encapsulates this and is defined as:

... a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown... (British Social Exclusion Unit 2001)

Criminal behaviour can therefore be seen as occurring largely as a symptom of this much larger problem of social exclusion. For young people, this often means that they may be disengaged from education or training, have poor

relationships with family members, have inadequate or lack of housing, have few if any positive role models and/or possibly experience other social or economic problems.

There is growing interest in the literature on the reasons some young people are able to desist from criminal activity while others continue on this path. As stated in Figure 5, prior interaction with the criminal justice system is one of the highest predictors of future interaction. Following from this, knowledge of the factors that are influential in individual choices to desist is vital in efforts to prevent crime. Initial criminal experiences of young people have been highlighted as often linked to the move from childhood to adulthood in terms of being more likely to test the societal norms and laws and explore the boundaries that come with a greater degree of freedom associated with age (Arnold and Kay 1999). The nature, duration and individual experiences during this period of experimentation have a considerable impact on young peoples' abilities to desist from crime. That is, if experiences during this time of transition to adulthood and experimentation with crime are positive, young people are likely to return to a law-abiding lifestyle. Following from this, as argued by Arnold and Kay (1999:172), *"the early stages of delinquent involvement and encounters with police authorities...is crucial to the subsequent development of stable criminal careers or effective intervention and deterrence at onset"*. From this perspective, services assisting young people throughout the teenage years are likely to be integral in affecting young people's ability to desist from offending.

The concept of multifinality, a term recently popular particularly in child health literature, is also relevant to social exclusion. Essentially, this term encapsulates the view that symptoms of social exclusion and poverty can contribute to a range of negative outcomes (Sanson 2002). In addition to criminal behaviour, other outcomes may include substance misuse, sexual risk taking, lack of educational achievement, depression and suicidal behaviour. As we can see then, social exclusion and poverty is both caused by a number of risk factors and subsequently can result in a number of negative outcomes.

3.4.2. Multiple Service Use among At-Risk Young People

Young people who experience social exclusion and/or poverty are more likely to have a history of high levels of interaction with government and non-government agencies to gain assistance with a variety of issues and problems. Many have been the subject of a care and protection order, have needed to access increased levels of medical services due to poorer health than the rest of the population, have required the assistance of welfare and income support agencies, have been in contact with the police or experienced a range of other scenarios leading to relatively high service interaction.

As White (2003) investigates in a scoping paper for the Criminology Research Council, services including government departments, police, housing services, welfare agencies, non-government community organisations and others will necessarily affect the wellbeing of these young people, possibly in a way that has some bearing on their offending behaviour. While there remains limited knowledge on the effects of this interaction by young people with services, White suggests that such contact has the potential to result in three outcomes: offending behaviour could reduce as a result of positive contact, offending could occur or increase because of negative experience, or offending could occur or increase as a result of young people's inability to access appropriate types or levels of assistance.

Questions relating to the frequency of young people's interaction with different types of services, the nature of services delivered and the degree to which they are relevant and helpful to the young person are therefore important in contributing to an overall understanding of offending by young people. A study investigating the use of multiple social services among chronically offending young people is, however, in the process of being commissioned by the Australian Institute of Criminology. This study will contribute substantially to the knowledgebase of the effects of services on young people. The present research also fits comfortably into this agenda through the focus on young people that access NGOs not necessarily in relation to offending behaviour.

3.4.3. Risk Factors for Offending in Developmental Criminology

As discussed above, criminal behaviour occurs as a result of the culmination of a variety of risk factors that vary between individuals and vary in their influence over the life course. Figure 5 highlights some of the key risk factors identified by developmental criminologists. It is important to reiterate that many of these risk factors do not occur in isolation.

Figure 5: Risk Factors Associated with Offending

Inadequate Parenting

Many studies have found that inadequate parenting is one of the strongest predictors of young people becoming involved in crime (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber 1986; Yoshikawa 1994). Parenting factors that have been shown to relate to offending by young people include parental neglect, child abuse, parental conflict and discipline, deviant parental attitudes and behaviours and family disruption (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2003). Studies using methodologies including aggregate levels, self-reports and direct observations almost universally report such links¹⁷. For example, in a study of 2,885 Queensland children reported to the Department of Families as being maltreated by their parents or caregivers, it was found that almost one quarter of the maltreated children who suffered physical abuse or neglect subsequently offended (Stewart, Dennison and Waterson 2002).

While inadequate parenting sometimes rouses the belief that parents are to blame for their children's involvement in crime, this is a highly value laden statement. As noted by Weatherburn (2001:4), "*judgments of blameworthiness are moral judgments*". The reasons that inadequate parenting occurs is also often closely linked to the parents' experience of poverty, social exclusion or other social problems they have experienced during their lifetime. In these cases, the so-called 'poor parenting' is often passed on from generation to generation, essentially 'taught' from parent to child (Tomison 1996)

Economic disadvantage

Economic factors are also recognised as having a considerable impact on young people's involvement in criminal behaviour. Research has found that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are at increased risk of offending (Larzelere and Patterson 1990; Cunnen and White 2002). Like other risk factors however, this association between economic disadvantage and offending is fraught with complexity; difficulties arise due to the close association of economic disadvantage with other problems such as living in a low socio-economic locality and parental stress. To illustrate, a study undertaken by Weatherburn and Lind (1998) examining the link between young people, crime and poverty found that:

- localities which were characterised by high levels of poverty showed a positive relationship to the level of inadequate parenting such as child neglect,
- there was a strong relationship between those localities with higher levels of inadequate parenting and areas with above average involvement in crime by young people,
- economic and social stress exert their effects on crime by increasing the risk of child neglect and
- young people at risk of crime through the experience of inadequate parenting are more likely to become involved in crime if they reside in crime prone neighbourhoods.

Findings similar to these have also been reported in a number of other studies¹⁸. A recent study on how economic disadvantage leads to crime concluded that the higher crime rates found amongst young people from disadvantaged communities *reflects "a life course process in which adverse family, individual, school and peer factors combine to increase individual susceptibility to crime"* (Fergusson, Swain-Campbell and Horwood 2004: 3). Crime prone communities have also been found to persist over time and once there are sufficient numbers of offenders in a given community they become self-sufficient (Weatherburn and Lind 2001).

Peers Involved in Criminal Behaviour

It has been noted in the literature that young people who regularly associate with friends who engage in criminal behaviour are more likely to get involved in crime than other young people. While elements of this premise are contested, from the research then, it is possible to arrive at three main conclusions:

- young people who are already involved in criminal behaviour (or some possible precursors to it such as truanting) may choose peers that are similar to them in this regard,
- young people who have friends that engage in criminal behaviour may be influenced to start or continue similar behaviour to “keep up” with their friends
- young people who find themselves with peers who don’t engage in criminal behaviour are more likely to desist¹⁹

Problematic Substance Use

While problematic substance use is often reported as leading to criminal behaviour in the media, efforts to investigate this relationship further have generally concluded, as reported by the Australian Institute of Criminology, “*that the relationship is extremely complex and defies attempts to sort out directionality*” (Australian Institute of Criminology 2004: 1). Despite this, as discussed earlier in this chapter, drug and alcohol misuse and criminal behaviour both stem from similar origins in line with the understandings of multifinality. Further, it has also been noted that efforts to address drug use alone may not be effective in preventing crime if other issues relevant to the young person are not addressed simultaneously (Makkai and Payne 2003).

Age

A number of studies have found that the age that a young person first offends has a significant impact on whether the individual will continue to offend²⁰. Studies show that the younger the individual is when they first start offending, the more likely they are to re-offend in the future (White 2003).

Previous Engagement with the Justice System

Previous engagement with the criminal justice system is a strong predictor of future engagement. Like the other identified risk factors, this relationship is the subject on ongoing debate among researchers.

Of particular research interest is young offenders' history of offending behaviour or behavioural problems. Research released this year noted that a high proportion of young people who make their first appearance in a children's court continue their offending into adulthood; this pattern increases in likelihood the younger the offenders were at their first appearance (Chen et al 2005). Another study of incarcerated male Australian offenders found that juvenile detention *"is a clear marker for the early onset and persistence into both criminal careers and drug use"* (Makkai and Payne 2003²¹). In an effort to try to unpack the relationship of engagement with the criminal justice system from early years into adult years, Sampson and Laub (1993:246) note, *"early delinquency predicts weak adult social bonds, and weak adult social bonds predict concurrent and later adult crime and deviance."*

Despite these findings, in reference to Western Australian, it appears that the diversionary system for young offenders has shown a considerable degree of success. Such programs as conferencing and mentoring to young people that have appeared in court are likely to have contributed to this. In fact, according to the Department of Justice, 61 per cent of young people who have interaction with the criminal justice system do not go on to have any further interaction.

Other Factors²²

Other key risk factors that have been identified include childhood behaviour exhibiting aggression, low self-control and other forms of anti-social behaviour, large family size, weak school attachment and offending by siblings and parents (Farrington and Welsh 2002).

3.4.4. Protective Factors, Resilience to, and Desistance from Offending

Not all young people that experience multiple risk factors or who could be considered 'at-risk', engage in offending. The literature surrounding protective factors and resilience to offending sheds light on some of the key reasons why some individuals who are 'at-risk' are able to refrain from offending. Like risk factors, 'protective factors' encompasses both personal characteristics as well as factors relating to different social settings including family, school, social services, social support and the wider community. Protective factors have been defined as those that:

... reduce the impact of an unavoidable negative event, that help individuals avoid or resist temptations to break the law, that reduce the chances that people will start on a path likely to lead to breaches of the law and that promote an alternative pathway... (White 2003:11)

While the influence of protective factors remains less well understood than the influence of risk factors, essentially it appears that protective factors provide a buffer against the young person engaging in offending behaviour. Examples of protective factors include positive role models, school engagement and supportive family environment²³. Socially excluded young people either may lack access to these types of mitigating factors or only experience them minimally, at insufficient levels to counteract the risk factors. Notably, it appears that little research has been undertaken into the protective effects of access to basic needs such as accommodation and food. Figure 6 provides an overview of key protective factors.

Resilience to offending, closely linked to discourse on protective factors, adds to the knowledge in this area by specifically focussing on young people who could be categorised as 'high risk'²⁴ and what it is that makes some of these young people refrain from offending. Adding to the literature on the importance of peers and role models in the home and community, as noted by Samuelson (2002:3), "*core values, such as gender and cultural identity, have also been identified as key components that could influence their behaviour*". Katz (1997)

identifies some of the key elements of interventions that serve to act as buffers against offending for young people at high risk. These factors include interventions that:

- are able to offer safety,
- allow the young people to feel listened to,
- offer real opportunities to young people,
- expose young people to the world outside their neighbourhood,
- require young people to maintain real and valued responsibilities,
- have clearly articulated rules where discipline is consistent when rules are broken and
- focus on the future and the integral role of education to the wellbeing of young people.

Katz (1997) also identified a number of common characteristics of individuals running interventions for high-risk young people. These characteristics included a strong belief in the potential and value of young people and recognition of the positive attributes that young people have²⁵.

There is growing interest in the literature on the reasons some young people are able to desist from criminal activity while others continue on this path. As stated in Figure 5, prior interaction with the criminal justice system is one of the highest predictors of future interaction. Following from this, knowledge of the factors that are influential in individual choices to desist is vital in efforts to prevent crime. Initial criminal experiences of young people have been highlighted as often linked to the move from childhood to adulthood in terms of being more likely to test the societal norms and laws and explore the boundaries that come with a greater degree of freedom associated with age (Arnold and Kay 1999). The nature, duration and individual experiences during this period of experimentation have a considerable impact on young peoples' abilities to desist from crime. That is, if experiences during this time of transition to adulthood and experimentation with crime are positive, young people are likely to return to a law-abiding lifestyle. Following from this, as argued by Arnold and Kay (1999:172), "*the early stages of delinquent involvement and encounters with police authorities...is crucial to the subsequent development of stable criminal careers or effective intervention and deterrence at onset*". From this

perspective, services assisting young people throughout the teenage years are likely to be integral in affecting young people's ability to desist from offending.

Figure 6: Summary of Protective Factors

Source: Howard and Johnson 2001

Life Events	Self	Family	School	Community
Full-term birth (satisfactory birth weight, injury free, able bodied)	Personal attributes (easy temperament, academic ability, emotional strength, sense of autonomy, sense of humour, social competence, physical competence)	Love and attachment (parents, siblings, extended family)	Good teachers (positive relationships, knowledge of children and adolescents, positive behaviour management skills, positive sense of efficacy, high expectations)	Adults (supportive, protective, culturally proud)
Continued good health	Coping behaviours (problem solving strategies, active engagement, optimism, persistence, reflectivity)	Support (material, emotional)	Support (time, other adults, agencies)	Pro-social peers (supportive, common interests, common experiences, sharing, helpful, talk with and listen)
Opportunities at major life transitions	Beliefs about self (high self esteem, positive self efficacy, sense of purpose, positive attitude, self confidence)	Models of resiliency (parents, siblings, extended family)	School climate (child focused, collaborative, caring, safe/secure, empowering)	Sports and clubs (positive self identity, belongingness and connectedness, opportunities for success)
Meeting significant persons		Positive links with school	Curriculum (relevant, enriched, age appropriate)	Agencies (supportive, protective)
Moving into a more supportive community			Special programs (social/life skills, academic)	

3.4.5. The Impact of Life Transition Points

Individual experiences of key life transition points are central in understanding young people's involvement in crime (AIFS and Crime Prevention Victoria 2003). Transition points such as the onset of adolescence and the move from primary education to secondary have important significance in the development of behaviour and attitudes. Within this is the observation that at each of these life stages or transition points there is a risk of a negative experience leading a young person onto a path characterised by offending. Accordingly, each young person will vary in his or her experience of transition points and the relative effect they have on their well-being. While the large majority of young people experience a number common transition points at specified ages without any major difficulties, some young people experience either more transitions or more problematic transitions. Transition points that have the potential to influence the life path of a young person, possibly making them more susceptible to engaging in criminal behaviour, include:

- educational transition points – both entry into primary school, the shift from primary to secondary school, a change in school attended and the transition of leaving formal education,
- entry into the labour market,
- adolescence,
- parental or family disruption,
- instances of abuse or neglect,
- the experience of 'coming out' for same sex attracted youth,
- homelessness,
- first and subsequent interactions with the justice system and
- initial drug and/or alcohol misuse (Sampson and Laub 1993; Homel 1999).

3.4.6. Over-representation of Indigenous Young People in Criminal Justice System

Indigenous young people are grossly overrepresented in terms of their involvement with the criminal justice system (Fernandez et al 2004). The experience of many Indigenous young people is greatly influenced by the historical and contemporary

context of social, economic and political marginalisation and exclusion. As a result of these complex negative circumstances, many kin networks have become eroded in terms of the social functions they have traditionally held. There are also many reports of an essential loss of identity for many Indigenous people and communities (Zubrick and Robson 2003). The effect of this decimation of Indigenous cultures cannot be underestimated in terms of understanding the overrepresentation of these young people in the criminal justice system. Further, the effect in itself of this heightened involvement with the criminal justice system is also a factor that seems to perpetuate the problem of offending. To highlight, *“with the escalation of crime and incarceration of Indigenous people, many Elders and community members believe that the relationship between them and representatives of the criminal justice system is declining further and that justice is becoming more difficult to secure”* (Samuelson 2002:35).

3.4.7. Other ‘High Risk’ Groups and Victimization

Other groups of young people are also at increased risk of social exclusion, and subsequently, offending. These groups include:

- young people experiencing homelessness (National Crime Prevention 1999);
- dual diagnosis sufferers (NYARS 2004);
- people with mental health issues and particularly those unable or unwilling to access therapeutic or support services (Jobes 2004);
- young people who have been in state care (Stewart et al 2002); and
- same sex attracted youth (Trinity Outreach Services 2005).

Analyses of some of these high-risk groups, as well as profiles of other young people caught up in the justice system, have highlighted the close association between offending and victimisation (Gaetz 2004). That is, engaging in criminal behaviour and being the victim of criminal behaviour have a close relationship. For example, the relationship between youth homelessness, victimisation and offending behaviour is now well-recognised (Lauritsen et al 1991²⁶). Conclusions from such research show that offending behaviour may develop as a way for homeless young people to protect themselves. As noted by Homel (1999) *“homeless young people develop*

screens to conceal their vulnerability such as antisocial behaviour, bravado and displays of toughness and invulnerability, and that they display 'a confusing cocktail' of criminal and antisocial behaviour".

3.4.8. Other Criminological Theories on the Causes of Offending

To provide further context to the current research, it is important to note a number of other well-established theories of the causes of crime. These theories are not necessarily in opposition to developmental criminology, but rather serve to add depth to the preceding review.

Firstly, control theory focuses on the impact of informal social control mechanisms such as the family, community and education providers. Instead of asking why individuals offend, this theory is instead based on exploring why the majority of people do not (Hirshi 1969; Kierkus and Baer 2004; Costello and Vowell 1999; Hay 2001). This ties in closely with the literature on social exclusion and protective factors in highlighting that many young people experiencing multiple social and economic problems may feel they have little reason not to offend. For example, young people who have poor relationships with family or are not involved in education, training or employment may see little reason to conform to society. As previously discussed, a lack of positive mitigating factors in these young people's lives may result in feelings of helplessness and provide inadequate motivation for young people to develop hopes and ambitions or other reasons not to offend.

Secondly, labelling theory, at its broadest definition, recognises that criminal behaviour is a socially constructed term; acts become criminal and offenders become referred to as 'criminals' only when their acts are labelled as such (Tannenbaum 1938; Katz 1988; Braithwaite 1989). Criminality therefore varies significantly between time and place. This concept can be understood by looking at the difference between current Australian law and traditional Aboriginal lore. In such an analysis, there is great variation between what is considered unlawful and between the punishments considered suitable for unlawful acts. Labelling theory is also useful in describing the process whereby some groups in the population are

essentially labelled as criminals by the media, police and other segments of society. Even if the majority of the group have not offended, they may nevertheless all be labelled as criminals. Over time, this tag begins to infiltrate those who have been substantially affected by this criminal label, and this in itself influences them to adopt behaviour in-line with that label. For example, the media attention that young people as a group are given is disproportionately related to instances of perpetration of crime. While the overwhelming majority of young people are not involved in offending behaviour, the effect of the media presentation of young people as perpetrators is likely to substantially affect many members of our society. The outcome of this may be that young people are faced with more barriers to a range of opportunities the rest of the population enjoy. If certain young people are unable to overcome these barriers, criminal behaviour may, at least in part, result as a response to this.

Thirdly, differential association, notably proposed by Sutherland (1947), understands criminal behaviour as learned through social interaction with key others including family, peers and other central role models in a young person's life. This social interaction is closely linked to the development of values within the young person concerning criminal behaviour (Sutherland: 1947). Differential association is central to the understanding of intergenerational patterns of offending in some families. Young people in these cases grow up in environments where violence and criminality is accepted and in some cases embraced, encouraged and rewarded with praise and approval. In these instances, it is likely that such attitudes would occur in conjunction with a multitude of other social and economic problems. Offending subsequently may become an integral component of being accepted by family and peers.

3.5. The Role of Non-Government Organisations in Preventing Offending by Young People

3.5.1. Characteristics of NGOs

NGOs assist many groups within the community including families, children, young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, migrants and refugees as well as people on low incomes, those with disabilities, mental illness, drug and/or alcohol problems,

inadequate housing. Some NGOs are large organisations offering a range of services and receiving funding from a number of sources, while others are small, privately funded local groups. Many NGOs are somewhere between these. Despite considerable differences within the sector, a number of general observations can be made about NGOs. As noted in the Industry Plan for the Non-Government Human Services Sector (IPNGHSSWP 2004: 34), NGOs are *“constitutionally independent of Government and are formed and sustained by members who act voluntarily and without seeking to profit to provide benefits for themselves or for others.”* Further, NGOs are seen as *“expressing community values such as altruism and empowerment of individuals, families and communities”* (ibid: 34). NGOs vary in terms of who they target, what services or programs they offer, the length of assistance provided and a variety of other factors. Programs and services also vary based on public policy initiatives and funding priorities.

It is likely that the majority of NGOs in Australia do not define themselves as crime prevention agencies and may not recognise this as one of their key functions. Despite this, due to their engagement with at-risk young people, it is likely that they have some influence on the decisions of young people to offend. A number of researchers have articulated this role, with comments such as:

...One of the most important and effective ways of preventing crime is work at grass roots level, since this is the level that is most familiar with the problem and in the best position to find appropriate solutions... (Ministry of Justice 2004).

While little research has been undertaken into the role of NGOs in diverting young people from crime as an unintended consequence of services delivered, there is considerable research looking at the attributes of intended effective developmental crime prevention interventions. It is important to recognise that directly transferring what is known to be effective in preventing crime to the work of NGOs that do not have crime prevention as an explicit objective is problematic. This is because the majority of the programs evaluated in terms of their crime prevention function have this as a service objective and are explicitly designed to reach this outcome. However, as White (2003) has recently investigated, services that share characteristics

with what is known to be effective in preventing crime are also likely to have a positive impact on offending by young people.

3.5.2. Developmental Approaches to Crime Prevention

Criminological theories that focus on addressing the early or “developmental” roots of offending have attracted increasing attention in recent years with the relative cost benefits of early intervention receiving particular interest and appreciation (Sherman et al 1998). In Australia, models that take into consideration these factors have only relatively recently appeared in the literature. The most influential Australian model of this sort is detailed in the 1999 National Crime Prevention report *“Pathways to Prevention: Developmental and Early Intervention Approaches to Crime in Australia”*. Essentially, as defined in the report, developmental interventions *involve “the organised provision of resources in some fashion to individuals, families, schools or communities to forestall the later development of crime or other problems”* (Homel 2005:2). Integral to this approach is the recognition of the intrinsic link between social and economic problems experienced by an individual and the subsequent involvement in criminal behaviour. As noted in the report, developmental crime prevention initiatives are those *“aiming to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors that are hypothesised to have a significant effect on an individual’s adjustment at later points of development”* (ibid 2005).

Developmental crime prevention models demonstrate awareness of the importance of transition points throughout a young person’s life. While much focus has been placed on interventions aimed at children before the age of 5, there appears to be a renewed emphasis on the importance of later transition points. Adolescence, changing educational situations or changing employment environments are times that have been recognised as crucial points for developmental crime prevention interventions. As noted by Homel (2005:16):

...Life according to this (developmental pathways) perspective is not marked by one steady march toward adulthood whose direction becomes fixed after early childhood, or one steady line of change, either for better or worse. Instead what occurs is a series of phases, a series of points of change, a series

of transitions. These points of transition are when intervention can often occur most effectively, since at times of change individuals are both vulnerable to taking false steps and open to external support or advice...

Essentially then, the focus of early intervention and developmental criminology can be seen as not necessarily early in life, but more importantly, early in the pathway leading to criminal behaviour. This notion also encompasses the need for interventions with those already involved in criminal behaviour.

3.5.3. 'What Works': The Evidence

There have been a variety of programs in Australia, as well as overseas, that arose out of the developmental crime prevention model that are being increasingly recognised for the benefits they are bringing to individuals and the wider community. Alongside the development of such programs, is the publication of reports that seek to document what works in reducing young people's involvement in crime. Reports commissioned by State and Federal Government agencies as well as independent bodies have investigated what it is about interventions that are effective in reaching this outcome. Notably, National Crime Prevention and the Australian Institute of Criminology have added considerably to this knowledgebase²⁷.

3.5.4. Characteristics of Developmental Crime Prevention Interventions

Developmental crime prevention initiatives have been implemented in a variety of social settings including kindergartens, schools, families, non-government organisations, government agencies, medical centres, within local communities and across a multitude of other settings. General characteristics of these service interventions include:

- They are designed to divert young people from pathways leading to offending and produce long term effects;
- They are guided by an understanding of risk and protective factors in particular groups;
- They are aimed at providing support and skills to individuals and families;

- They aim to strengthen existing supports in families, schools and communities;
- They are rigorously evaluated;
- They demonstrate that prevention does work;
- They generally work across a variety of social settings; and
- They have contact with a young person for extended periods of time (Homel 1999).

In regard to community organisations offering assistance to young people between the ages of 10 and 18, the 'what works' discourse has resulted in a number of specific components and characteristics recognised as important for services designed to play a crime prevention function. In particular, components and characteristics have been identified specifically in relation to organisations at the service and program levels as well as concerning the social settings in which such interventions are implemented. Further, characteristics and components have also been identified for application at a youth service sector level. These are particularly important given that it is likely that most services for young people do not have an explicit crime prevention function. Figure 7 provides an overview of what works in diverting young people from offending.

3.5.5. Importance of Involving Stakeholders

Given that young people are a heterogenous group and necessarily encounter a variety of different services and individuals across a range of social settings, there is considerable benefit in adopting a holistic approach that involves a variety of stakeholders in the design and delivery of interventions. Researchers have commented almost consistently on the importance of this wide level of involvement. Relevant stakeholders identified as important include: NGOs, government agencies, schools, neighbourhoods, health services, police, legal systems, employers, media and others. Within this is the commitment of involving stakeholders from across all settings that parents, children and young people have contact with. As noted in a report by White (White 2003:19):

...Those projects which appear to work best are those which are targeted geographically on identifiable communities, which are based on a strong commitment to multi-agency co-operation, and which are guided by detailed knowledge of local problems and local resources...

3.5.6. Service Characteristics

Within the literature, there is a growing recognition of a number of principles that services should try to meet in efforts to divert young people from offending. These general principles include ensuring that services are accessible to young people, keeping stakeholders involved as much as possible, working in partnership with stakeholders and avoiding stigmatising people accessing the service. This last point appears particularly relevant to the current study in terms of the possible negative consequences of labelling services for young people as “crime prevention”. In addition, it also has been noted that agencies should have clear aims and objectives, employ skilled and appropriate staff and maintain a high degree of relevance to people accessing the service (White 2003). In regard to young people accessing NGOs, this requires services to keep up to date with key issues affecting their clients and the possible service types that would be seen as relevant to them.

The importance of ongoing evaluation of services is especially central to good practice crime prevention. However, many researchers have reported evaluation of services as an element lacking considerably in current service delivery to young people. Evaluation should be a necessary component of NGO service delivery as it facilitates a process of continual improvement and dispersal of information to other agencies and funding bodies. It also allows for the ever-changing issues affecting the young people that come into contact with services to be recognised resulting in programs tailored to meet these needs.

As a final note concerning good practice characteristics of services to young people, services should take into account cultural and local issues affecting their clients and community. In addition to recognising relevant risk and protective factors, this point also incorporates an awareness of the cultural and local issues that have made young people particularly at risk of offending. As noted by Homel (2005: 27) *“it is also*

essential to draw on any historical data on how a community was arrived at the point of social dislocation”.

3.5.7. Program Characteristics

Closely linked to good practice principles of services are those characteristics relevant to the programs implemented within the services. The service characteristics above provide little insight into the actual content of the programs and other specific details regarding their development, design and implementation. Important to note is that no program is effective in assisting all young people across all social settings. Instead, the effectiveness of programs varies considerably between young people. This is in line with the recognition that young people are affected by a variety of different risk and protective factors and may be at different life transition stages. Despite this, studies have sought to identify characteristics that make programs successful in terms of crime prevention. A recent review investigated a number of specific project types for their relative benefits in crime prevention for young people aged 12 to 25 (Sallybanks 2002). Program types investigated included: social competence training, programs that diverted young people from custody, educational programs, employment programs, mentoring, comprehensive programs, recreation programs and programs targeting specific groups. The programs reviewed varied significantly not only in terms of the nature of assistance provided, but also in terms of the characteristics of young people targeted, how they integrated with other services and the ways in which young people were recruited for involvement.

This review noted a number of findings:

- Social competence training (cognitive-behavioural) has been recognised as positively reducing criminal behaviour through helping change the ways that young people think and act
- Programs that divert from custody (in the form of intensive supervision, mediation conferencing, cautioning and peer mediation) reported mixed findings in their effectiveness in preventing crime – in many cases, it was noted that more evaluation was required

- Education type programs (based in schools) appear to be positive in developing positive behaviours in young people
- Employment programs were viewed as being limited in their effectiveness
- Mentoring appeared to have promising short term results
- Comprehensive programs such as multi-systemic therapy were seen as effective in reducing and preventing crime²⁸ Recreation appeared to have promising short term effects, although these were noted as being quite small in the size of effect
- Programs targeting specific groups were found to be effective by using a number of different approaches in different settings (Sallybanks 2002)

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the importance of youth development and youth led programs as a means of engaging marginalised young people who may be at risk of offending. These models differ from traditional youth service models by viewing young people as active participants rather than clients and recognising the inherent skills and strengths young people possess (Listen Inc. 2001). They aim to provide opportunities for young people to overcome the barriers that are limiting their involvement in mainstream life and develop the capacities and skills to assist them meet identified goals. This is often through facilitating young people to take on leadership roles within the organisation and offering support, as young people are encouraged to take on a variety of responsibilities within the organisation. Such programs also seek to address one of the key problems associated with many marginalised young people through building a strong sense of identity and sense of active citizenship (Listen Inc. 2000). Examples from overseas have also shown them to be highly effective as a crime prevention intervention.

Mentor and role model programs are also gaining increased support for the positive effects that have on young people's involvement in offending behaviour (National Crime Prevention 2003).

3.5.8. Sector Characteristics

The complex and interconnected nature of social problems leading to offending among young people necessarily requires a wide variety of community services be available to young people if the causes of crime are to be addressed and protective factors of young people enhanced. It has been recognised in the literature as important that young people both have access to appropriate government and non-government mainstream services as well as specialist youth services. While mainstream services are important in linking them into other networks and services used by the majority of the population, these services must recognise and act on the different needs of young people and adopt a youth-friendly approach (White 2003). Despite this, mainstream services have been shown to be somewhat ineffective in their ability to engage excluded youth (ibid). For this reason, specialist youth services are necessary in the service mix to be able to engage those who are excluded or at risk of becoming excluded, as well as for those who choose not to access mainstream services for whatever reason (Homel 2005).

Incorporated in the recognition of the need to provide a wide mix of different service types is the differing needs of sub-groups of young people. In the literature, considerable effort has gone into identifying good practice ways of working with groups such as Indigenous youth, CALD youth, and young people presenting mental health issues and/or drug misuse issues²⁹. At the core of the literature looking at these, and other sub-groups of young people, is the importance of tailoring programs to address the common experiences and needs of each of these groups. There is a strong component of having good local knowledge of the target group being worked with including the entrenched or structural social problems certain groups may be affected by. In relation to Indigenous youth in particular, many of these problems have been recognised and good-practice service delivery incorporates an intimate understanding of these issues, often through the delivery of services by Indigenous people themselves (Zubrick and Robson 2003).

As shown in the above table, another element of good practice is multi-agency partnerships and collaboration between agencies. This refers to both agencies within the NGO sector as well as with other agencies that offer services to young people.

While services that have the capacity to work with multiple risk and protective factors have been evaluated as being particularly beneficial to young people, in reality there often remains issues of relevance to the young person that a single agency cannot address in-house. Thus, close partnerships between agencies facilitate the effective “linking in” of young people to other relevant government and non-government agencies. Partnerships and collaboration between such agencies has also been recognised as being able to reduce the stress of the young person by the ability of agencies to share information (Homel 2005)³⁰. Limiting the number of times a young person has to ‘tell their story’ is an important means of being able to engage with disadvantaged young people. Thus, since many young people who could be deemed at risk of offending lack positive networks – particularly positive adult role models and pro-social supportive peer groups, multi-agency collaboration and partnerships can assist the young person by providing support in the first instance and secondly, expanding their support networks.

Figure 7: What Works in Diverting Young People from Offending?³¹

Social Settings

- Programs that work across social settings
- Programs based in the community
- Programs that go into the environment of the young person
- Programs that facilitate youth use of public space

Service Characteristics

- Services with clear aims and objectives that have integrity
- Services with a commitment to social justice principles
- Well trained, committed and enthusiastic workers
- Services that are regularly monitored and evaluated
- Services that provide programs that are sufficient in length and intensity to impact behaviour
- Community involvement in planning and implementation of particular programs
- Services that seek to involve young people in the design and implementation of programs
- Those that avoid labelling of young people accessing the services

- Services that are effectively marketed to young people
- Services that are youth friendly and operate within a supportive social context
- Services where the management and administration functions are orientated and attuned to the needs of young people

Program Characteristics

- Programs that address a variety of risk and protective factors rather than just one or two
- Programs that contain skill-based components
- Programs that are culturally specific
- Programs that influence the way a young person thinks and acts
- Programs that are targeted to the needs of the young person
- Programs that are flexible
- Programs that are prevention orientated rather than reactive
- Programs that include peer and/or adult role models
- Programs that co-ordinate the efforts to impact individuals, their peer groups, families, schools, other agencies that young people have contact with and the wider community
- Program implementation that is relevant to target behaviours of client group
- Programs where there is an emphasis on the promotion of opportunities for the development of independence
- Programs that allow for the self determination of young people

Sector Characteristics

- Multi agency collaboration and partnerships including opportunities for networking and development of referral capabilities of agencies
- Commitment to research aimed at determining levels and types of needs of client group in local community
- Combination of mainstream, generic and specialist youth services

3.6. Conclusion

Within the literature on “what works”, it is evident that most of those programs that have been evaluated are those that are designed and funded to divert young

people from offending. While the contribution that NGOs make to deterring youth involvement in crime is still far from being fully understood, it is demonstrated that this contribution is significant and, as stated above, more effective in many cases than attempts to divert youth from offending through the implementation of harsh penalties and greater police surveillance.

The proposed research fits comfortably into the emerging discourse on crime prevention strategies through early intervention and developmental approaches. The existing research confirms the assumptions made at the outset of this review that socially and economically disadvantaged young people are more at risk of offending, that crime prevention through early intervention is imperative in addressing issues arising from disadvantage and that social services are in a unique position to assist in crime prevention at this level. The identification of the known elements of good practice crime prevention provides an informed starting point to research further the role of NGOs in diverting young people from offending.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

The aims of this research are centred on five discrete themes, as reflected in the interview questionnaire. These themes now provide the structure to guide the summary of results and discussion. The themes are:

- Relevance - the degree to which NGOs providing services to young people see crime prevention as relevant to them
- Causes of offending - the main understandings or views of service providers in regard to the causes of offending by young people
- Impact - the view of service providers in regard to how they see their work or similar services work as affecting young people in such a way as crime is prevented
- What works? - the view of service providers as to what is working in regard to crime prevention for young people
- What doesn't work? - the view of service providers as to what is not working in regard to crime prevention for young people

The first section of this chapter will provide an outline of some salient details about the work of the agencies who were interviewed. Discussion will reflect on how the results highlight, and can further inform, the efforts being made by NGOs in Perth to help young people in such a way as to prevent crime. The discussion will also include comparisons of how the work of NGOs in this study compares to existing evidence of what is known to be effective in diverting young people from offending. Good practice principles and recommendations emerging from the research will be the subject of the following chapter.

4.2. Background on the Agencies Interviewed

4.2.1. Service Types

Most agencies offered more than one service to young people. A number of services had the flexibility to provide assistance relevant to the needs of the young person, so

services offered varied between clients. Many agencies received funding from a variety of different sources. This accounted for many having a range of programs that provided different services to young people. Funding came from State and Commonwealth agencies such as the Department for Community Development (DCD), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of Health, Drug and Alcohol Office (DAO), Family and Community Services (FACS) and the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Figure 8 provides an overview of the main categories of service that the agencies indicated as providing. As agencies had the capacity to nominate more than one service area, the total is greater than the 51 agencies interviewed.

Figure 8: Main Types of Service Provided by Participating Agencies

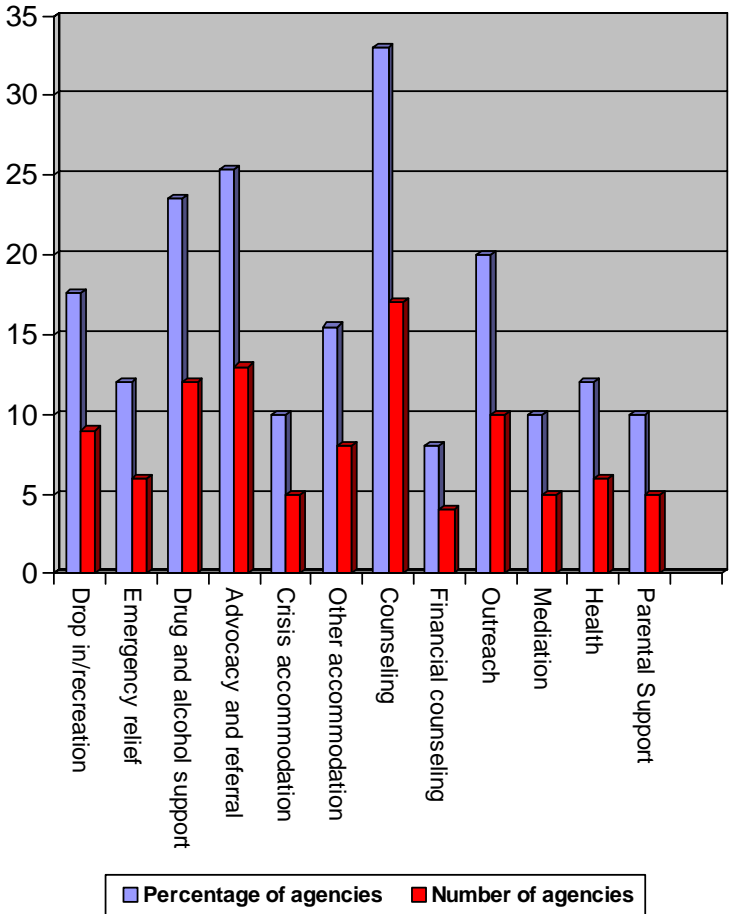


Figure 9: Definition of Service Types

Service Type	Definition
Drop In / Recreation	Characterised by providing a space for young people where they can obtain assistance, spend time with friends, engage in various organised activities. These services provide varying degrees of support to young people.
Emergency Relief	Provide basic necessities such as food, blankets, assistance with bill payments
Drug and Alcohol Support	Provide counselling on substance misuse problems, drug and alcohol information, withdrawal and detox services
Advocacy and Referral	Referral of young people to agencies that can offer assistance relevant to the identified needs of the young person (including government, non-government and private). Advocacy for the young person on issues including legal matters, education, housing and accommodation, employment and training
Education, Employment and Training	Alternative education programs designed to equip young people to access employment or other mainstream training or education institutions. Assistance securing employment, or providing supported employment
Crisis Accommodation	Short term accommodation that young people can access in crisis situations
Other Accommodation	Mid and long term accommodation that offers varying degrees of support to young people residing there
Counselling and mentoring	Incorporates both formal and informal counselling. Mentoring to young people by trained youth workers
Financial Counselling	Providing assistance and information on financial matters relevant to the young person. Includes assisting with budgeting
Outreach	Services that have the capacity to engage with young people in their environment. This may be in the young person's place of residence, in their school or in a public place.

Mediation	Mediation with family or education provider or other important individuals or organisations in a young persons' life.
Health support / information	Medical assistance and information. Includes services that provide assistance to mental health problems and illness.
Parental Support	Support for the family as well as the young person often characterised by working with parents and young people together. Also incorporates services that assisted young people who were parents

4.2.2. Target Group of Agencies Interviewed

Due to the methodology adopted, most services focused specifically on young people as opposed to adults. Agencies differed in how they defined "young person". Most accepted the broad definition of the range 12-25 years old. For most (64%) agencies more than 3 out of 4 clients were in this age bracket. Indigenous agencies generally had younger clients reportedly starting around 10 years of age. No services dealt exclusively with male or female clients except where a number of small programs operated under the same service. In these cases, sometimes one or two programs focused on either male or female clients only.

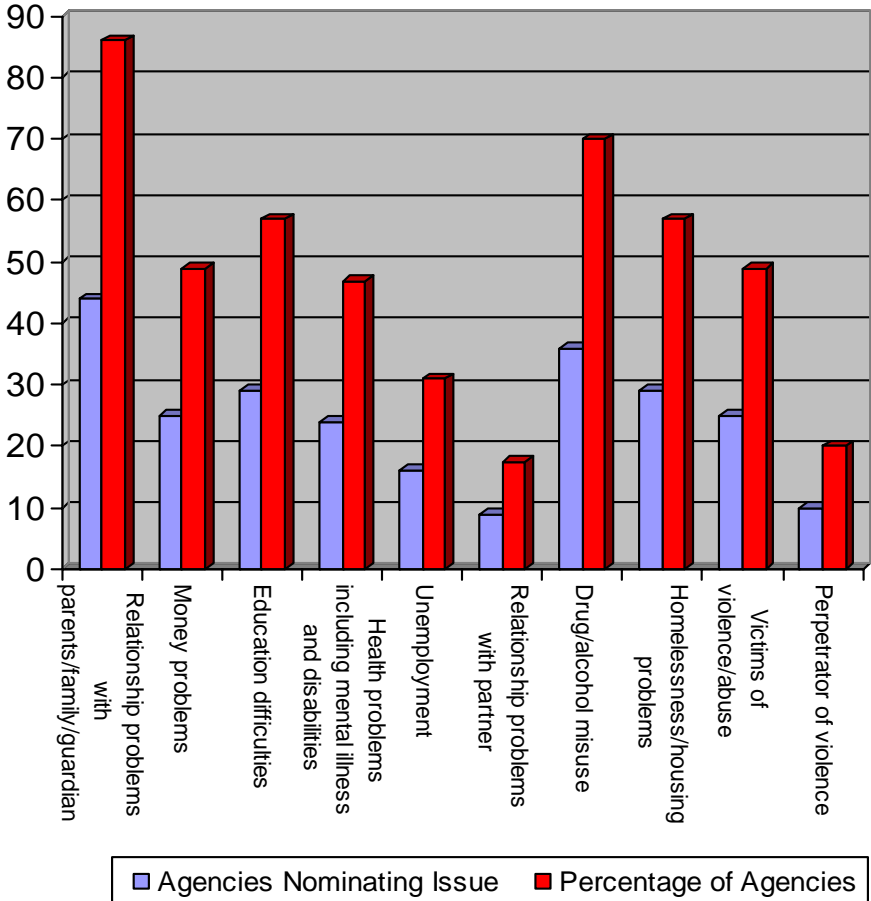
4.2.3. Issues Affecting Young People Accessing Services

When respondents were asked, *"What is the most significant social issue or problem that you feel affects many of the young people accessing your service?"* (Question 4) there was consistently more than one social issue mentioned. In a number of cases, almost all social issues listed seemed to be of relevance. There was a strong feeling amongst interviewees of the 'joined-up' nature of the social issues. That is, social problems never stood alone but were interrelated. For example, when "drug misuse" was listed as a problem, this was seen as being closely related to other factors such as family breakdown.

As shown in Figure 10, relationship problems within the family was one factor reported consistently in all service types. Often this related to family breakdown and the impacts of new partners of parents moving into the family home. The responses

reported in Figure 10 relate to the major categories allowed for in the questionnaire. Other responses were also recorded. These included self esteem issues (4 responses), boredom (3 responses) and racism (2 responses).

Figure 10: Most Significant Social Issues Affecting Young People Accessing Services



4.2.4. Service Provider Views on Involvement in Criminal Behaviour of Young People Accessing Services

Questions 5, 6 and 7 sought to provide an estimate of the proportion of young people accessing a service that were to a greater or lesser extent already involved in crime or considered to be at significant risk of offending. These questions sought to measure the relevance of crime prevention in a slightly different way from the previous question. Services that adopted a case management approach, provided accommodation or worked with the young person because of their offending

behaviour (and were funded for it) were able to estimate the proportion of young people accessing their service that were at risk of offending. For those able to provide an estimate it appeared that more than half of the young people were considered to be at risk of offending with a significant proportion involved in relatively serious offending and already known to the police. For many agencies however it was unknown what proportion of the young people were involved in offending.

4.3. Relevance – Is Crime Prevention a Relevant Issue for Service Providers?

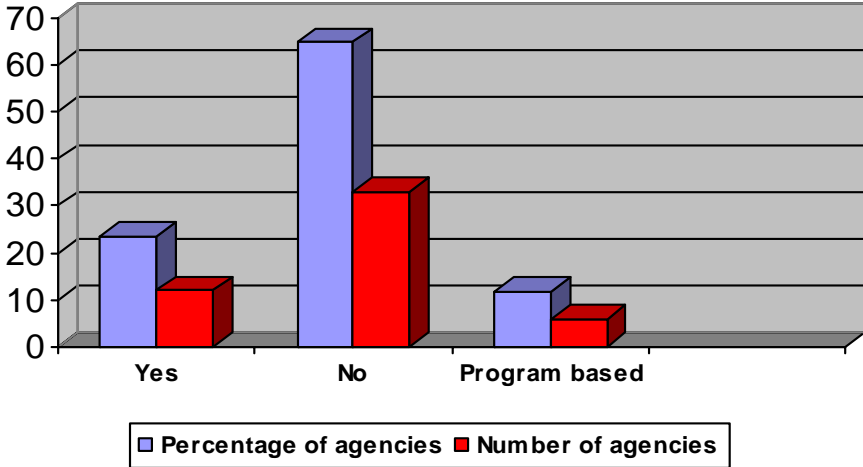
4.3.1. The Relevance of Crime Prevention to NGOs

Establishing the relevance of services to crime prevention is one of the fundamental aims of the present research. A series of interview questions asked respondents about the connection of their service to crime and crime prevention. Rather than asking directly, *“Is crime prevention relevant to your work?”* the issue was approached more circuitously through a series of questions. This approach was adopted to gain a deeper understanding about the philosophical underpinnings of service providers on their work and the agencies linkage to crime prevention. With the exception of services with an explicit function of diverting young people from offending (as shown in Figure 11), providers stated that the service programs they provided were aimed primarily at helping young people – with their role in crime prevention as a secondary, barely conscious role.

Question 9 asked directly whether NGOs providing services to young people had crime prevention as specific service objective. More services stated that they had crime prevention as an explicit service objective than had been anticipated. This was seen to be because many of these agencies operated a number of programs with often only one small program having a crime prevention function, therefore core funding was not linked to this objective. These results are shown in Figure 11. Services that had crime prevention as an objective received funding (in the most cases program based) from the Office of Crime Prevention, National Crime Prevention, Department of Justice and/or Drug and Alcohol Office.

While the large majority of interviewees recognised that the services they delivered had an impact on young people’s decisions to offend, the current capacity of crime prevention to become an increased focus of their work appeared limited. The majority of services were not funded to divert young people from offending and appeared to have varying degrees of knowledge in terms of what is known to be effective in diverting young people from crime. This point will be discussed in detail below.

Figure 11: Does your Program have Crime Prevention as a Service Objective?



4.3.2. Crime Prevention as a Public Label

The focus group was asked the question: “Given that crime prevention is not sometimes an explicit objective of agencies despite the fact that agencies believe they have a crime prevention function, is it necessary to publicise the diversion (crime prevention) functions of agencies?” This question was asked of the focus group in response to a number of service providers interviewed discussing this issue. The focus group cautioned against further publicising the crime prevention role due to the perceived risk of “turning off” young people from accessing the service. Publicising crime prevention as a service objective was seen to potentially have a negative effect by stigmatising young people accessing the service. It was strongly felt that either young people may not access the service as a result or alternatively (and more likely), it will negatively affect the way that young people engage with the service

and the staff. According to the focus group, presenting the service as aiming to prevent crime does not just stigmatise the young person, but also the agency.

From an agency perspective, the focus on crime prevention as a service objective risks damaging the non-judgemental reputation and approach of the agency and necessarily makes the problem the focus rather than the person. This is seen as contrary to the “strengths perspective” that many agencies are encouraged to implement or currently practice. From this perspective, recognising the positive attributes and skills of the young people are important. Further, the focus group, as well as many service providers interviewed, believed that highlighting criminality in young people diverts attention from the structural barriers leading to offending and those barriers will not receive the attention that they deserve. As articulated by participants of the focus group, the risk is that agencies working to assist young people in need will actually contribute to the overall problem. This is through masking the extent to which certain elements of our social structure or ways of dealing with young people act to place some young people at considerable risk of offending. For example, the negative implications of inappropriate educational opportunities will be further hidden if agencies are seen to be working to address only the symptoms (i.e. crime) of such factors. This, in turn, may contribute to a continued lack of recognition of the inadequacies of the education system, acting to justify apathy in changing it.

On the other hand, the NGOs represented in the focus group understood that funding support for youth agencies often depended on the funding bodies perception of a distinct positive benefit of the work - and there are few social benefits seen as more positive than crime prevention³². Increased funding means that the effectiveness of the agency in helping the young person can be increased, subsequently enhancing the crime prevention function.

From a practical point of view then, the crime prevention function of services working to assist young people should not be displayed or seen at the point where services are actually provided. On the ground, no one wants to work with young people “because it will prevent crime” and it is even less likely that a young person in crisis will accept help from someone acting on such a motive. Thus, crime prevention is not an appropriate public face of agencies assisting young people anymore than “death

prevention agency" would be a suitable way to rename our hospitals. In effect, the crime prevention function of youth service funding should be seen as the "silent partner" in the funding formula and separate material on the youth service sector needs to be produced for different audiences.

4.4. Causes of Offending by Young People

4.4.1. Correlation Between Social Issues of Young People Accessing Services and Known Risk Factors for Offending

The social issues identified as affecting young people (as shown in Figure 10) accessing NGOs link closely in with known risk factors for offending. Of particular note, as discussed in Chapter Two, problematic family relationships and inadequate parenting have been identified as being among the strongest predictors of young people's involvement in crime. Results from this study also show that family relationships (incorporating inadequate parenting) are one of the most commonly cited social problems of young people accessing services offered by NGOs. Other social issues identified in this study as affecting young people accessing services are also consistent with the literature on risk factors for offending. Of particular note, economic disadvantage, peer involvement in crime, and substance misuse were among the social issues listed by interviewees.

The NGOs interviewed recognised the "joined up" nature of social issues, now commonly understood as central to increasing the risk of young people becoming involved in criminal activity. Further, as noted by the interviewees, many young people accessing services are experiencing critical transitions points or social problems that have also been identified in the literature as placing young people at increased risk of offending³³. As highlighted in the literature review, the quality and nature of the assistance that young people receive during this time is likely to impact on criminal behaviour³⁴. It therefore is evident that young people accessing NGOs are often considerably at-risk of engaging in criminal behaviour, linked to their experience of a variety of different social issues and problems and their experience of known risk factors for offending.

4.4.2. Causes of Offending by Young People Identified by Service Providers

Question 16 and 16b sought to obtain service provider views on the causes of offending by young people. It extended the earlier discussion of the social issues most affecting young people accessing services by investigating whether these issues were perceived as influencing the decisions of the young people to engage in crime. Question 16 asked *“What would you say are the key experiences that the young people that access your service have gone through that may make them more likely to get involved in crime?”*. As found in previous studies, it emerged that the social issues affecting the young people were central to service provider views of the causes of offending. In response to this question, agencies mentioned a range of experiences that focused on problems in the family of origin as well as intergenerational issues such as domestic violence and poverty. The responses are shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Interviewees' Perception of the Key Experiences Related to Offending

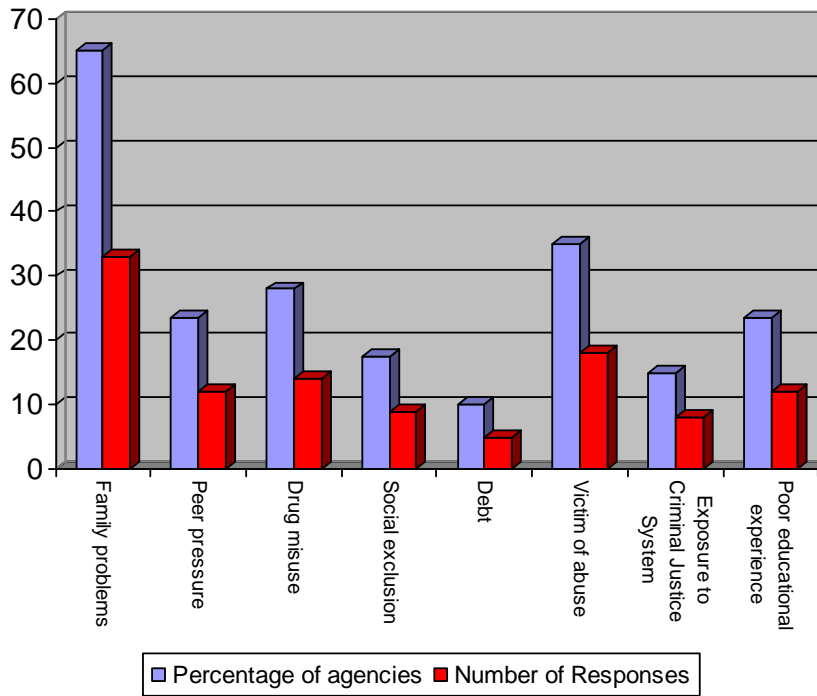
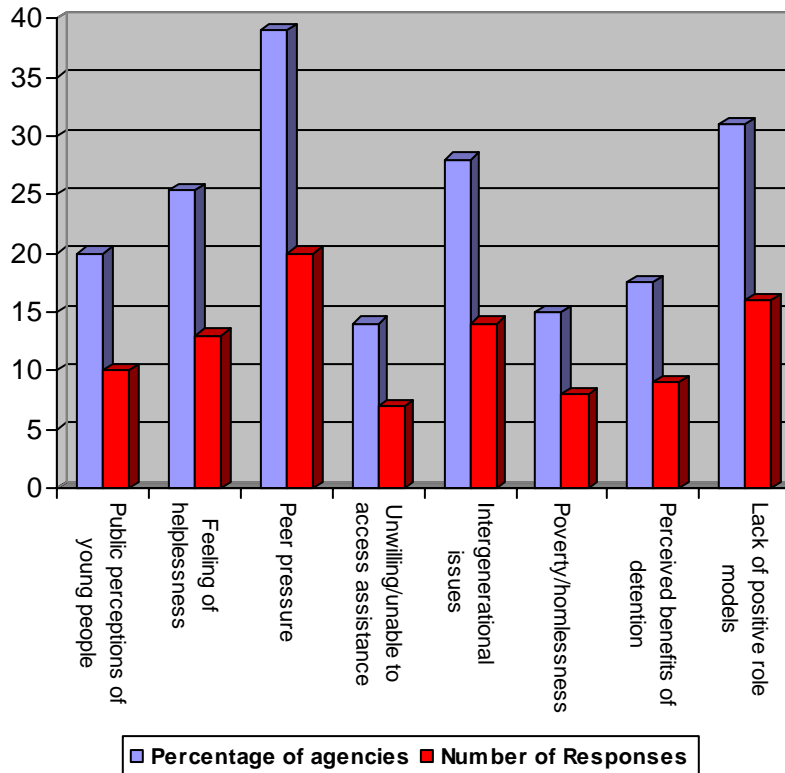


Figure 13: Circumstances that Make Offending More Likely in "At Risk" Young People



4.4.2.1. Family Problems

As mentioned above, family problems were cited as being central in influencing young people's decisions to engage in criminal behaviour. A majority of service providers recognised this link.

"Parents don't know how to parent and have their own issues being dominant over their kids".

"A lot of it comes down to family issues"

"Kids go home and no ones there"

4.4.2.2. Intergenerational Issues

Intergenerational issues also emerged as an integral component of service provider's understandings of young people's involvement in criminal behaviour. A number of service providers expressed the view that many of the young people accessing their service have been born into environments where it is virtually expected that they will drop out of school, spend time on the streets and ultimately offend. It was noted that such behaviour was expected, as this had been the experience of the majority of the young person's family.

"Many grow up in environments where it is the right thing to steal rather than be employed"

"Their family environment has taught them to use aggressive and offending behaviours to meet their needs"

These intergenerational problems seemed to be of particular relevance to Indigenous young people.

"The 1905 Act that meant that kids got taken away from their families – now many don't know how to show love and emotion"

Service providers reported that many Indigenous young people grow up in environments where the experience or prospect of being in detention or prison may not necessarily be as unfamiliar or foreign to them as to many non-Indigenous young people.

"They often have family in detention so it really doesn't matter to them if they enter – there are also better services inside, they can access education and medical care"

4.4.2.3. Abuse

Many agencies reported high levels of young people experiencing abuse. This is not surprising given the amount of previous research that has established the link between child abuse and/or neglect and offending by young people³⁵. A number of agencies, not specifically dealing with (or funded for) issues of abuse, reported that 100 per cent of their clients had been the victim of physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

"Many have been the victim of sexual abuse – they have left home before they're old enough to get Centrelink and other government support"

"Concern was also expressed by the number of interviewees regarding young people who have been sexually assaulted while in detention."

"Young men are getting raped in detention centres – how are they meant to do anything meaningful after this experience? "

Recent research in Western Australia associated with the Gordon Inquiry (Gordon et al 2002) also revealed the high rates of physical and sexual abuse in Indigenous communities and service providers interviewed reflected this knowledge. Central to this experience, it was noted that the resulting trauma has considerable implications on offending behaviour.

4.4.2.4. *Joined Up Causes of Offending*

Many interviewees recognised that the multitude of social issues experienced by young people were what led them to engage in criminal behaviour. In this sense, offending behaviour by a young person could not simply be put down to peer pressure or family problems, but rather it was the experience of a number of such problems in unison that caused the young person to offend.

“Usually there’s more than just one issue, they all feed off each other so young people can feel there is no other option for them”

4.4.2.5. *Crime as Necessity*

Not fully captured in Figures 12 or 13 is the prevalent perception of service providers that much crime is committed out of necessity. As many service providers noted, if a young person is homeless or experiencing poverty, their involvement in criminal behaviour essentially becomes a question of survival. Services believed that most young people committed crime to gain material necessities; many also acknowledged that it appeared that criminal behaviour was a component of gaining acceptance socially. For homeless young people in particular, the need to develop a network of friends may mean that criminal behaviour becomes a necessary component of being accepted into such a network. Due to the high level of victimisation of homeless young people, it is likely that a network of friends is essential in providing a degree of protection when living on the streets. This is in line with existing literature on the needs of homeless young people and their involvement in criminal behaviour (National Crime Prevention 1999)

“Crime is a necessity to remain part of their peer group – if they lose their group then their back on their own”

4.4.2.6. *Negative Experiences with Government Departments and NGOs*

Many of the young people accessing services offered by NGOs were reported as having long standing and/or ongoing involvement with numerous government

agencies. This was stated as being in relation to involvement with DCD for care and protection matters, the department of justice, Centrelink, the Police and others. As discussed in Chapter Three, young people as multiple service users have been the subject of research undertaken by White (2003). In a scoping paper undertaken for the Australian Institute of Criminology, White asserted that a young person's experience of services is likely to affect their future offending behaviour. In many cases, if a young person had a negative experience with a service provided by a government agency, this could jeopardise the potential benefit of alternative services offered by that agency or other agencies. Service providers in this research articulated that many young people were wary of becoming further involved with government agencies and suffered as a result of the treatment received by such agencies. In these cases, service providers often needed to prove to the young person that they were not a government agency and operated differently to such agencies. Negative experiences with Government departments, and young people's unwillingness to request help from them were also seen as influencing the decisions of young people to offend. This issue is flagged as a potential area for further research and investigation to be undertaken into.

Closely aligned with this, is the recognition of service providers of young people's difficulty in negotiating their way through the government system of support and the negative outcomes that result.

"Kids can't cope with bureaucracy – they don't know where to get help so they feel they need to provide for themselves - they steal"

4.4.2.7. Laws that are Not Youth Friendly

Added to the intense personal problems experienced by young people emerged issues that can be considered superficial by comparison but seem to be intractable and immediate impediments for young people trying to get ahead and avoid involvement in criminal behaviour. For example, as policing of public transport has increased, the number of young people charged with fare evasion has risen. Although the concept of a fine is a meaningful concept for those who have some capacity to pay them, many young people seeking services from the agencies that

participated in this study have no such capacity. The fines simply were reported as becoming another festering problem, a debt that builds and provides another reason to commit crime.

The problem of train fines is further complicated as the confrontation with transit police is often the time when the young person, lacking the personal resources to handle the conflict, may act abusively leading to criminal charges and further alienation from authority. Similar dynamics often appear to lie behind charges related to abusive language and attempts to assault police who confront young people on the street.

4.4.3. Correlation between Causes of Offending and Criminological Theory

4.4.3.1. Lack of Bonds to Society

Many of the comments by service providers alluded to the understanding that the root causes of crime were essentially a lack of fundamental bonds to conventional society. Disengagement from meaningful family relationships, positive role models, education or training, employment and appropriate housing were all recognised as key components to this. Various control theorists such as Hirschi have expounded this kind of explanation (Hirshci 1969). Under Hirschi's theory, attachment and commitment to, involvement with and having beliefs in line with conventional society are key elements that affect whether individuals will become involved in criminal behaviour. This 'bonding' to society is in effect obtained through social mechanisms such as the family, education and work environment and peer networks that reinforce pro-social, non-criminal behaviour.

Building on from this, service providers were articulating a now well-established understanding of the causes of juvenile offending. The underlying explanation of why, when and where some young people offend could be reduced to the point that there is insufficient reason for them not to offend. Jackson Toby concluded his research in 1957 with a similar point when he found that delinquents could be distinguished from non-delinquents in terms of one essential characteristic: they did

not have a “stake in conformity” which provided a reason not to commit crime (Toby 1957).

4.4.3.2. *Labelling Theory*

In this research, there is also much support for the basic tenets of labelling theory³⁶. Many service providers articulated the view that young people are, in many cases, almost expected by their family, peers and the wider community to get involved in crime – so they do. This “labelling” or “self fulfilling prophecy” is seen as aided by the behaviour of the police and justice system who treat many young people like criminals even if they have not been charged of crime.

“If you treat people like perpetrators for long enough then they will become perpetrators”

This reinforces the importance of programs that divert young people as quickly and effectively as possible from any association with the label “crime” or “offender”. This recognition also has important implications in terms of labelling services assisting young people as ‘crime prevention’. As mentioned above, service providers are very aware of this and especially the fact that the perceptions of the young people in terms of why a particular service is being made available to them can considerably affect the potential benefit of that service. In addition, the issue of cross-contamination by bringing young offenders together in groups is seen as a related critical issue and a risk that may affect many of the programs run by the Department of Justice such as Work and Development Orders, Community Service orders or similar orders where the offender is mandated to a group or program “for offenders”.

4.5. Agency Views of the Impact of Services in Diverting Young People from Offending

4.5.1. *Services Diverting Young People From Offending*

Nearly all interviewees said that they felt their service played a role in diverting young people from offending. Some respondents felt that they had a direct influence while

for others the relationship was more indirect. Of those who didn't think they influenced the likelihood of young clients getting involved in crime, reasons given included the intervention being too short in nature and, for older teenagers that started offending particularly early, two agencies reported that offending behaviour was already entrenched thus limiting the effectiveness in preventing crime by these agencies. Despite this however, these agencies still recognised the value that their services brought to young people.

When asked *"What proportion of the young people accessing your services, would you estimate, have benefited from those services in a way that could reduce their likelihood of offending or contact with police?"* (Question 11), most agencies indicated a relatively high proportion as shown in Figure 15. More than four out of five agencies suggested that the number of young people they helped was 50% or greater. Most believed that while the young person may not stop offending altogether, because of services provided, they may either not offend as often or the offences that they do commit would not be as serious. In these cases, an approach that could be characterised as harm-minimisation was expressed. Also, some stated that they felt their service would have a more significant long-term benefit rather than short term.

Figure 14: Do You Think the Program/Service Influences the Likelihood of Young Clients Getting More Involved in Crime?

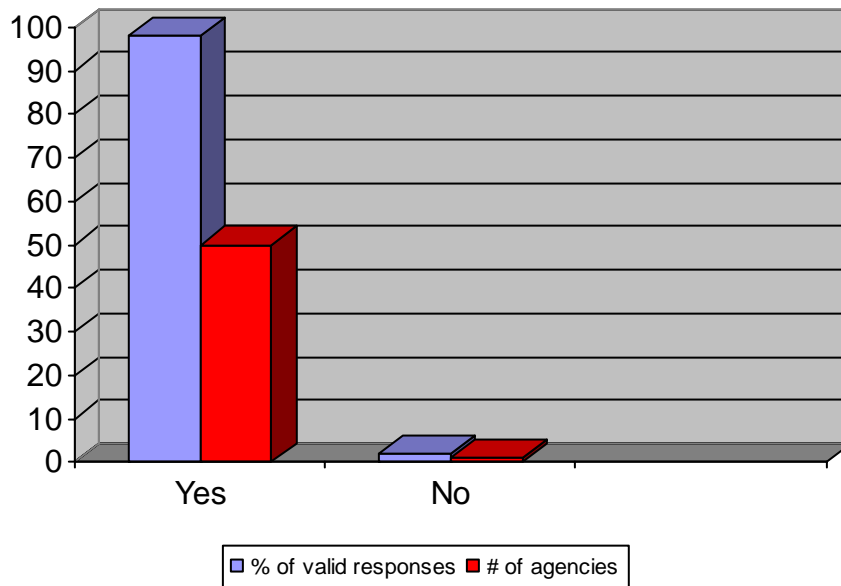
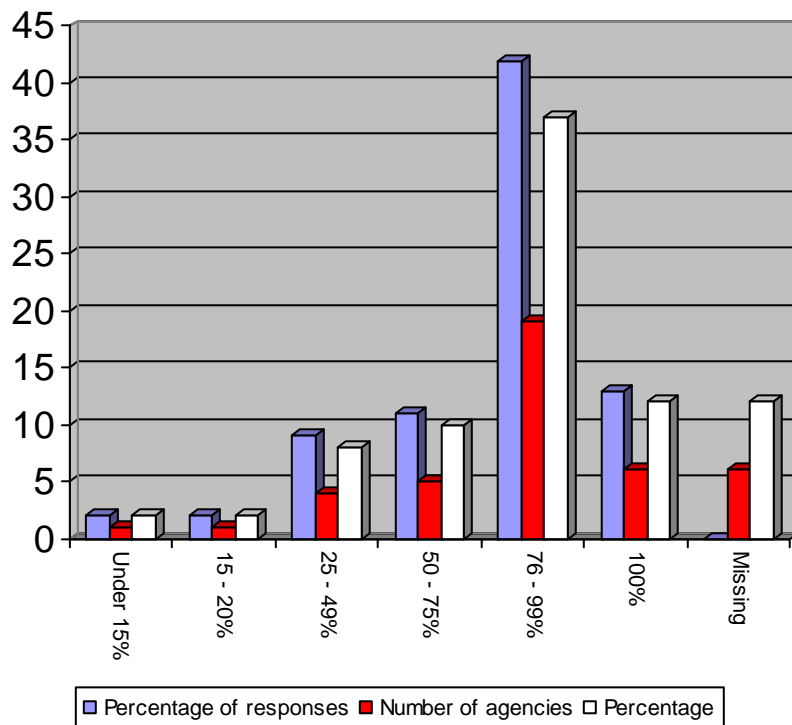


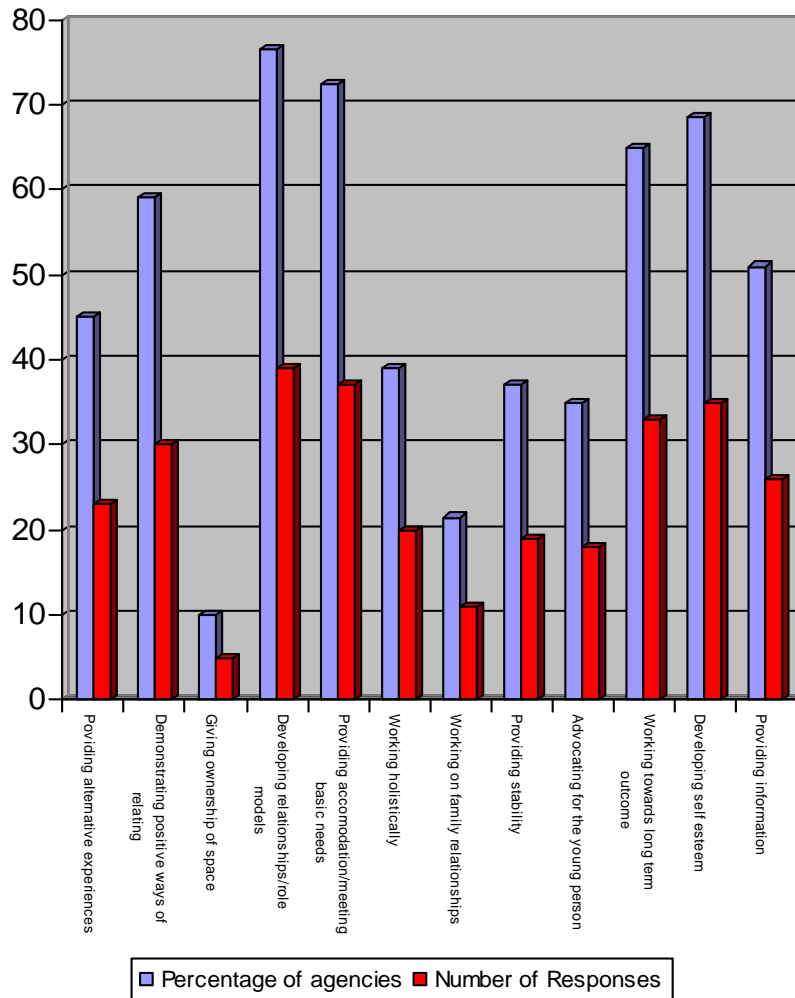
Figure 15: What Proportion of Young Clients, Would you Estimate, have benefited in ways that could reduce their Likelihood of Offending or Contact with Police?"



4.5.2. How Agencies Assist Young People Generally

In response to Question 8 ("Generally speaking, how does your agency assist young people?") interviewees pointed to a number of things that youth service agencies do that assist young people. These are listed in Figure 16.

Figure 16: How Does Your Agency Assist Young People?³⁷



4.5.3. How Agencies Divert Young People From Offending

Agencies stated that it was largely through providing services and assistance to young people generally that acted to divert the young people from offending. Service providers often expressed the view that their service reduced the need of the

young person to offend. While varying considerably between agency's, common themes that emerged were:

- Providing adult role models that demonstrate positive ways of behaving and thinking and provide someone for the young person to talk to
- Working with the young person 'where they're at'
- Respecting young people, listening to them and building trust
- Assisting young people to access needed goods and services,
- Working toward building the capabilities of the young people so they were able to get a job and support themselves,
- Assisting the young person to see consequences of their actions and alternative courses of action with a particular focus on the setting of long and short term goals
- Working toward building the self-esteem of young people
- Working with young people holistically, recognising the multiple factors that impact them
- Helping the young person to see that there are alternatives to the pathway that they are on
- Facilitating young people a feel a sense of achievement

In the focus group it was reiterated that all assistance offered to young people essentially acts to divert them from offending. However, the emphasis was placed on what was seen to be the active ingredient which was working with the client "where the client is at". This group expressed the view that it is important to do an assessment of the young person (either formally or informally) to uncover their needs and find out the issues affecting them, and subsequently work to address the practical and social issues relevant to the individual.

4.5.3.1. Building Relationships with Young People and Providing Positive Role Models

Relationships were seen as the bedrock of much of the activity of youth work generally and the central component of efforts to attract a young person away from crime. Given this vital role of relationships, it was recognised as essential that much emphasis be placed by the youth agencies in getting these relationships right.

Facilitating the building of these relationships emerged from this research as the primary part of the work of youth workers. Fundamentally, relationships were noted as needing to be non-judgemental and trusting. It was overwhelmingly recognised by service providers interviewed that such relationships can empower the young person and provide them with a much-needed positive role model. The view was also put that by respecting the young person and promoting positive interaction, a bond was forged between the young person and the youth worker. As a consequence of this bond it was less likely that the young person would offend as they would not want to 'let down' the individuals involved in helping them. In other words, the young person would be given a reason not to offend. This point reflects classical notions of control theory as articulated earlier.

An observation not captured by the results of the interview schedule is the passion and commitment that exists in the youth sector to working with disadvantaged and 'at-risk' young people. Such an observation - while not able to be measured in terms of the value that this adds to the effectiveness of services - is an important recognition. Youth workers appeared to have a high level of respect for the young people with whom they work and strived to offer services in a positive, non-judgmental way. It appears that within non-government agencies, this commitment by staff is vital to ensuring that agencies are able to operate effectively. This is in terms of both working with limited funding and considerable demand for services and providing valued assistance to young people that access services.

4.5.3.2. Providing Shelter and Meeting Basic Needs

Apart from relationships, the next most important factor identified was offering assistance in securing safe shelter and meeting the basic needs of the young person. In regard to shelter, while it was often recognised that this should ideally be with the young person's family as this was often not possible, other safe, appropriate and secure housing needed to be available to provide effective assistance to young people and divert them from crime. The benefits associated with providing accommodation were noted as allowing the young person to feel safe and respected and facilitating them to feel part of a community.

"Supported accommodation and youth services that are easily accessible to young people with staff that have a good rapport with young people."

If housing and other basic needs were unable to be met due to lack of available accommodation and resources, the outcomes were reported by agencies as being detrimental.

"Some clients end up re-offending largely because they want to go back into detention – it's somewhere they fit in and they feel secure"

4.5.3.3. *Developing the Self Esteem of Young People*

It was reported that many of the young people accessing services were severely lacking in self-esteem and so this was a key issue that youth workers aimed to address. This state of low self-esteem is likely to result from life experiences characterised by inadequate family relationships, disengagement from education and other problems faced by the young person. It was noted by service providers that it was vital that the self-esteem of a young person is lifted to the point where they are able to see opportunities to succeed and accomplish tasks and importantly, be able to recognise themselves as a good person.

The main vehicle for developing the self-esteem of young people appeared to be through such things as listening to them, respecting them, giving them responsibilities and recognising when they do fulfil these and act in other positive ways. It also appeared to be an enormous benefit to many young people to be formally recognised for an achievement. Particularly noted by indigenous service providers were the benefits gained through rewarding young people for achievements by presenting them with certificates and other formal rewards. Essentially, of course, the achievements need to feel real and important to the young person. In the case of indigenous young people, recognising achievements were seen as especially positive when parents and other kin were able to be involved in the recognition of the young person. It was reported that for many young people accessing the NGOs in this study, positive recognition has not been gained through school or other avenues where most young people receive positive attention and praise. This seems

particularly relevant in light of other comments by service providers that stated that many young people come to see crime as an achievement. In this sense, it appears that when a sense of achievement and/or recognition cannot be obtained through mainstream avenues, the young people then can often turn to crime in efforts to bring about a similar feeling. Linked to this is also the recognition of service providers that many young people feel that 'bad kids' are essentially rewarded for criminal behaviour through opportunities offered to them in efforts to divert them from offending.

4.5.3.4. Focussing on Long Term Outcomes

Closely linked to developing the self-esteem of young people, was the identified need for services to facilitate young people to make lasting positive differences to their lives. The way services appeared to achieve this was often through working with the young person to set both long and short term goals. An integral feature of the setting of these goals was that the young person should decide them. Agencies interviewed were highly aware of the detrimental effects of setting goals that were essentially unattainable for the young person given their current situation. Those interviewed cautioned against 'setting young people up to fail' through placing unrealistic expectations on them.

Other identified ways of working towards achieving positive long-term outcomes for young people was to provide them with something substantial such as education, training or employment opportunities.

4.5.3.5. Teaching and Showing Young People Positive Ways of Relating and Behaving

It was surprising to note the perspectives of many youth workers of the relative lack of knowledge of many young people in terms of appropriate ways of relating and behaving, especially concerning ways of resolving conflict. In many cases, it was stated that young people had picked up negative communication practices from family members or other significant people in their lives, and had subsequently accepted this behaviour as correct. This is in line with the theory of differential association as briefly discussed in the Literature Review. Youth workers reported that

many young people had never been exposed to positive and commonly accepted ways of relating and behaving.

Also noted by the interviewees was the importance of providing programs that discuss and deal with relationship problems. Such programs have been recognised in the literature as working by opening up questions and providing skills that can break the cycle of violence (Atkinson, Indermaur, and Blagg 1998). Despite this, service providers cautioned that the young person should decide the possibility of working on strengthening relationships with family members – they should be empowered to make this decision.

4.5.3.6. Providing Information

While seeming insubstantial in comparison to some of the other types of assistance provided, the provision of basic information to young people was prominent in the ways that agencies felt that they assisted young people to divert them from offending. Information on issues such as young people's legal rights and responsibilities, where they can go for assistance, and how to negotiate government departments were all included in this recognition. Information on the effects of drug and alcohol use and other health risk behaviours were also noted as being much needed and valued by many of the young people that receive assistance from NGOs.

4.5.3.7. Offering Alternative Activities and Experiences

Young people with limited amounts of money struggle to find appropriate and relevant activities to occupy their time. In addition, many have come from family backgrounds that have either not had the money and/or the capabilities to expose them to alternative experiences such as camping. Alternative activities listed as being beneficial to young people and acting to divert them from offending by ranged from adventure type excursions, to creative activities such as art and music. The focus here was on taking the young person out of their, often-troubled environment and exposing them to positive and fun activities. This was seen as both providing the young person with a respite from the social and economic issues affecting them and can provide a much-needed sense of achievement.

4.5.3.8. *Providing Holistic Assistance Relevant to the Needs of the Young Person*

While this was recognised by interviewees as being an essential component in diverting young people from offending, it appeared that agencies varied substantially in their capacity to be able to offer holistic and relevant support to young people. This limited ability mainly resulted from funding restrictions and criteria and the resulting lack of resources agencies had at their disposal. Most agencies were unable to offer the extent of services and assistance recognised as needed by the young people and were limited in other important elements of the services that could be provided due to strict funding criteria.

4.5.3.9. *Other Assistance Provided by NGOs Considered to Divert Young People from Offending*

Other factors listed as acting to divert young people from offending were assisting with the stability in a young persons life, advocating for their needs with government departments and other services, and giving ownership of space to young people.

Stabilising a young person's life came out as a contentious issue in this research. While this had been mentioned several times during the course of the interviews, the focus group cautioned against the use of this term. The reason for this was that the term 'stabilising' was viewed as anti-empowering for young people. In this view, agencies should not 'stabilise' a young person's life, but rather facilitate and work with the young person so they are able to stabilise their own life.

4.5.4. The Needs of High Risk Subgroups

The research highlighted that many young people accessing the services through NGOs can be considered as belonging to a 'high risk' group of young people. Similar to other research in this area, this study confirms the complexity in working with particular groups of high-risk young people in that this work necessarily requires a considerable amount of expertise and knowledge on ways of delivering services

effectively. The present research identified that Indigenous young people, dual diagnosis sufferers, the mentally ill, those with substance misuse issues, the homeless, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and same sex attracted young people are all groups with particular needs that differ in some regards from other disadvantaged young people. Service providers, particularly those working predominantly with one or many of these particular groups of young people, recognised these diverse needs. There was a strong awareness of the need for further work in the formation of positive identities within these young people. For Indigenous young people in particular, cultural components of service delivery were a key way of facilitating the development of such identity.

As discussed above, many young Indigenous people are struggling with the effects of trauma as a result of abuse. For service providers, this adds great complexity to their work generally and in terms of aiding crime prevention amongst these young people. Added to this complexity is the gross underfunding reported by these agencies.

4.6. What Works in Diverting Young People from Offending?

4.6.1. Lack of Knowledge about Existing Research

One of the surprising results from the present research was the difficulty most service providers had in identifying with any confidence what the truly effective programs were in regard to crime prevention. Even amongst the relatively small group of service providers that did proffer an answer, the diversity of responses was striking. What emerges, therefore, is that there appears on the one hand to be no “stand-out” program that has high recognition as well as a lack of awareness about what an effective program should entail. Given that crime prevention is not embraced by most youth sector agencies as a key goal, such a lack of knowledge may not be surprising. However, it does indicate an area where those concerned about enhancing the crime prevention effects of youth services may productively work. Such work could usefully provide leadership, co-ordination and the dissemination of information about crime prevention and the work of youth service organisations. The kit component produced as part of this project will address some of the identified need however it is likely that there may be some value in further developing this

information to include examples of known successful programs when working with young people in the Perth environment. This issue will be revisited in the following chapter.

4.6.2. Key Times to Offer Services

Service provider views of the most effective point or opportunity to *intervene in the lives of young people* was sought through Question 17. This question asked: “What are the key times in the lives of these young people that are the most effective opportunities for NGOs to offer a service that may divert them from offending?” The responses to this question were informative and signalled the importance of agencies being ready, willing and able to respond at the point of crisis in the young person’s life. Agencies that worked predominantly with street present young people referred to the importance of working concertedly with the young person at their first entry onto the streets, before they became accepted and familiar with the street subculture. Thus, risk of homelessness is an important time for intervention with some agencies specifying a 2-week window of opportunity once young people enter into living on the streets.

Interestingly, it was also noted by a number of agencies that the point of young people leaving detention was a particularly beneficial time to offer services. This was often noted by Indigenous specific organisations. This is a notable point due to the reported lack of services (particularly beds) for these young people and the apparent lack of recognition of the importance of this transition within developmental crime prevention literature. A number of agencies reported that many young people exiting detention did so with very little support. Of considerable concern was comments by a service provider that stated young people were being released without so much as a change of clothes.

Perhaps most significantly, the responses provided by the NGOs in this research pointed to the understanding of the importance of the onset of adolescence and critical transition points such as the move from primary to secondary school. These two stages are viewed by agencies interviewed, reflecting the literature in this area, as being times where many young people face an array of problems that may

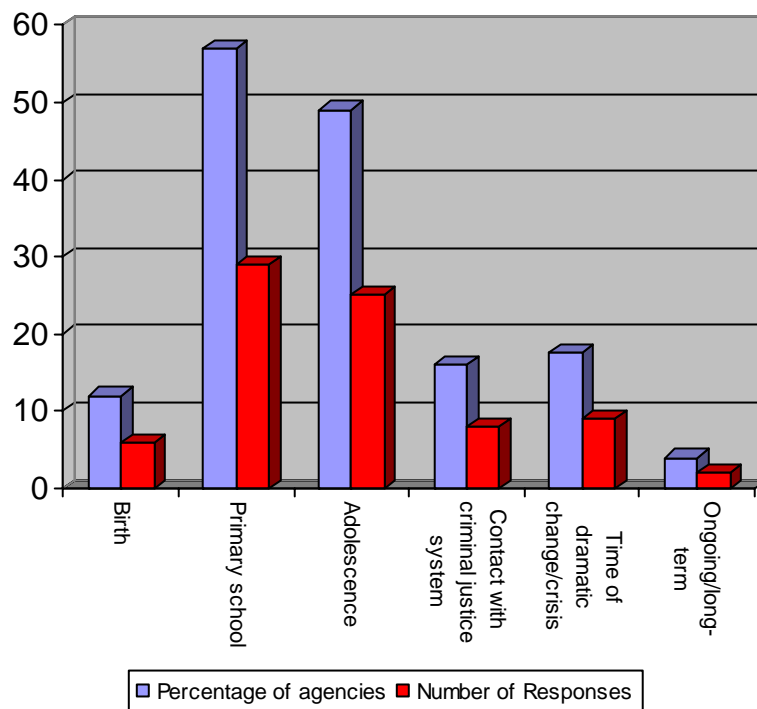
influence decisions of young people to offend. Amongst others, educational problems and changing peer influences are central. This finding becomes additionally important in light of observations by agencies that there currently exist insufficient support services focused on these transitions and age groups.

“Any time before eighteen – especially when they’re changing from primary school to high school and again at fourteen or fifteen.”

Pre-birth was also recognised as an important intervention time, particularly among Indigenous communities. Many Indigenous specific organisations recognised that kids are born into lives where their life chances are significantly lower than other young people. It was seen as almost inevitable that many of these young people would eventually offend due to their family experiences. This was particularly in regard to involvement by families in offending, domestic violence and other forms of assault. For these families it was considered necessary that assistance be given to parents before the birth of a child.

It was positive to note the view of many service providers that “whenever” is a good time to offer services to at-risk young people. This view suggests the understanding that the young person is essentially a victim of their experiences. Therefore, as noted specifically by participants of the focus group, whenever an opportunity presents itself to make a positive impact on a young person, this opportunity should be grasped. This also reaffirms the view that the whole community is involved in diverting young people from offending and all those who come into contact with young people have the potential to make positive contributions to the pro-social development of young people.

Figure 17: Key Times to Offer Services that May Help Divert Young People from Offending



Reflecting the views of services interviewed to this question, the focus group also expressed the view that there was a need for greater recognition that the most effective times for intervention depends largely on the individual young person and what is happening for them. The act of a young person accessing a NGO for assistance was therefore viewed as an important opportunity for service providers to divert the young person from offending as, in many cases, the young person upon accessing assistance by NGOs is in a state of crisis. As noted in the literature review, it is often at points of crisis, where young people are particularly vulnerable that real differences can be made to their lives.

4.6.3. Perceptions of Service Providers on What Works

The perceptions of service providers on what works ties closely in with the current ways of working identified in the above section on the impact of services in providing assistance to young people. The following figures highlight some of the most common responses. It is interesting to note, not captured in the below figures, that

many services providers felt that their own service type was particularly effective in working to divert young people from offending.

Figure 18: Services Most Likely to be of Assistance to “At Risk” Young People

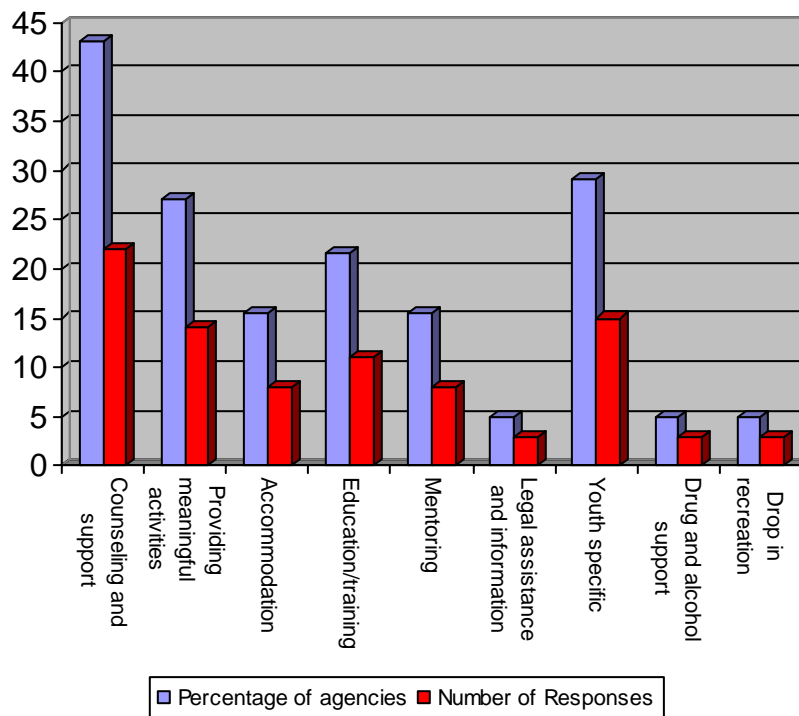


Figure 19: Interviewees' Perceptions of the Most Effective Form of Service Intervention with This Group

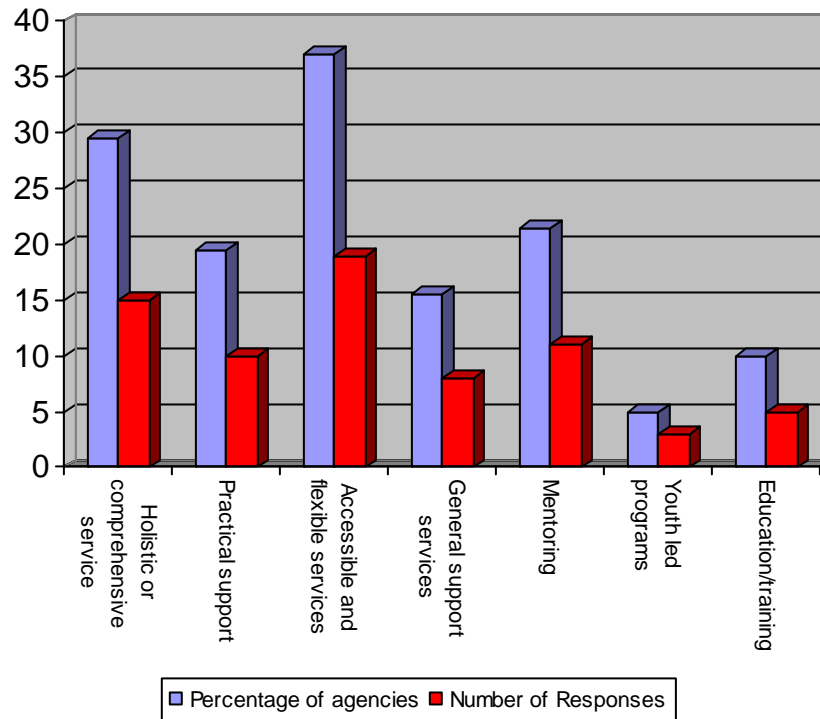
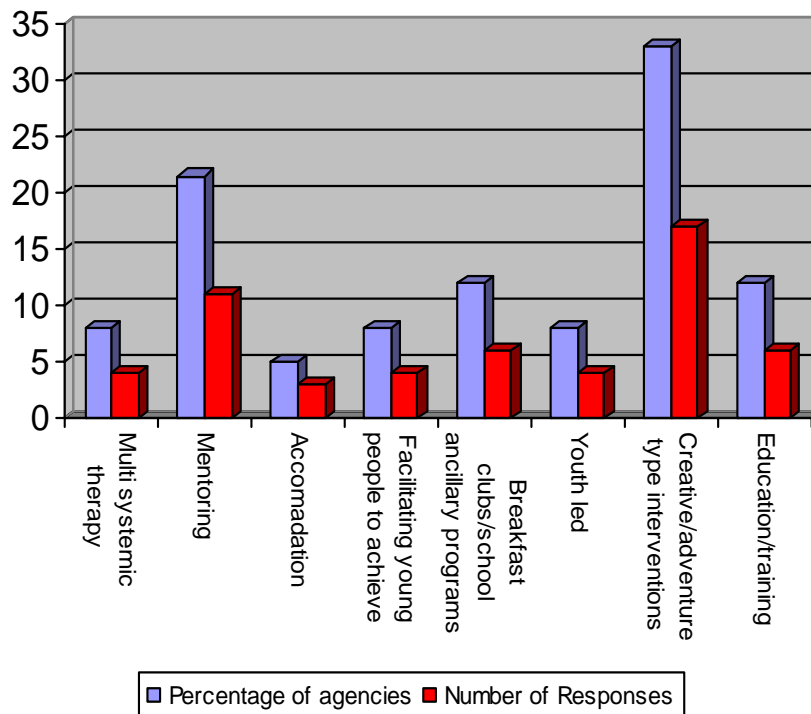


Figure 20: Interviewees' Perceptions of Particularly Inspiring or Useful Service Interventions



Responses from service providers tie closely in with the existing literature on what works in diverting young people from offending.

4.6.4. Effective Service Types

4.6.4.1. Services that Meet Basic Requirements of Young People

As discussed above, providing basic requirements such as housing and emergency relief were viewed as important mainly in terms of getting young people to a point that they could benefit from the opportunity to build trusting relationships with youth workers. The view might be summed up by the comment: "You've got to give a hungry man a fish before you can teach him how to fish". Basic requirements also seemed to be a given in terms of their importance in reference to human right principles.

In the existing literature on good practice crime prevention, the importance of providing basic services such as accommodation appears to be largely overlooked in the impact that this has in diverting young people from offending. In the cases where it is addressed, the focus remains on the interventions that can be implemented while in a residential setting or once the basic needs of the young person have been met. This can be opposed to the impact that accommodation has in itself for diverting young people from crime. It would be worthwhile conducting further study into this topic to see the affect on offending behaviour simply by ensuring that a young person has a stable roof over their head. Working on social competence for example, is unlikely to be effective if the young person does not have suitable accommodation. Given the high perception of service providers in this study that much crime is committed out of necessity, it is therefore probable that by ensuring the basic needs of young people are adequately met, much crime could be averted.

4.6.4.2. *Interpersonal Skills Training and Mentoring Type Programs*

In the literature on good practice crime prevention, the value of interpersonal skills training and mentoring programs feature prominently. The present research also affirmed the value of these types of intervention through recognising the benefits of working with young people to see and adopt alternative ways of behaving and thinking as well as providing positive role models. The approach adopted by many of the agencies interviewed that were not funded to deliver such types of programs however, was working in largely informal ways based on the same principles.

“Mentoring situations need to be not too contrived. It should be young person to young person or adult to young person, but free and not overly structured.”

It emerged from this research that developing young people’s understandings of suitable behaviour within family relationships and what to do when faced with domestic violence or abuse, should be the subject of considerable attention in the youth service sector. This is both because many service providers reported a high level of abuse experienced by the young people and, as is now well understood, domestic violence and abuse is largely transmitted through the generations through a process of social learning.

4.6.4.3. *Services that Provide Something Substantial to Young People*

Another characteristic of good practice recognised in the literature and reflected in the current research, is that the service should provide something substantial such as employment, skills and/or education. A number of services reported that this was a central component contributing to the effectiveness of their service. Youth service policy should therefore be structured to facilitate the further emergence of these characteristics in NGOs.

4.6.4.4. *Services that Offer Opportunities for Self Expression*

One of the interesting findings from the current research was that aspects of self expression for young people figure prominently in agencies' suggestions of effective ways of diverting youth from offending. This was also accompanied by a strong belief in the value of experiences or opportunities that allow a positive self-identity to form. Such positive self-identities can develop through a number of means or strategies. Examples include outdoor excursions, adventure experiences, group activities, mentoring and forming a meaningful relationship with a youth worker or counsellor. Such a positive identity can also develop - as they do traditionally - through finding a job or completing an educational qualification. Such good practice principles are also recognised in the existing literature on crime prevention.

4.6.4.5. *Services Relevant to the Interests and Needs of the Young Person*

This research found that many youth services can help bridge difficult transitions that young people encounter by providing a range of alternative avenues for young people. These alternative avenues need to be varied so that they can appeal to the diverse tastes and interests of different young people, from the creative expressive opportunities of art therapy to the practical hands-on business of fixing cars provided by the Mission Australia service, U Turn. Service providers noted that these programs should not be seen as an end in themselves but rather as opportunities or portals through which young people can gain more confidence and consider the possibilities of a new, responsible and adult identity. It is also essential that real work opportunities be married to these experience based programs to ensure that young people can consolidate and move on with the new learning and perceptions that the experience based program has provided. Ultimately, it is through making the successful transition to adulthood that the young person can be assisted and that much crime can be prevented.

It could be argued that getting a job or completing a course of training is rather more practical and perhaps sustainable as a means of forming a positive identity. The young person through a process of enculturation makes a successful transition to a new position of responsible adult. As highlighted in this study, this transition may be

particularly difficult for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds as there may not only be insufficient positive role models but also often insufficient opportunities to find a new role and considerable doubt about whether that is the right path to take. When conjoined with the difficulties experienced in early development and education this mainstream transition path proves much more difficult. Youth services that can help make this path more amenable, attractive and/or achievable provide a great service to both the individual and the community.

While comprehensive programs that adopt a case managed approach to working with young people were viewed as effective interventions, few agencies had the capacity to offer such assistance. Many service providers noted that they were limited in the amount of time they were able to spend with each young person and this was seen as negatively affecting the services provided in terms of having a crime prevention outcome.

4.6.4.6. *Creative Interventions*

When asked, *"Are there any other particularly inspiring or useful things that you have heard of in relation to helping this group of young people?"* (Question 14), a number of agencies mentioned creative interventions as being particularly beneficial in assisting young people. Examples include art therapy and music. These activities were seen as being effective because they provide an opportunity for young people to excel and get a sense of achievement. Activities that allow for expression are also favoured because they provide a way for young people to express themselves in a way that is not threatening for them. In particular, art therapy was seen as a way of bringing out deep psychological problems and allowing staff to have an awareness of the feelings of the young people that could then inform the way that they interacted with them.

4.6.4.7. *Recreation Programs*

Recreation programs were seen as positive and useful interventions primarily by addressing the issue of boredom for the young people. While perhaps not an end in themselves, recreation programs were also seen as important to provide

opportunities for the development of positive relationships between young people and youth workers.

In regard to taking young people out of their environment on adventure type excursions, the recognition that the young people are going to have to return to their usual environment is important. In this way, it was recognised that work centred on the young person should be combined with work addressing issues concerning the family and education concurrently.

4.6.5. Effective Ways of Working With Young People

From responses to Question 12 (*“What kind of services do you believe are most likely to help this group?”*) most agencies seemed to think that the provision of basic requirements such as housing, food, medical support and access to education, while essential, were not what made a service affective in assisting young people in a way that would divert them from offending. Instead, the way that they engaged with the young people seemed to matter most. Specifically, factors such as helping young people recognise the consequences of their actions, looking to see alternative pathways and providing positive adult role models were all linked closely in with working to improve the social competence of the young people

A number of these key characteristics of successful ways of working with young people have come to be recognised in the field. In addition to those listed above, these include ensuring that services are accessible, flexible, respectful and are based on forming meaningful relationships with the young person. The importance of these factors was affirmed in this research. Within the literature there is also a strong emphasis on ensuring programs are able to be sufficiently targeted to the needs of the young person as identified by the young person himself or herself. In this research, there also emerged a recognition of the value of engaging with young people in their own environment where they feel comfortable.

Another element of good practice emerging from the literature review could be described as “dosage”. As affirmed in this research, programs should be able to operate with a particular young person over extended periods. As recognised by

service providers in this study, assistance provided cannot expect to have much impact when contact with the individual in need is transient and limited. It is important to recognise that there are implications regarding the length of service intervention and its link to the needs of the young person concerned. Service providers in this study recognised this as having the potential to enhance or limit the effectiveness of services in terms of preventing offending. Integrally tied to this was the recognition that workers needed to be skilled and appropriately qualified and be based at the agency for extended periods in an effort to develop these meaningful relationships with young clients.

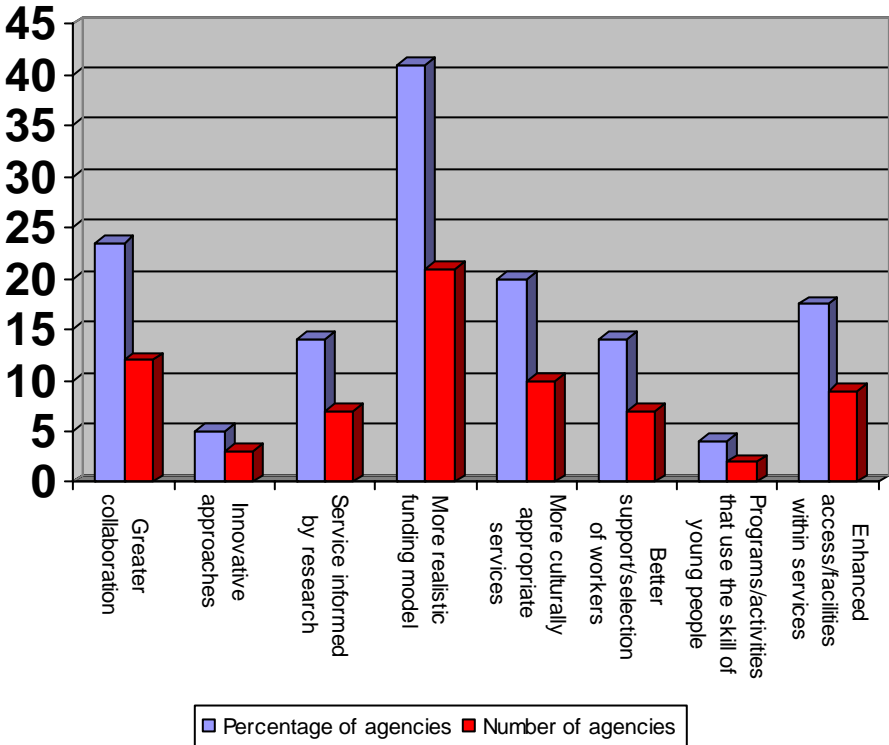
4.6.6. How Can Services Enhance Their Crime Prevention Function

In regard to how existing services may be changed to achieve a greater crime prevention impact, Question 22 asked: "*How can existing services be changed or altered to provide further assistance that is likely to assist in diverting young people from offending?*". The dominant themes in the responses included showing attitudes that are more positive to young people as well as having better funded, more comprehensive and well-evaluated services. There was a recognition that agencies viewed that the youth sector was operating well under increasingly difficult conditions. A strong belief came through that the programs operating were of great benefit to young people, however they did not have the capacity with current resources to fully deal with the complex needs of many young people combined with the growing numbers of young people coming to them for assistance.

In line with the literature on good practice crime prevention, agencies stated that there is no one size fits all approach to good practice crime prevention. As Silliman notes, "*many programs have been extensively tested yet none is effective with all groups, in all settings, for all types of behaviour*" (Silliman 2005). Ultimately it emerged from this research that the measure of success of the work of the youth service sector in providing interventions should not simply focus on the severity, incidence and harmful consequences of offending in the short term, but the degree to which these interventions enhance the ongoing capacity of the community to provide meaningful alternatives to offending. It is this contribution of the work of the youth

sector to social capital that reflects the sustainability of the work of the youth sector in regard to crime prevention.

Figure 21: Suggested Changes to Increase the Crime Prevention Impact of NGOs'



4.6.6.1. Improve Cultural Appropriateness of Services

Some of the themes discussed by the focus group in relation to the issue of improving the work of NGOs highlighted the need to improve the cultural appropriateness of services, especially for Indigenous and CALD young people but also on a more general level relating to youth culture. Incorporating elements of youth culture into services appeared to include a relatively informal environment for the service to operate and for staff to respect the skills and knowledge young people possess. Respecting youth culture was also seen as incorporating components such as awareness of the importance of peer networks to young people and the desire of young people to express themselves.

4.6.6.2. *Perceived Imbalance with Young People Who Commit Crime Able to Access More Services than Youth Who Do Not*

Also raised in the Interviews and in the Focus group was the issue of an imbalance in that those involved in crime sometimes get access to more services than those not involved. This issue relates to the perennial issue of how to provide reparative services to a disadvantaged group without cries from other disadvantaged groups that the young people who have behaved badly have unfair benefits from their behaviour. This observation ties closely in with service provider views of the value of family recognising young people for positive achievements.

4.6.6.3. *Better Engagement with Young People*

Generally, there was seen to be a need for more engagement with young people and a meaningful platform for programs for young people. Youth led programs were also recognised as being particularly beneficial for young people. These sorts of programs allow young people to achieve things they would otherwise not be able to. The programs were seen as helping young people develop a variety of interpersonal and other skills.

4.6.6.4. *Services Being Accessible to Young People and other ways Services can Enhance Crime Prevention Function*

One of the key issues raised during many of the interviews was the accessibility of services to young people, which can be improved in a variety of ways including geographical location and greater web presence. Other prominent issues featured in interviews included better information about the activities of other NGOs and government services as well as a call to treat young people respectfully as mature decision makers. Services being co-located was also seen as an important aspect that fits with the vein of comments that services need to meet young people where they are at and make it easy for them to access services. It was suggested that youth services would be of particular benefit if they could be co-located at high schools.

"The geographic location of services is important because (they need to be) close to where youth are comfortable being and also it shouldn't be about moving them on."

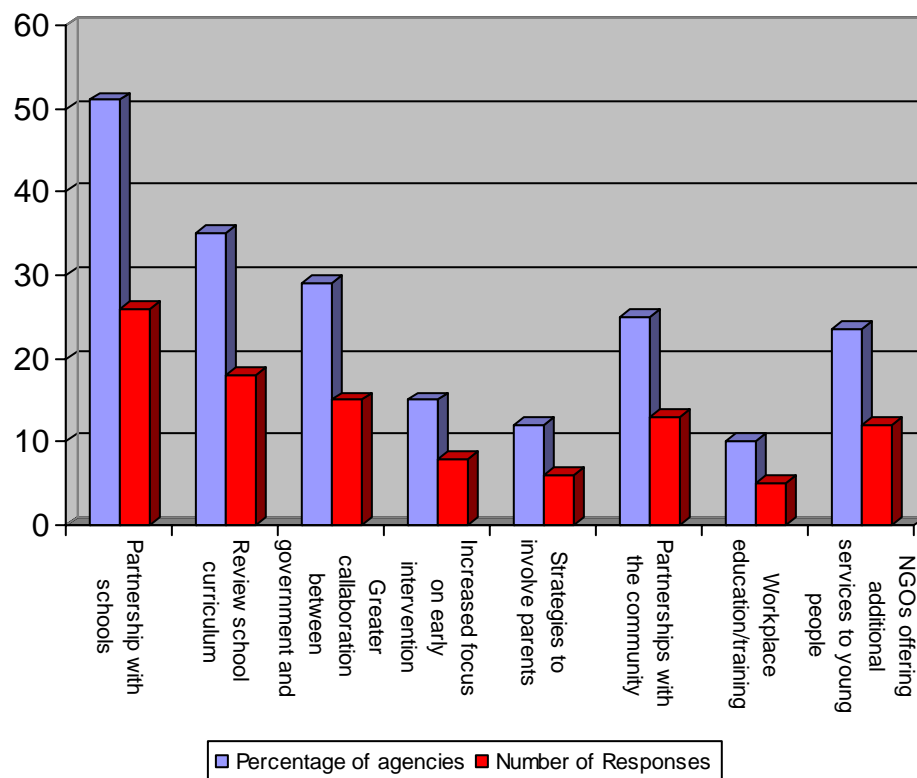
4.6.7. What are Key Opportunities for Initiative

Question 20 asked: *"Where would you say the key opportunities are for change or initiative that would provide some intervention for at risk youth to make it less likely that they would offend? For example within government services, education, employment opportunities, etc?"* Responses to this question seemed to resonate the view that early intervention, particularly in and through schools, is most important.

Schools are particularly well placed to deliver services to at-risk young people, as they are more easily able to raise awareness of the available support and engage with young people on the premises. Locating services within schools also relieves some of the problems associated with transport difficulties affecting young people in their ability to travel to services to access assistance. Further, there was also recognition that teachers should be more fully trained in assisting young people.

"The education department hasn't considered that it has a larger part to play – we need more teachers that are more knowledgeable and understanding of issues that affect some young people."

Figure 22: Key Opportunities for Change or Initiative that Could Help Reduce Offending of Young People



4.7. What Isn't Working in Diverting Young People from Offending?

4.7.1. Obstacles to delivering services to young people

Service providers were asked about the obstacles experienced in delivering services to young people (Question 15). The responses that featured prominently were lack of funding, funding protocols and co-ordination between NGOs themselves and working together with government. Distinct gaps in services available to young people was also a paramount concern.

Figure 23: Interviewees' Perceptions of the Main Obstacles Experienced by Agencies Providing a Service to At Risk Youth

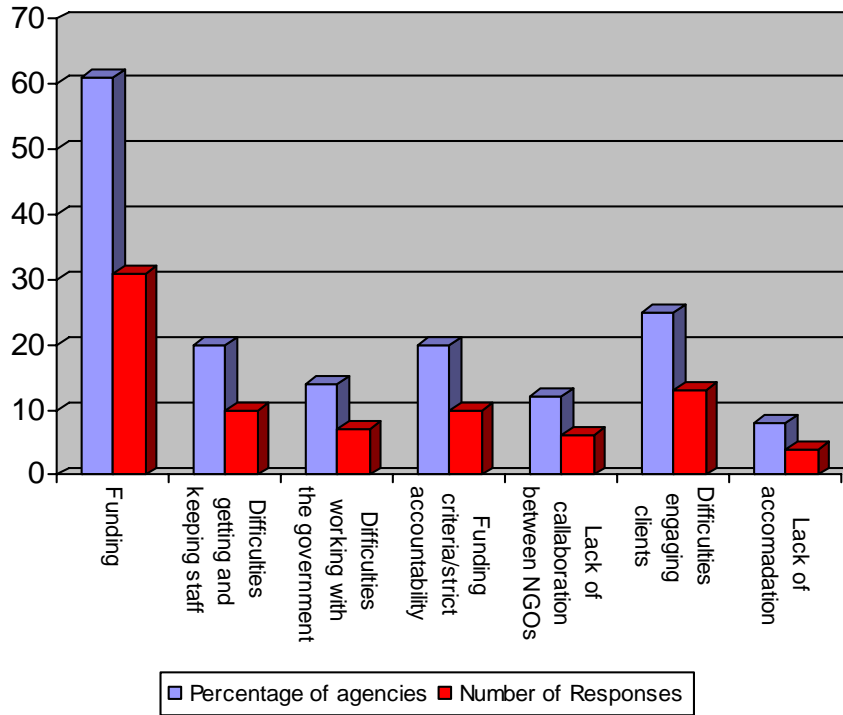


Figure 24: Interviewees' Perceptions of Adverse Practices of Government

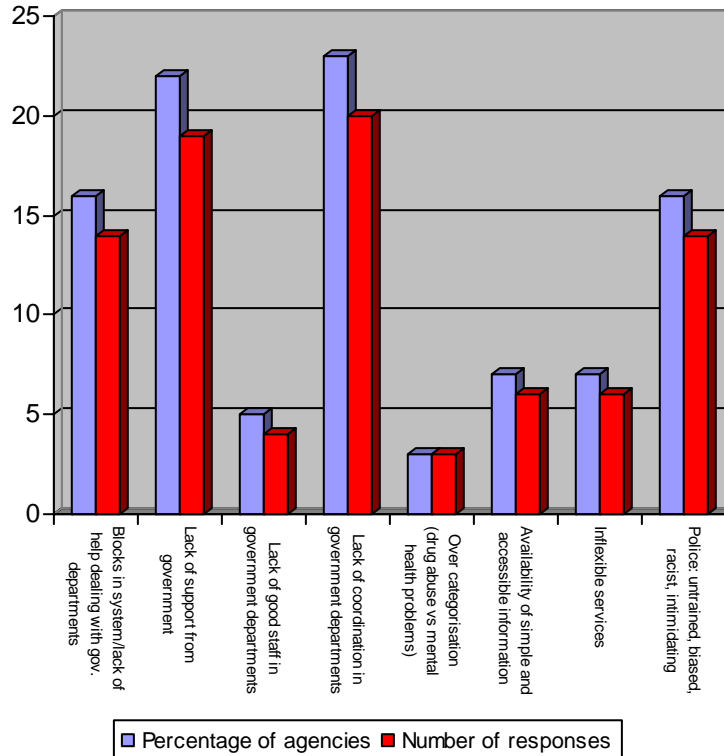
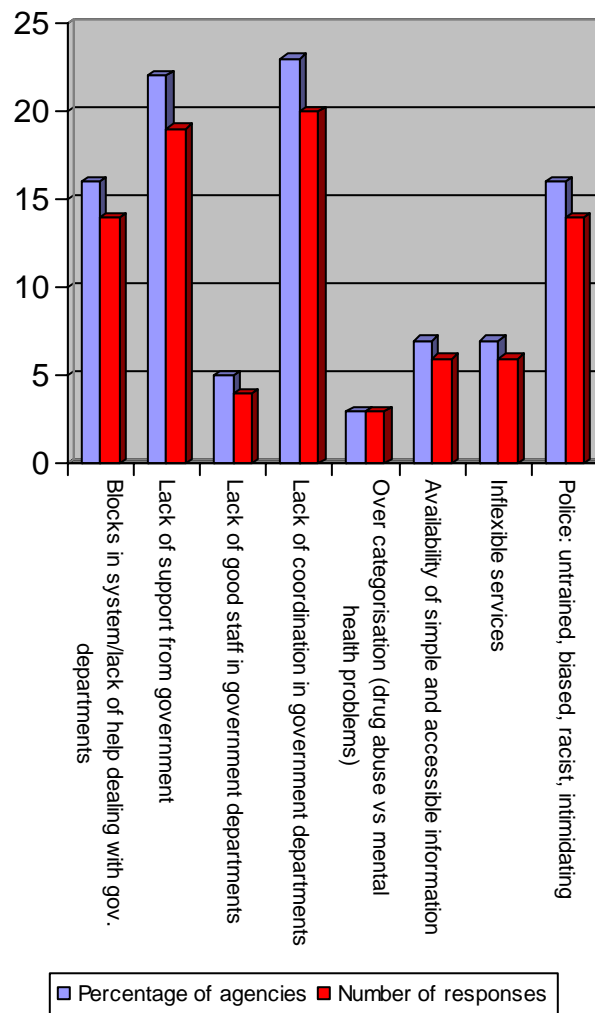


Figure 25: Interviewees' Perceptions of Adverse Practices of NGOs



4.7.2. Gaps in Western Australia Regarding Services

Question 21 asked specifically about the gaps in youth services that are critical to the goal of diversion from offending. The responses show three prominent characteristics. Firstly, there appeared to be little difficulty on the part of the agencies pointing to the gaps. From the 51 interviews, 98 gaps were identified. Secondly, the identified gaps were diverse and ranged from early intervention alternative education through to more accessible services, drug and alcohol services, as well as accommodation and assistance when exiting detention. Thus, there appears to be much work to be done in addressing the needs of this group of young people. The third prominent feature emerging from the responses to Question 21 is the emphasis, once again, on the three main needs highlighted by earlier responses. First, one in five responses focused

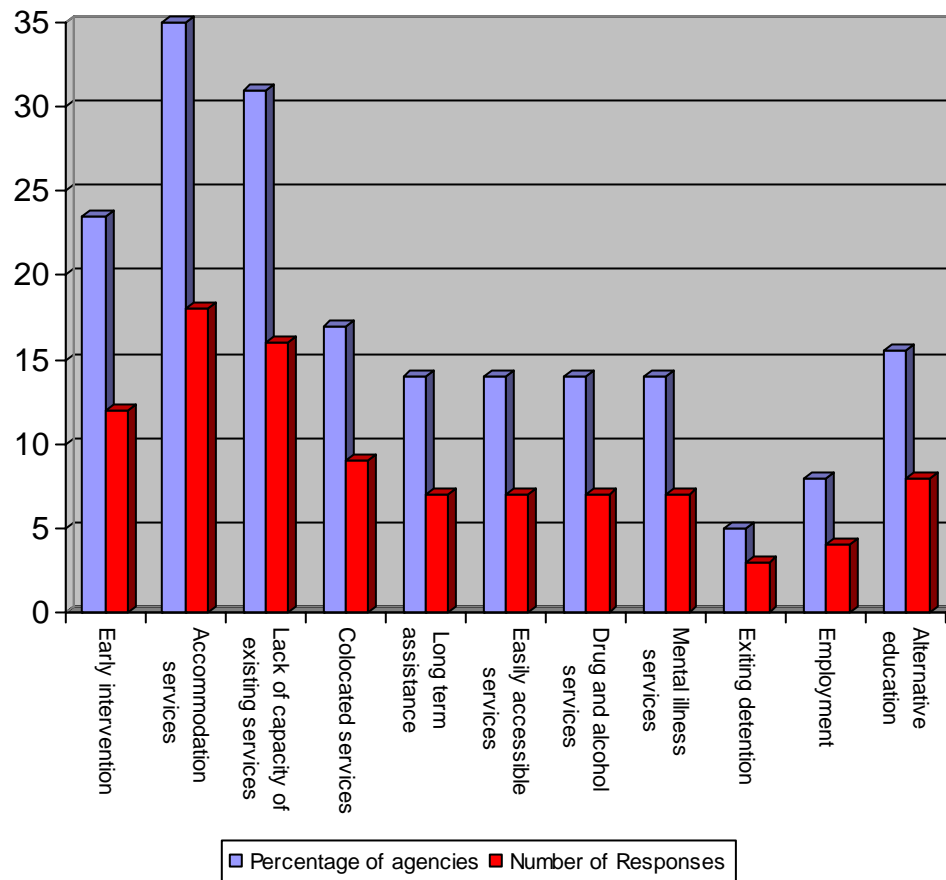
on the lack of services (or capabilities of services) that provide early intervention and alternative education. Second, almost the same number focused on the lack of accommodation services. Third, the urgent need for services to be accessible, flexible and responsive emerged yet again and made up one in three of the responses.

The issues listed above were used as a basis for discussion in the focus group. The group was asked to consider "*What are the most urgent needs in terms of services that are necessary to divert young people from offending? What are the least? Is anything missing?*" The focus group reinforced many of the gaps listed above and stated that the most urgent needs are:

- Housing – crisis, short, medium and long term
- Public space for young people, especially in the city
- Youth led programs
- Detox and drug facilities
- Indigenous specific programs
- Alternative education programs

A lack of a clear policy guiding government funding, the lack of coordination between government and non government services as well as the lack of collaboration and coordination between NGOs emerged as a major issues blocking the development of a more coherent and comprehensive range of services for young people in need.

Figure 26: Interviewees' Perceptions of the Gaps in WA concerning Services that May Help Divert At-Risk Young People from Offending



1.1.1.1 Accommodation

The focus group, reiterating many of the comments of service providers interviewed, expressed the view that accommodation is the most important and urgent need. It was noted consistently both by service providers and the focus group that accommodation for young people is increasingly hard to come by. In a number of cases, service providers stated that their only option was to provide the young person with a blanket and direct them to a secluded place to sleep.

1.1.1.2 Services for "High risk" Groups of Young People

It also appeared that in certain key areas such as assistance for dual diagnosis suffers (for example, young people with a mental illness and involved in drug misuse) there is a distinct lack of services. For young people in these most distressful circumstances it appears society can offer little in the way of supported accommodation and the kind of intensive nurturing that may help.

Similarly, for young people on the street with simply a mental illness or a drug problem, accommodation is hard to find. Again, for such young people who are in dire straits and at risk of offending, largely out of necessity, significantly more needs to be done. The development of a helpful solution to these problems is beyond the scope of the present study. However, the results suggest the need for a mechanism where such acute needs are mapped, processed through the appropriate government agencies and followed up with necessary action.

The particular needs for young people when they exit detention were also highlighted in addition to those with mental health and / or substance misuse issues. For these clients there also appears to be particular difficulties in providing housing options. There were also reports that some young people are also turned out from detention with not even basic requirements such as a change of clothes.

1.1.1.3 Services Addressing Particular Needs of Indigenous Young People

This research also uncovered a particular need for ATSI specific services. The high levels of over-representation of Indigenous people in the justice system was seen to be scandalous and a source of alarm. The absence of culturally appropriate services for young people was seen to be a concern especially because there appeared a real need for more services for these groups. Those that are operating, in the most cases appeared to be grossly underfunded.

4.7.3. Issues Surrounding Funding

Issues surrounding funding were highlighted as one of the key problems affecting agencies that participated in this study. Identified problems in this area included:

lack of sufficient funding to operate effectively, the short-term nature of funding, the preponderance of program based funding, strict accountability criteria, and lack of coordination between funding bodies. Many service providers appeared to have a feeling of being in the front line trenches up against a massive task and with insufficient coordination or back up for their role. It appeared in this study that it is perhaps necessary for funding bodies themselves to find more discipline and coordination, or even a meaningful point of reference from which funding may be applied in a more coordinated and complementary fashion.

Funding bodies are aware that often money is diverted to agencies with the best application writer and so to ensure that funding is provided to the best service rather than application writers, more responsibility should be taken by the funding body to investigate and consider what they are funding rather than wait for bids to come in. Further to this it emerged quite clearly from the field that the funding "circus" resulted in a crass preference for anything "new and innovative" over solid services providing fundamental but necessary services such as supported accommodation and training and those services recognised as being effective. In regard to discontinuing funding to effective services, the effect of this is two fold. In addition to the potential of losing valuable programs, it also is likely to affect service providers' knowledge of what is truly effective in assisting young people. This can affect the ability of services to keep abreast of what is currently available to young people, influencing their ability to make appropriate referrals and work in ways that are able to complement and enhance other services that a young person may be accessing.

Building from this, there was a perception that government does not have the interest or willingness to provide new funding for existing programs. This continual focus on the new and innovative erodes the ability for programs to get over the learning hump and to be established and then continue the work. This politicisation of funding needs to be addressed and steps taken to preference solid and reliable services and to ensure that good and effective services are maintained. This can be greatly assisted by the establishment of a meaningful system of evaluations.

There was also criticism about the criteria to get funding which was seen as too program based. Because most funding is tied to programs, there is a major issue of

timing. For example, funding may be provided for a 6-month program despite the fact that it may take four months to set up. With only 2 months to run the program, it does not have time to get established and can not as effectively assist young people in a way that will deter them from offending. Service providers interviewed commented on these negative implications for the young people.

The strict accountability requirements tied to funding were also a cause of considerable concern to many service providers. Effectively this means that small agencies have great difficulty obtaining funding because of a lack of resources to put in the work to prepare funding applications. Again, the focus on the establishment of new and innovative programs is driven by political imperatives and appears to be resulting in the tried and tested programs, proven successful are defunded or passed over in favour of new programs.

The essential need on the ground (or "in the trenches") expressed by agencies interviewed was for back up, support and more resources. Service providers talked about the inability to attract well-qualified experienced staff because of the lack of sufficient funding. The field obviously is in considerable need for individuals who are well qualified and experienced and who can establish a career within the youth services sector.

"Maintaining good staff is very difficult because services can't afford to pay them properly"

Agencies interviewed reported that in most cases, significant under-funding and a growing demand by young people for services were challenging day-to-day issues. Concerning Indigenous specific services, a number of these agencies stated that they had minimal funding with workers often employed only through the CDEP scheme, thus not even getting appropriate remuneration for their work.

4.7.4. Lack of Access to Government Services / Resources and Programs Being Absorbed by Government

Another distinct obstacle was seen to be the interface between the government and non-government sector. In regard to the possible counter-productive effects of government agencies (Question 18) or non government organisations (Question 19) some of the things mentioned referred to a lack of communication. For example, it is difficult finding out what different government departments are doing. In the youth sector, there are numerous departments involved at state, federal and local levels. There was seen to be a lack of knowledge within government about what other government agencies were doing. This was not helped by the high staff turnover in government departments and a lack of on-going support for agencies.

Programs being absorbed by government are also a problem, with programs proving to be very effective until government absorbs them. Agencies reported that many young people would not engage with government services because of negative past experiences such as being under care and protection orders. It was felt that government playing the statutory role with young people conflicted with their role in offering support.

4.7.5. Evaluations

Agencies participating in this study recognised the value that evaluation could bring to their services. For funding bodies to have a useful basis upon which to determine whether a service is meeting its goals and should be supported there needs to be an agreed and consistent process upon which such achievements can be gauged. Evaluations provide a mechanism of assessing service delivery against stated goals. The conduct of good evaluation requires a high level of skill. The conduct of a fair and impartial evaluation requires that the evaluation be conducted independently. Independence from the agency being evaluated is essential and preferably, the evaluation should be independent of the funding body. Ideally, both agency and funding body would agree on a process that established fair, meaningful and realistic goals and establish an evaluation process that was also fair, competent and

independent. Such evaluations could provide both parties with a fair and reasonable and reliable set of parameters.

Many of the agencies interviewed stated that it was simply not feasible with current resources to be able to evaluate their own service effectively. This is a considerable issue of concern identified in this research and these findings join a plethora of similar findings and conclusions from various reports on the youth service sector in Australia. Evaluation and the adoption of a process of continual improvement is recognised as a vital component of the success of agencies in assisting young people at risk of offending.

4.7.6. Lack of Collaboration between NGOs

At a sector wide level, it was recognised in this research that multi-agency collaboration and partnerships were important primarily so that the multitude of issues that may affect young people at risk of offending could be responded to. Inherently linked to this is the need to enhance agency knowledge of other services' functions and capacities to be able to facilitate affective referrals and agency partnerships.

"No communication between agencies. Confidentiality (has) gone too far"

"Agencies don't know what other agencies are doing"

"Funding bodies create environments of competition rather than collaboration. They should reward collaboration."

At a general level, there is a strong recognition in the literature of the need to be able to develop a system that has the capacity to enable service providers to articulate principles of good practice for their particular target group. This is built on the knowledge that good practice is highly dependent on agency capabilities, clientele characteristics, service objectives and local crime issues. As noted by Silliman, *'Implementing successful strategies and testing their effectiveness enables organisations and governments to exercise good stewardship of limited resources'* (Silliman 2005:1).

4.8. Conclusion

While the majority of service providers stated they did not have crime prevention as a specific objective of their agency, in the most cases it appears that the provision and delivery of services fit closely into good practice principles of service delivery outlined in the literature on developmental and early intervention crime prevention. The fundamental understanding about the causes of crime and what works to prevent it point to the importance of building substantial and meaningful relationships with young people and providing them with sustainable links to society. When linking crime prevention responses to the identified causes of crime, it was interesting to note the strong correlation between responses from service providers and the criminological theories such as control and differential association. It may be worthwhile then to revisit these theories in an effort to better correlate crime prevention responses to identified explanations of criminality.

Working with disadvantaged young people is very difficult. The problems experienced by these young people are generally complex and require a considerable amount of attention and expertise to be able to address effectively. Youth workers ideally need to be able to work holistically with the young person and be able to engage with them in a way that is acceptable to the client and facilitates the building of trust.

At the same time, however, NGOs are under a considerable amount of pressure with growing client demands and an ongoing lack of sufficient funding and resources. Given that crime prevention initiatives intend to prevent an outcome rather than manifest one, such effects of services make it particularly difficult to define success and even harder to measure outcomes. Despite this, the present research suggests that NGOs are substantially involved in crime prevention, although this is hardly the focus of their work but rather an unintended consequence of it.

Providing young people with one, and hopefully more, reasons to not get involved in crime is the surest way to protect youth and society from juvenile crime. Service providers in this research articulated these understandings, and suggested a range of

other interventions that could deter young people from crime. The research has also uncovered a number of good practice principles in relation to crime prevention. The final chapter of this report will articulate these principles and provide an overview of some of the key recommendations that have emerged from the research.

5. Benchmarks of Good Practice and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a list of the key principles of good practice crime prevention that have emerged from the research as well as a summary of the main recommendations. Further information surrounding each of the benchmarks can be obtained by referring back to the relevant sections of the previous chapter.

5.2. Benchmarks of Good Practice Crime Prevention

Benchmark 1:

That the relevance of crime prevention to the work of NGOs is recognised at an individual agency level, a youth services sector level and a government level (Section 4.3)

Benchmark 2:

That the relevance of crime prevention to the work of NGOs, while being inherently recognised, is not displayed at the point where young people access services (Section 4.3)

Benchmark 3:

That the causes of offending are recognised as being inextricably linked to social, economic and environment factors affecting young people at agency, community and government levels (Section 4.4)

Benchmark 4:

Positive relationships between young people accessing services and youth workers can provide an invaluable reason for young people not to get involved in criminal behaviour (Section 4.5.3.1)

Benchmark 5:

Critical transition points such as the onset of adolescence and the move between primary and secondary school should be recognised as important in the development of a young person and have the capacity to influence decisions to offend (Section 4.6.2)

Benchmark 6:

'Whenever' is a good time to offer services to disadvantaged young people. If an opportunity presents itself to make a difference in the life of young person, this opportunity should be grasped (Section 4.6.2)

Benchmark 7:

That the provision of basic services such as accommodation and emergency relief not be overlooked in terms of the contribution they make to crime prevention (Section 4.6.4.1)

Benchmark 8:

Services should provide something substantial to the young person such as employment, skills, and / or accommodation or facilitate young people to feel a sense of achievement (Section 4.6.4.3)

Benchmark 9:

Services or programs that facilitate self-expression of young people and offer alternative experiences for them are vital as they encourage the development of positive self-identity (Section 4.6.4.4)

Benchmark 10:

As far as possible, services should be accessible, respectful and based on forming meaningful relationships with the young person (Section 4.6.5)

5.3. Recommendations

The recommendations listed emerged directly from the discussion in the previous section. These recommendations are proposed to those with an interest in enhancing the crime prevention work of NGOs in Perth.

1) Further the development of programs and strategies to recognise and enhance the role of NGO's in crime prevention

Although the crime prevention work conducted by NGOs with disadvantaged young people is necessarily "low profile" it is important that this work be recognised and that those departments and agencies involved in reducing crime in Perth make a commitment to developing meaningful partnerships with non-government youth service agencies.

2) Greater recognition in policy and practice of the role of early family relationships in placing young people at increased risk of offending through responses such as increasing capacity of services able to focus on addressing these problems

Young offenders or potential offenders present a unique challenge and opportunity. They often represent the results of early family problems and often direct abuse. The youth service agencies were very clear in their support for early intervention, echoing the common call "the earlier the better". This points directly to the work that needs to be done in the family of the at-risk young person and among those groups in the community where family dysfunction and poor parenting are common. It also points to the need for greater support and assistance given to at-risk young people who become parents.

Given the considerable recognition of family problems identified in this study, it would appear that there a need for basic or supplementary training in "family problems first aid" or special services that can address the range of family conflict problems that young people might experience

3) Facilitation of young people reporting victimisation against them and enhancing the support provided to them in recognition of the link between being a victim and being a perpetrator of crime

Once young people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds are more fully recognised and understood as victims – who at the same time are “at risk” of translating their experience into offending there is a double justification for providing enhanced services to this needy group. At the very least emergency accommodation, food and safety should be available to young people in Perth who cannot access these fundamental resources elsewhere.

An audit of the availability of these three fundamental resources should be undertaken, particularly for young people coming from high-risk areas and groups. An attempt should be made to identify gaps and ensure appropriate services are put in place to meet these gaps.

4) The establishment of a co-ordination centre for youth services with the aim of maintaining the knowledge of available services and programs with a particular focus on highlighting and responding to current gaps in the provision of services to young people who may be at risk of offending.

A number of service providers mentioned the problem of co-ordination and duplication. This may be overcome through the establishment of a co-ordination centre that maps and keeps a record of key details such as the number, nature and location of various youth services. This centre would provide much more detail and information for service providers about areas of duplication or services that complement each other. Such a co-ordination centre could also provide an invaluable service to funding agencies and the government by mapping distinct areas where there are gaps in service. This could be enhanced by the ability to map certain fundamental demographic features – like age, socioeconomic status, crime rates and other indices of social stress. Those areas involving crime, lower socioeconomic status, child abuse and crime should be seen as focal areas for the provision of youth services. Where such services do exist, the agencies need to be supported and monitored to ensure that youth in the area have maximum access to alternative and effective programs and facilities. These alternative pathways will allow some of the youth in these areas to achieve transitions to meaningful adult roles and identities that would not otherwise be possible. These transitions will allow the establishment of adult identities that do not involve or support offending behaviour.

The link between economic disadvantage, child abuse and juvenile delinquency has now been well established. It is now important that the distribution of youth services be reviewed by an appropriate agency to ensure that services are available when and where they are most needed. Accessibility of services was one of the most common comments coming out of the in-depth interviews with key informants. Similarly, the call for services to be co-located with other facilities used by youth was very common and this also goes to the question of the specific location and availability of youth services.

5) A recognition in policy and planning of the importance of:

- **providing appropriate, safe, and affordable housing for young people;**
, and
- **services to assist young people with mental illness and/or drug misuse issues**

as being key priority areas in efforts to tackle offending by young people

Two key areas for the provision of basic services pointed to by the agencies was the need for more supported accommodation as well as a variety of services for young people with presenting mental illness and/or substance misuse issues. Safe, secure and appropriate accommodation for disadvantaged young people lacking appropriate alternatives appears in this study as one of the crucial requirements in efforts to reduce offending among young people. As highlighted in the previous chapter, this should always be the starting point of being able to engage with young people in efforts to prevent offending.

There is also a significant identified need for special services, particularly accommodation services, for those with "dual diagnosis". The group of young people, often, if not usually, coming from disadvantaged and abusive background suffering mental illness and becoming involved in drug abuse need special attention to intervene in a pathway that will lead to destructive and harmful behaviour. Facilities need to be developed and the capacity of existing services be expanded so they are able to effectively accommodate young people in this group.

6) A recognition in policy and planning of the importance of culturally appropriate services both to Indigenous and CALD young people in efforts to reduce offending by these young people

The considerable lack of funding allocated to Indigenous specific services and CALD services was of great concern to many interviewees and those who participated in the focus group. It was recognised, on many occasions that for services to be accepted by Indigenous young people, they must be culturally specific, preferably run by Indigenous peoples themselves. While there are relatively few ATSI specific services accessible to young people currently operating, this problem is compounded by the severe lack of funding to those services that do exist. The need for Indigenous specific services to assist young people should be considered of paramount importance also given the recognition to the gross over-representation of Indigenous young people in the criminal justice system.

In relation to CALD youth, a number of service providers noted that many of these young people who could be considered 'at risk' of offending were not accessing mainstream services. While it would be useful to undertake further research into the need for such services, it is likely that this is a significant gap in the current array of services for young people.

7) Enhance the existing mentor role played by workers in NGOs to at risk young people through increased funding and support to services and the effective dissemination of good practice mentoring models

The general value and success of mentoring programs supports the view articulated by service providers that it is ongoing relationships that are able to provide the kind of long term and on-going support that young people need. Therefore, it is recommended that the mentoring role played by NGOs be enhanced through increased funding and support to existing agencies. While the value of services offering exclusive mentoring services is recognised, it is important that considerable effort go into strengthening this role in agencies where young people frequent that may not be funded to provide such assistance.

Further, it has been found that some of the key lessons that young people take forward from difficult family backgrounds concern how to be in relationships and

handle emotions. There is a unique opportunity during adolescence for those assisting young people generally to help them understand relationship dynamics better, learn how to handle emotions and develop increasing awareness of the effect on others of certain behaviours. This understanding could viably be provided through the mentoring role of youth workers. Hopefully by developing understanding, the ability of young people to enter relationships and do less harm will be increased.

8) Provide further information and training on “what works” in diverting young people from crime to non-government youth service organisations.

As discussed in the previous chapter service providers’ knowledge about “what works” can be improved. In particular, knowledge about effective strategies and programs as well as the fundamental reasons for this success should be the subject of special training sessions funded provided by a suitable Government agency.

While the kit produced as part of this project, will seek to further this knowledge of youth service providers, it appears that it would be valuable to increase the commitment in this agenda. To be effective such information needs to be made widely available in the youth service sector, be concise and have an ongoing focus on being relevant to youth agencies. It is also necessary that the information consider key issues affecting many ATSI specific services. For these services, it has been identified that language needs to be very plain and easily readable. It would possibly also be useful for the Office of Crime Prevention to fund a full time position, perhaps within the Youth Affairs Council of WA to undertake dedicated work in providing ongoing support to youth agencies in regard to crime prevention and to run on-going training for the youth sector in this area.

9) Commit to maintaining an up-to-date website and on-going information sessions and resources to NGOs on issues and services of relevance

In line with the preceding recommendation, one of the most effective ways to enhance service provider knowledge on high quality effective programs is to provide extensive information on such programs on a website, which can be updated on an ongoing basis. Because of the unique conditions in Western Australia this website should be developed and maintained by an agency such as the Youth Affairs Council or DCD and feature information about innovative and effective West

Australian programs or programs that have been implemented elsewhere in Australia which may be applicable to conditions in Western Australia. This website should be joined with information about what is going on here in Western Australia as many service providers seem to be unsure about all the things that are available, and the rate at which new programs start and then disappear is probably more than most agencies can keep up with. The problem is made harder for new workers entering the field. A clearinghouse of relevant information would be a great service to workers in the field. The website should also incorporate some of the guidelines and principles (including those identified in this research) of best practice.

While the report and resources resulting from this project will be posted on-line via the WACOSS website, it would be useful to tie this information in to an independent and more comprehensive site.

10) Develop strategies to enhance the role of schools in diverting young people from offending with a focus on the development of a framework to facilitate partnerships between schools and NGOs

Many of the comments related to the fact that many young people faced difficult crises or transition points at school. Often it seems school based services were not available, accessible or attractive. More could be done to provide suitable support to young people at crisis in school. The key transition points were pointed out – at the move from primary to high school and when faced with educational difficulties. By providing a range of supportive relationships as well as alternative experiences, NGOs partnered with schools could help some young people to make decisions from the basis of support and information rather than reaction and alienation. It is recommended therefore that the Education Department, Youth Affairs Council representative and a representative of the NGOs undertake a feasibility study of such partnership arrangements. This process could be auspiced through the Office of crime prevention.

11) Renew the focus on multi agency collaboration in funding guidelines

The need to further develop a system that has considerable capacity to enable service providers to be part of a comprehensive response was discussed in the last chapter. This also fits with the co-ordination and information functions. Basically, the

role of NGOs within a multi agency collaboration could be advanced through the development of a compact between three parties. First, peak bodies providing resources information and training to youth services. Second, funding agencies providing the necessary finance for the provision of services. Third government and non-government agencies providing complementary services in their field of expertise. A particular focus should be on encouraging NGOs to work together to address identified needs in the community.

While, in theory such multi-agency collaborations are possible, it currently appears that the commitment by funding providers, peak bodies and NGOs to ensuring that these partnerships are successful is severely lacking. In the case of peak bodies and NGOs, this is largely due to lack of resources. Funding providers are likely to have an array of different reasons for this lack of commitment.

Essentially, what appears to be in urgent need is leadership in the development of meaningful collaborations and partnerships. This leadership could appropriately be provided by YACWA or WACOSS given that funding and support be made available.

12)Facilitate the development of meaningful, on-going and helpful performance monitoring for agencies in partnership with other funding bodies

As part of the compact that was included in the previous recommendation there is a need for a meaningful system of performance management for the agencies.

Evaluation and ongoing monitoring of services was recognised by agencies however, there appears a considerable deficit in agency capabilities to be able to do this due to funding constraints. Agencies participating in this study also often recognised the value that evaluation could bring to their services however many stated that it was simply not feasible under current resources to be able to do this effectively. The conduct of good evaluation requires a high level of skill. As discussed in the previous chapter it is recommended that evaluations should be provided by an independent body but funded separately by funding agencies. To be cost effective evaluations should be reserved for large and/or model programs and the results should be widely disseminated to allow policy makers and service providers to learn from the outcomes of evaluations.

13)Work with other funding bodies to address the current problems in the discipline on funding across and within different providers especially in regard to the preponderance of short-term program based funding

Some of the problems raised by the key informants concerned the effects of sporadic, short term but often un-coordinated funding of programs. It is recommended that youth services themselves are best positioned to present a joint face to government to stream appropriate funding to where it is most needed. Because of the three tiers of government as well as numerous other sources of funding discipline cannot be expected at the "supply" side of the funding equation. Only through forming a coalition and exercising a co-ordinated approach can the necessary complementarity and order be achieved.

14)Work in partnership with other stakeholders in the development of a program to provide ongoing assistance and mentoring for Youth Workers

The establishment of a number of senior positions within the youth service sector that are funded by a pool of funders and provide supervision and support across the sector are likely to be of considerable benefit, in which disadvantaged young people will ultimately be the winners. The provision a certain number of such senior positions could assist in providing necessary support to new and junior staff and help monitor or detect inappropriate and even dangerous work practices.

15)Fund further research into the use of multiple services by young people at risk of offending

Finally, this research identified considerable need for further research into the use of government and non government services by young people who could be considered 'at-risk' of offending. While similar research is in the process of being commissioned by the Australian Institute of Criminology, Western Australian specific research could act to complement both the present research and that undertaken by the AIC.

Endnotes

1 Western Australia spends more on police services than any other State in Australia. In addition, WA's costs per prisoner per day are greater than any other Australian States and the figures in terms of rates of return to prison and/or corrective services are also worse than other states as shown in SCRGSP (2005). WA also has a higher rate of imprisonment than any other state. See table C2 for recurrent expenditure on Police, Figure 7.2 on imprisonment rates, Table C.3 on recidivism rates, Table C.4 on overall costs of criminal Justice, Figures 7.15, 7.16 on prisoner costs.

2 The Pathways to Prevention Report funded and published by National Crime Prevention has been very influential. At the international level the growth and interest in evidence based crime prevention has been seen through the work of Sherman and colleagues (1997) and a more recent work by Farrington and Sherman (2002).

3 See Literature Review for further information

4 In May 2004, there were 6 and 14 per cent fewer teenagers and young adults in full-time employment as compared to 1995. Also at this time, unemployment rates for 15-19 year old Australians were three and a half times higher than for adults 25 – 64 years (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2004)

5 It is now well recognised that there is an increasing number of one parent families and it has been predicted that single-parent families will increase by between 30 and 60 per cent over the next 20 years – (DCD 2004). Further, between 1997 and 2003, there has also been a substantial increase in the number of children on care and protection orders – (AIHW 2005).

6 Problem behaviour in this case is integrally linked to involvement in offending behaviour

7 Cited in Homel (1999:29)

8 See for example, Homel (1999)

9 Control theory is one of the most widely endorsed and supported of the mainstream criminological theories of the causes of criminal behaviour. The best known exponent is Hirschi (1969) for recent evidence see Kierkus and Baer (2004) Costello and Vowell, (1999), Hay (2001)

10 For example, those services funded primarily through DOJ

11 Developmental criminology is the body of thought that focuses on individual social and economic factors as the most dominant precursor to engagement of individuals in offending behaviour (Homel 2005)

12 See for example Homel 1999

13 See for example Gaetz 2004

14 Involvement in the Criminal Justice System incorporates all of types identified in Table 1

15 Antisocial behaviour in this sense is defined by Smart et al (2004: 1) as incorporating a varied set of behaviours ranging from criminal acts such as physical assault or property offences to acts such as school truancy and bullying.

16 Persistent antisocial behaviour was defined as high anti-social behaviour at two or more of the three time points including the 17 – 18 yr old time point. Experimental anti-social behaviour was the reporting of anti-social behaviour only once at 13-14 yrs or 15 – 16 years and no anti-social behaviour at 17-18.

17 Also see Bor, W, McGee, T and Fagan, A (2004)

18 See for example: Williams, Whelan and Nolan (1996)

19 For further information see for example: Weatherburn (2001), Weatherburn and Lind (1998) and AIFS and Crime Prevention Victoria (2003)

20 See for example: Harding and Maller (1997), Chen et al (2005) and Weatherburn (2001)

21 Cited in AIHW (2005:71)

22 For a more complete listing of risk factors, refer to Farrington (1996) or Homel (1999)

23 High risk refers to young people who experience a number of risk factors or particular groups of young people that are statistically shown as being overrepresented in the criminal justice system (for example Indigenous young people, mentally ill etc) (Samuelson 2002)

24 For further information on resilience to offending see Samuelson and Robertson (2002), Zubrick and Robson (2003) and Howard and Johnson (2000)

25 Cited in Gaetz (2004)

26 See for example Sallybanks (2002), National Crime Prevention (1999) and Homel (1999)

27 Multi-systemic therapy incorporates a variety of interventions across a full range of social settings including the family, school and peer networks.

28 See for example Szirom, King and Desmond (2004), Samuelson and Robertson (2002) and MacCallum and Beltman (2002)

29 Although sharing of information is recognised as an integral component in good practice crime prevention it is also recognised as essential that the privacy of the young person is respected and “sharing” does not impinge upon the rights of young people

30 Compiled from sources including: Homel (1999), National Crime Prevention (1999), Homel (2005), Sallybanks (2002) and Silliman (2005)

31 This is noted due to ongoing media interest in crime and Government commitment to addressing crime through the adoption of a crime prevention strategy

32 For example, many interviewees stated that considerable numbers of young people accessing services had recently, or were currently undergoing transitions such as: leaving home, becoming homeless, experimenting with illicit drugs, becoming disengaged from education or training etc.

33 Alternatively, see White (2003) for further information

34 See material discussed in the literature review. For example, Weatherburn (1999) provides Australian data on this link.

35 For further information on labelling theory, see Tannenbaun (1938) or Braithwaite (1989)

36 Many agencies provide a whole range of services and so this Figure should be seen as indicative of the main types of service on offer across the sector. Most agencies will also provide advocacy for the young person if and when needed.

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6. Appendix One: List of Participating Agencies

Stand By Me Youth Services

Joondalup Youth Support Services

Anglicare Step 1

Victoria Park Youth Accommodation

Perth Inner City Youth Service

Catholic Migrant Centre

Community and Youth Training services

Outcare – Youth Service

Big brother / Big Sister (YMCA)

Passages Resource Centre

Youth Changing Trax

The Samaritans

Juvenile Diversion Program - Hills Community Support Group

Young Women's Program - Hills Community Support Group

Swan Emergency Accommodation

Swan City Youth Service

Mission Australia Girrawheen

Holyoake

South Metro Community Drug Service Team

Drug Arm

Burdiya Aboriginal Corporation

Life Support Ministries

Noongar Alcohol and Substance Abuse Service

Centrecare Solid Program

Rockingham youth external acc

Anglicare Parents and Adolescents Counselling Service

Chesterfield House

Trinity Youth Options

Balga Detached work project

Youth link

Fremantle Youth
Mercycare youth services
Great Mates Armadale
Mamba Aboriginal Corporation
Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation
YMCA Youth Services
Youth Focus
Riverview Youth Services
Oake House
Bassendean Youth Service
Street Doctor
On Track
Trinity Outreach Service
Adventure WA
Community Health Service Men's Program
Great Mates Spearwood
Yirra
Pro-Education, Employment and Training Program - Parkerville Children's Home
Youth Withdrawal and Respite Service
Seen and Heard Young People's - Program Parkerville Children's Home

Other Individual's / Agencies Consulted:

Killara Youth Support Service
City of Fremantle Youth Service
Jack Busch – Consultant
Police and Citizens Youth Centre

7. Appendix Two: Outreach Letter to Agencies

Dear Coordinator

Re: Office of Crime Prevention Research –Invitation to participate

WACOSS with funding from the Office of Crime Prevention is conducting an investigation into how services that young people access help prevent crime. We would be delighted if you could share some of your thoughts and experience about how organisations such as your own assist in diverting young clients away from engaging in criminal offending in the short and longer term.

For this research, we are approaching a wide range of community services, including those who do not have crime prevention as a service objective. Agencies being approached include: youth centres, emergency relief agencies, accommodation providers, counselling services, education assistance and a wide range of others.

If you would like to participate in this research, have some inquiries about it or you have any particular views you would like to put about the connection of NGO's and crime prevention please phone the project officer for the research, Natalie Hunt on 9420 7219.

Over the next few weeks, we will be contacting a number of agencies to request their participation in the research. As part of this, we will be seeking 50 key agencies and stakeholders to agree to take part in an in depth interview. We hope this will allow us to canvass the wide and rich range of views and insights in regard to the role of NGO's in preventing crime. If you would like to nominate your agency to take part in one of these in-depth interviews, please phone Natalie on 9420 7219. If it is easier or more convenient for you, Natalie can be contacted on e-mail at: natalie@wacoss.org.au

Your agency can benefit from participating in the research through not only the knowledge that you are participating in a worthwhile project but also helping in the production of a manual of easily implemented, cost free strategies of crime prevention for community organisations. Participation in projects such as this is also useful to include in funding applications for your organisation.

If you would like to participate, please contact Natalie by 13th May 2005.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Baker', is positioned above the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lisa Baker

Executive Director

8. Appendix Three: Semi Structured Interview Schedule

Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed. Please ask me any questions you have about the research before we get started – or indeed at any time throughout the interview. We want to be sure that you are fully informed about the research and happy to be involved. Your responses will be confidential – the majority of results will be reported in aggregate form

Verbal informed consent:

- Offered opportunity to ask questions
- Informed consent obtained

General Introduction

We are interested in the way non-government agencies help young people who are at risk of offending. I'll start with a few general questions but as much as possible I'd like to just listen and for you to tell me what you think affect young people .- that is those between 10 and 18. By 'offending', I mean offences more serious than occasional drug use and traffic violations.

A. Role and relevance

1) What services do you provide for young people?

Drop in / Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency Relief	<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drug / Alcohol support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advocacy and Referral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mediation	<input type="checkbox"/>

	—		—
Accommodation (crisis)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodation (other)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parental support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Justice services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spiritual / religious	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Other: _____

2) What types of clients does your agency assist?

Non specific	<input type="checkbox"/>	ATSI	<input type="checkbox"/>
Males	<input type="checkbox"/>	CALD (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Females	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Youth only (10- 18)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Other: _____

3) What proportion of your clients are young people (10- 18)?

Under 15%	
15 - 25%	
25 - 50%	
50 - 75%	
75 - 100%	
Don't Know	

4. What are the most significant social issues or problems that you feel affects many of the young people accessing your service?

Relationship problems with parents and family / guardians	
Money problems (unable to afford necessities)	
Health problems (including mental illness and disability)	
Drug / alcohol misuse	
Homelessness / housing problems	
Legal issues	

Education difficulties	
Unemployment	
Relationship problems with partner	
Victim of Violence / abuse	
Perpetrator of Violence/ abuse	

Now I'm going to ask you some questions where I would like you to give me an idea about if, and how, your clients might be at risk of offending. In these questions we are interested in your own guess or estimate and would like you to express it as a percentage or a proportion

- 5) *What percentage or proportion of the young people accessing your service would you estimate are at risk of offending in the near future?*

Under 15%	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 - 25%	<input type="checkbox"/>
25 - 50%	<input type="checkbox"/>
50 - 75%	<input type="checkbox"/>
75 - 100%	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 6) *What proportion of these young people would you estimate are already known to the police? For example, those that have been cautioned, arrested or charged*

Under 15%	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 - 25%	<input type="checkbox"/>
25 - 50%	<input type="checkbox"/>
50 - 75%	<input type="checkbox"/>
75 - 100%	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/>

7) *What proportion of those known to the police in one of the above ways would you say have faced serious criminal charges – that is appeared in court?*

Under 15%	
15 - 25%	
25 - 50%	
50 - 75%	
75 - 100%	
Don't Know	

In the following questions, I am interested in getting a bit more information about the service/s your agency provides and how you feel they may act to divert young clients from offending

8) Generally speaking, how does your agency assist young people?

9) Does your program specifically have crime prevention as a service objective?

10) Do you think your program / service influences the likelihood of young clients getting involved in crime?

(b) If yes, how?

1) What proportion of the young people accessing your services, would you estimate, have benefited from those services in a way that could reduce their likelihood of offending or contact with police?

Under 15%	
15 - 25%	
25 - 50%	
50 - 75%	
75 - 100%	
Don't Know	

In the next few questions I will be asking for your views on young people in the community who may be at risk of offending

12) Generally, what kinds of services do you believe are most likely to help this group?

13) What is the most effective service intervention you are aware of in relation to this group?

(b) Can you be more specific – what organization, what have they done, why do you think this is effective?

14) Are there any other particularly inspiring or useful things that you have heard of in relation to helping this group of young people?

15) What would you say are the main obstacles experienced by agencies delivering services to this group?

16) What would you say are the key experiences that the young people that access your service have gone through that may make them more likely to get involved in crime?

(b) What sort of problems or situations might exacerbate the effect of these experiences leading to greater criminal offending? In other words, what is it about these experiences that may result in greater criminal offending?

17) What are the key times in the lives of these young people that are the most effective opportunities for NGO's to offer a service that may divert them from offending?

18) Are you aware of any practices or activities of government agencies that appear to be making things worse for this group of young people?

19) What about any adverse practices or activities of NGOs – are you aware of any that appear to be making things worse for this group of young people?

20) Where would you say the key opportunities are for change or initiative that would provide some intervention for at risk youth to make it less likely that they would offend? For example within government services, education, employment opportunities etc.

21) In your view what are the gaps in Western Australia regarding services for young people that are critical for diverting this group from offending?

22) How can existing services be changed or altered to provide further assistance that is likely to assist in diverting young people from offending ?

Basic demographics about the agency

male []
female []

Ages catered for:

under 18 []
18-20 []
21-24 []
25-28 []
29-32 []
over 33 []

Groups catered for:

ATSI []
CALD []
Anglo []

Person interviewed:

Position in agency:

Length of time in this agency:

Length of time in the sector:

Worked in this sector in other parts of the world or other states?

Professional Qualifications?

Relevant training: