



Youth Justice Board
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuenctid

Engaging Young People who Offend

Source document

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Glossary

Asset

A structured assessment tool used by youth offending teams (YOTs) in England and Wales on all young offenders who come into contact with the criminal justice system. It aims to look at the young person's offence(s) and identify a multitude of factors or circumstances – ranging from lack of educational attainment to mental health problems – which may contribute to such behaviour. It also measures changes in needs and risk of reoffending over time.

Case management

Case management is similar to casework, but builds upon that approach to include partnership and multi-agency working, and the co-ordination of a programme of support as an integral aspect. Case management involves casework, in that the relationship between a case manager and client is not a purely bureaucratic or functional one but remains one that entails one-on-one supervision and support; yet, case management moves beyond this support to include the identification and co-ordination of services and interventions and responsibility for the monitoring of these against the achievement of outcomes and indicators of change.

Casework

Casework is commonly understood as a social work approach, where an individual professional works closely with an individual client. Within this approach a caseworker provides direct support, services and advocacy as well as brokering services from others as an addition to the primary casework focus.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

This is a relatively new intervention type, which has arisen from advances in our understanding about the role of internal cognition in the expression of external behaviours. CBT is based on the idea that cognition affects behaviour, and that individuals have the capacity to be aware of and adapt their ways of thinking, which can lead them to change their behaviour.

Holistic

A holistic approach is one that considers the young offender and their circumstances and background as a whole rather than as a set of unrelated and separate elements.

Intervention

An intervention in the context of this document is a structured service or series of actions that aims to achieve change over time. It is focused upon a single issue or set of closely related issues, for example education or substance misuse. It is not a 'programme' (see below).

Multi-systematic therapy (MST)

MST is an intensive family- and community-based intervention designed to make positive changes in the various social systems (home, school, community, peer relations) that contribute to serious anti-social behaviour of children and young people. It is a flexible, individualised intervention and MST practitioners offer 24-hour support to

the families they work with. It uses evidence-based, solution-focused interventions, such as strategic family therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy.

Multi-modal approach

A multi-modal approach is one that identifies different strengths and different needs, and uses different and appropriate means for addressing them.

Programme

A programme in the context of this document is a structured set, or programme, of interventions that aims to address a range of issues over time and across which progress is supervised and reviewed.

Background

This review was commissioned to serve as a background source document to accompany guidance produced by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB), identifying key elements of effective practice in interventions in the youth justice context. It has not been written primarily for an academic or research audience, but for managers and practitioners working in the youth justice field who are directly involved in providing, or brokering access to, services for young people who offend and their families. The review offers an accessible guide to the current state of the evidence base on effective interventions and services, helping youth justice practitioners and managers to be aware of and deliver more rigorously evidence-based services.

The review document is divided into chapters structured around a number of key themes or headings relevant to practice in youth justice services. The source document is structured to mirror the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* to facilitate cross-referencing between the two documents, and to ensure it is a useful document for the intended audience who may wish to explore the areas covered in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* summary in more depth. These nine common chapters therefore reflect what are considered to be core areas of consideration for practice and management within youth justice, and as such this structure is largely consistent across all 10 documents in this series of publications. The following *Key Elements of Effective Practice* titles and corresponding source documents are available from the YJB website (www.yjb.gov.uk):

- *Accommodation*
- *Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision*
- *Education, Training and Employment*
- *Engaging Young People who Offend*
- *Mental Health*
- *Offending Behaviour Programmes*
- *Parenting*
- *Restorative Justice*
- *Substance Misuse*
- *Young People who Sexually Abuse.*

Introduction

The focus of this review is effective techniques for engaging young people who offend, although it also considers young people at risk of offending. The early work for this review indicated that there is a paucity of research that focuses upon effective techniques for engaging both these groups of young people. Continued searching of the literature, use of multiple and varied search terms, and exploration of databases around particular themes failed to uncover a useful mass of studies upon which robust conclusions could be drawn. Notes on the process undertaken and developed are included in the Appendix; suffice to say, we found that although there is a growing body of research that focuses upon interventions, there is rarely detailed consideration of the techniques for engaging young people that are employed within them.

As the review developed, it was agreed by the research team and the YJB that the most recent research in relation to effective interventions was being explored by other *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source document reviews commissioned 2006–07 and that in order to include this material, this review should include evidence of effective techniques that those reviews of interventions establish. Our approach enabled this source document to draw on the most up-to-date evidence across interventions without requiring an additional systematic review of each area of practice to be undertaken. It was also agreed that this source document would benefit from an exploration of practice literature from the areas of social work, probation and youth justice, and youth work so that relevant messages from this body of work, often rooted in evidence of good or emerging practice if not research and evaluation, could be included. Thus, this review moved away from the ‘systematic review’ model to draw on three sources:

- A systematic review of research highlighting effective techniques for engaging young people who offend.
- The systematic and literature reviews undertaken to produce *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents for the YJB during 2007 (‘effective practice reviews’).
- Messages from practice literature, which we characterise as a body of knowledge that is not ‘evidence-based’ in the sense that it is supported by rigorous research evaluations but that is both consistent with what we know about young people who offend from research, and supported by theoretical (psychological, social, cultural) understandings of how young people (and adults) can be engaged and relationships developed and sustained. The practice literature is also often illustrated with examples drawn from research, such as extracts from ethnographic studies or quotations from practitioners and young people. Since the factors that can support the development of such effective techniques emerge as generic, the practice literature that we draw on is not limited to the context of youth offending and we have therefore examined practice texts from the fields of social work, probation and youth justice, and youth work.

Throughout the source document we are careful to identify the origin of the evidence or messages presented. We do not consider in detail material from the *Key Elements of*

Effective Practice source documents, but we refer to it and indicate where it is relevant so that further detail can be sought by the reader where required.

General findings

In this chapter we outline the general findings that provide the overall background and context to the rest of the source document. The structure required for the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents highlights the areas of practice and service delivery and development that are essential for evidence-based and effective practice. This review is concerned with techniques within interventions, and for support and supervision across programmes of interventions, and began by exploring the research evidence relating to effective interventions.

Effective interventions – an overview of the evidence

When searching for research relating to effective techniques within interventions, a key focus was the literature about effective interventions themselves. Following from a period in the 1970s when there was a view that ‘nothing works’, there has been a growth in research and literature since the 1990s highlighting ‘what works’ in relation to both adult and youth offending on both sides of the Atlantic (e.g. McGuire, 2002(a); McGuire et al, 2002; McGuire and Priestley, 1995; McLaren, 2000; Prior, 2005; Whyte, 2004). Meta-analyses of interventions have sought to establish those that can be demonstrated to be effective on the basis of rigorous evaluation evidence, including preventative programmes and those targeting different types of offenders (e.g. Lipsey, 1995 and 1999; Lipsey and Wilson, 1998; Losel, 1995; McGuire et al, 2002; Wasserman and Miller, 1998). Yet the authors of these reviews and other authors who draw on them in reviews of policy and practice (e.g. Newburn and Souhami, 2005; Prior, 2005) consistently highlight the lack of rigorous research evidence upon which such analyses can draw and, stemming directly from this, the lack of evidence about why some interventions work better than others and what makes a difference when applying interventions in practice; thus they are unable to tell us about the techniques or lessons for practice when applying interventions. For instance, in reviewing a number of meta-reviews in relation to adult offending, Dowden and Andrews (2004) state:

Despite these impressive findings regarding what program characteristics are most effective for offenders, very little research has focused upon the characteristics of effective staff practice to use in the delivery of these interventions.

(Dowden and Andrews, 2004:204)

Indeed, for Newburn and Souhami (2005:378), the identification of the lack of research highlighting such features and the related plea for more robust research is ‘somewhat clichéd’.

The focus of such reviews is upon interventions in relation to outcomes; which interventions lead to reduced reoffending or reduced onset of offending of participants? The consensus from these studies and from those that look across them is that interventions or programmes of interventions that are effective are those that:

- are based on careful assessment

- link interventions to established need and thus are individually appropriate (using a risk and protective factors framework)
- include an element that focuses upon cognitive skills
- are multi-modal (address different aspects of the young offender's behaviour or lives, for example by working with the family as well as providing a range of direct support), and with elements that are co-ordinated or interrelated
- include an element of reparation
- are delivered as designed (are based on programmes that have demonstrated they are effective and are delivered as such, so that they have programme integrity)
- have long-term engagement and contact time (the greater amount available, the greater the impacts), particularly for persistent and more serious offenders; continuity of contact is important.

(Farrington and Loeber, 2001; Howell, 2003; Leschied, 2000; Lipsey, 1995 and 1999; Lipsey and Wilson, 1998; Losel, 1995; McGuire, 2002; McGuire et al, 2002; McGuire and Priestley, 1995; McLaren, 2000; NAO, 2006; RAND, 2006.)

This consensus is reflected in the findings of the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents, which themselves are:

- a review of assessment procedures
- reviews of interventions for different groups of offenders, for example those with issues relating to substance misuse or who are sexual offenders
- a review focused upon interventions that address offending behaviour, including cognitive skills programmes
- organised to explore interventions that focus upon different elements of young people's lives and needs, for example:
 - accommodation
 - employment
 - education and training
 - the needs of families and parenting issues
- expected to include within them an identification of, and focus upon, the features of effective practice that should be present in designed interventions.

Nonetheless, these reviews also reflect Lipsey's (1999) finding, when reviewing interventions with 'delinquents', that:

The more specific one attempts to be in regard to the nature of effective programs for particular sorts of juveniles, the fewer relevant studies there are to analyse.

(Lipsey, 1999:163)

The effective practice reviews therefore provide us with a wide range of evidence to consider in contributing to the review presented here, but each also highlights the

difficulties in establishing evidence of effective techniques for engaging young people who offend.

Engagement for effective outcomes

For the purposes of this review a working definition of engagement has been arrived at, which draws on the research and practice material we discuss below:

Techniques for engaging young people who offend are concerned with the question of how to gain young people's interest and willing participation in interventions or programme of interventions intended to prevent or reduce offending. 'Engagement' suggests a set of objectives around developing young people's personal motivation and commitment to involvement in activities. It implies that passive involvement is not enough – for example, if a young person attends and takes part in a prescribed programme of activities but does not feel any commitment to the objectives of the programme and is not motivated to benefit, through learning or personal development, from the programme activities, then they are not 'engaged' and the programme is unlikely to be successful. For practitioners, the implication is that specific skills and knowledge ('techniques') are required to achieve engagement, in addition to skills and knowledge associated with the particular type of intervention.

One key theme that has informed this definition emerges from meta-analyses and reviews of intervention literature, and has informed our subsequent exploration of practice literature; the relationship between successful engagement and effective outcomes. This literature identifies engagement as attendance or completion of interventions shown by research evidence to be effective; in order to achieve positive outcomes, young people must be engaged in the intervention as designed (e.g. Farrington and Loeber, 2001; Leschied, 2000; Lipsey, 1995; McGuire, 2002a), thus programmes of interventions need to be perceived as having relevance to their lives, and use methods of work that will interest them (McGuire et al, 2002). This theme is also reflected across the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*, which emphasise the need to support young people's engagement in order to achieve positive outcomes; at the centre of effective engagement are relationships, and how this is achieved in practice is explored in the remaining chapters of this review.

Assessment

This chapter considers the role of assessment and the ways in which assessment is the foundation of engagement, as well as the features of effective engagement within the assessment process itself.

Assessment as the foundation of engagement

As highlighted in the ‘General findings’ chapter above, there is consensus from meta-analyses and systematic reviews of interventions (including those informing the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*) that the foundation of effective work with young people who offend is assessment (Baker, 2008; Britton and Farrant, 2008; Farrington and Loeber, 2001; Ghate et al, 2008; Grimshaw, 2008; Howell, 2003; Hutchings and Levesley, 2008; Leschied, 2000; Lipsey, 1995 and 1999; Lipsey and Wilson, 1998; Losel, 1995; McGuire, 2002a; McGuire et al, 2002; McGuire and Priestley, 1995; McLaren, 2000; NAO, 2006; Perry et al, 2008; RAND, 2006; Sherman et al, 2008; Thomas, 2008; Wikstrom and Treiber, 2008). Across these reviews of effective interventions, the role of appropriate assessment is clear in establishing the level of need or dimensions of risk to be addressed, and the appropriate interventions assigned to the young person. In this way assessment is an essential feature of effective engagement, as effective interventions are those that are appropriate and that the young person can be engaged within.

Baker’s (2008) review of effective practice in assessment, planning interventions and supervision demonstrates how assessment provides the foundation for all work with young people who offend or are at risk and the importance of assessment in identifying the appropriate focus of interventions. Thus, the purpose of assessment is to guide action and in order to be effective, practitioners need to understand the different approaches to assessment and know which methods are best suited to particular situations and groups of young people. The 2008 source document *Key Elements of Effective Practice* title *Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision* centres upon the *Asset* tool, which is at the core of youth justice practice. Evidence suggests it is an appropriate tool for working with male and female young people, as well as those from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. A key feature of *Asset* that is emphasised is its ability to:

... take full account of social context and to begin to tease out the factors that may be the most significant in influencing anti-social or offending behaviour.

(Baker 2008:21)

This is important as the *Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision* and other *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents draw on evidence and echo the position established by this review (see the ‘General findings’ chapter); that effective intervention programmes are multi-modal and based upon a holistic assessment of young people’s needs. Assessment identifies the focus for intervention and action, and we know that interventions that tackle aspects of offending behaviour in isolation from the reality of young people’s lives are unlikely to be effective. For example, when

considering the role of accommodation and the relationship between accommodation, homelessness and offending by young people, Thomas (2008) states that if:

...living arrangements are fragile or unsuitable, the evidence shows that it will be harder for young people to engage and comply with the YOT's supervision requirements, to benefit from its support as a protective factor, to address wider criminogenic needs and make substantive changes in lifestyle.

(Thomas, 2008:10)

The need for assessment to be holistic is highlighted across all the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents. For example, whether in relation to education, employment and training (Hutchings and Levesley, 2008), substance misuse (Britton and Farrant, 2008) or young people with mental health needs (Perry et al, 2008), these issues are consistently emphasised as dimensions of interrelated problems or issues that cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. Wikstrom and Treiber (2008), in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source document *Offending Behaviour Programmes*, note that:

CBT and MST programmes do not exist in a social vacuum and therefore their success or failure may depend on broader social and developmental factors ... [their success] may depend on whether they are part of a comprehensive and integrated prevention strategy that not only addresses problems concerning the individual and his or her immediate environment, but also the broader social processes relevant to the success of [the therapies].

(Wikstrom and Treiber (2008:40)

Effective assessment results in programmes of intervention that, by their resultant nature, engage young people who offend. Effective assessment itself engages young people.

Engagement within assessment

As part of a holistic assessment, it may be appropriate to involve family members as well as the young person. Gbate et al (2008) offer guidance on involving parents in the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source document *Parenting*, and suggest a number of tools for assessing parents' needs directly. More generally, the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* in relation to *Substance Misuse* (Britton and Farrant, 2008), *Young People who Sexually Abuse* (Grimshaw, 2008) and *Education, Training and Employment* (Hutchings and Levesley, 2008), suggest that effective assessment should involve parents/carers, but how this might be achieved within *Asset* is less clear. The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source document *Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision* states that the *Asset* assessment should draw on a range of sources including parents/carers (Baker, 2008). Across these sources it is also stated that the findings or conclusions of the assessment and the suggested programme of action should be agreed with parents and the young person during the process, or certainly once the process has been completed, so that parents and carers can provide support for the young person engaging with their programme.

Engaging young people who offend within their assessment is an essential feature of effective assessment. At the heart of this engagement is a relationship developed

through the communication between practitioner and the young person (although these themes have resonance for work with parents and carers as well). Assessment should be based on the *Asset* tool, but this:

... should not be used as an interview schedule as reading out all the questions will make it more difficult to positively engage with a young person. Instead, it should be used as the framework for gathering and analysing information. It may be helpful to have a 'mental script' of what should be covered in the interview, and to keep in mind an outline of the assessment profile sections that will need to be completed later.

(Baker, 2008:29)

Communication and relationship building with young people, which begins with the assessment process, is explored more fully later in this document. But it is useful to consider messages from the practice literature that begin to consider the relational aspects of the assessment process. Farrow et al (2007:97–115) provide a detailed account from practice of a holistic approach to assessing a young person, which they also see as a necessary precursor to successful engagement in an intervention programme. This kind of approach itself requires the practitioner to successfully engage the young person in order 'to draw out the individual's story, as it has meaning for him and her, and avoid imposing an adult, impersonal, 'professional' interpretation too early in the process'; hence 'the importance of collaborative, interactive and motivational methods' and 'particularly the principle of empathy'.

When it comes to planning the nature of the intervention:

... a youth-informed assessment will alert the practitioner to potential barriers to engagement in terms of maturity of thinking, literacy skills and lifestyle issues, all of which should influence how, where and when work is undertaken.

(Farrow et al, 2007:117)

But, they suggest, 'of even greater significance to young people is the nature of their relationship with the practitioner' (ibid). The *Key Elements for Effective Practice* source documents *Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision* (Baker, 2008), *Education, Training and Employment* (Hutchings and Levesley, 2008), *Young People who Sexually Abuse* (Grimshaw, 2008), *Parenting* (Ghate et al, 2008), *Offending Behaviour Programmes* (Wikstrom and Treiber, 2008), *Restorative Justice* (Sherman et al, 2008) and *Accommodation* (Thomas, 2008), all explicitly see assessment as an ongoing process. Ongoing assessment engages young people as it reviews and rewards progress, highlights areas of further or ongoing need, and is based upon a sustained relationship between the practitioner and young person (and their parents/carers). This requires a casework or case-management approach, which we explore further in the following chapters ('Communication' and 'Service development' in particular). It is important that the young person involved agrees with the conclusions of the assessment and the programme of action identified (Baker, 2008).

Finally, it should be noted that for some areas of practice or groups of young people, specialist tools or multi-agency approaches are suggested by the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* in undertaking appropriate and engaging assessment of particular groups. In addition to Ghate et al's (2008) suggested tools for engaging parents in

assessing parenting support needs, specialist tools are considered by Grimshaw (2008) in relation to young people who sexually abuse; Perry et al (2008) in relation to young people with mental health needs; and Britton and Farrant (2008) in relation to substance misuse. Perry et al (op. cit.) also recommend that joint, multi-agency assessments are appropriate for those with mental health needs, as do Britton and Farrant (op. cit.) for those with substance misuse problems.

Individual needs

The literature reviews and meta-analyses identified earlier in this review have long established that programmes and interventions for young people who offend need to be appropriate to individual need and should follow holistic and appropriate assessment. Indeed, each of the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* titles highlights how assessment is essential in determining whether particular interventions are appropriate (e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy [Wikstrom and Treiber, 2008]) or which interventions are appropriate for addressing an individual's needs in relation to broadly defined areas (e.g. substance misuse [Britton and Farrant, 2008]). We suggest that the reader refers to these documents for advice in relation to these areas of practice; in this document we focus upon the importance of the recognition of, and work to address, individual needs in order to engage young people who offend.

The importance of individually tailored interventions

Some researchers and authors have begun to attempt to address the issue highlighted at the beginning of this document in the 'General findings' chapter; that research rarely focuses upon the features of interventions and of staff practice that engage young people. Where these features are identified, they centre on the importance of relationships and individualised interventions. This has resonance with findings from research with children and young people that have established the importance of such relationships within preventative services more generally (Edwards et al, 2006). Critics of the emergence of 'evidence-based practice' as part of the 'what works' agenda in relation to both adult and young offenders have argued that this focus limits the ability for practitioners to work in individualised and supportive ways with offenders (Pitts, 2001). Yet, Burnett and McNeill (2005) argue that although 'relationships' as a dimension have been missing from discussions of, and guides to, effective practice (with adults, but this is also applicable to young people who offend) beyond control and regulation, it has remained at the heart of practice and is now beginning to be recognised as the essential feature of interventions that rely on the interpersonal and relational skills at the centre of delivery.

Dowden and Andrews (2004) draw on their meta-analyses to move beyond their own and others' concern within such reviews that identify the components of effective interventions, to identify the characteristics of staff and the specific techniques required to deliver programmes. Indeed, Palmers' earlier (1995:104) review of 32 literature reviews and meta-analyses argued for just such an approach in order to understand the 'nonprogrammatic factors and conditions' that are central to understanding what works and why. On the basis of their reviews of effective interventions, Dowden and Andrews (2004:205) identify a set of Core Correctional Practices (CCPs). These are:

- the need to use authority effectively (see also messages from research into sports-based programmes below)
- modelling and reinforcing behaviour

- the ability to teach problem-solving skills (both of these two concern cognitive approaches)
- advocacy and brokerage with community resources (as with the ability to refer on to appropriate interventions highlighted in mentoring research)
- and ‘the fifth and final component... relationship factors... arguably the most important. Essentially, this approach argues that the interpersonal influence... is maximised under conditions characterised by open, warm, enthusiastic communication’.

They found that when assessing programmes, these principles were rarely used, or were rarely quantifiable within research studies. They argue that such features are lacking from treatment programmes, although this fails to acknowledge the limits of this particular methodology or the position of Burnett and McNeill (2005); that they remain in practice but not in the practice guidance literature or intervention design.

Nonetheless, Dowden and Andrew (2004:210) found that where there was evidence of their principles enabling an individually tailored approach, those interventions ‘were associated with substantially higher mean effect sizes than programs that did not’.

McNeill and Batchelor (2002) argue for a similar approach in their paper on working with persistent young offenders. Their work with the case files of a sample of persistent young offenders placed within their reading of the ‘what works’ literature and meta-analyses reported here, argued for change-focused practice that is based on sound assessments of need and the identification of appropriate support. This should be developed through communication that is built on empathy and trust, and delivered through individualised active and participatory support. They argue that to stop offending, practitioners need to focus on the desistance factors – what will enable young people to move away from offending – that are present within and around young people, rather than focus on factors that led to offending. To address the wider context of young offenders’ lives, ‘the qualities and skills of workers remain vital in developing the relationships within which such magical processes occur’ (McNeill and Batchelor 2002:40).

McNeill (2006) argues there are dangers that an over-reliance on structured programmes and prescribed interventions, which ignore issues of individuality and the impacts of social and material contexts in shaping individuals’ lives, can result in practice which is ineffective in engaging young people who offend in positive change. He draws on work by Raynor (2004), which asserts the importance of the interpersonal skills of professional staff, including the ability to use discretion in the use of specific interventions, to take account of the diversity likely to be found among participants in interventions and to look beyond the immediate context of the intervention to the broader service environment for ways of supporting effective practice. Thus, interventions can be delivered as designed, but this should not be at the expense of relational aspects, nor of a recognition of the context of young people’s lives and the identification of other interventions within a programme of interventions and activities to address these. Moreover, McNeill (2006:130) suggests that literature on the effectiveness of psychological interventions in settings beyond criminal and youth justice provides ‘still stronger evidence’ for the importance of a flexible, personalised approach:

Here, it is a recurring finding that no method of intervention is, in and of itself, any more 'effective' than any other; rather there are common features of each intervention that are most likely to bring about positive change ... These 'core conditions of effectiveness' include: empathy and genuineness; the establishment of a working alliance; and the adoption of person-centred, collaborative and 'client-driven' approaches.

(McNeill, 2006:130)

The key rationale for McNeill's (2006:133) focus on building positive relationships with young people derives from his analysis of adolescence as a period of transition, 'a period of malleability during which there may be the opportunity to enable the development of positive identities before negative messages are internalised'. It is through the quality of the relationship formed between the professional and young person at this crucial point of personal development, rather than the content of any intervention, that real progress can be made in the prevention of future offending.

Eadie and Canton (2002) in their practice guidance set out what they see as the approach required of the 'reflective youth justice practitioner' in working with young people subject to court orders. They start from a similar position to that of McNeill (2006) by insisting that practice must recognise the characteristics of the particular developmental stage through which young people who offend are passing:

... a recognition that rule-breaking by young people is not at all uncommon and that the wisest course may be to support young people as they grow out of crime... [practitioners] have to recognise that adolescence is about testing boundaries, and help young people address problems so as to find alternative ways of behaving.

(Eadie and Canton 2002:14)

For Eadie and Canton the challenge to the practitioner in delivering evidence based practice is to be 'both accountable to the organisation *and* retain sufficient (that is, not unbounded) discretion and judgement' (ibid; emphasis in original) to be able to respond effectively to individual young people. The exercise of appropriate discretion and judgement by the practitioner in finding the best ways of helping a young person avoid reoffending is viewed as essential because of what is revealed by a substantial body of research about the context of youth offending:

Offending by young people is associated with, rather than necessarily caused by, numerous social and psychological influences. These might include peer group pressure, a neglectful, inconsistent or abusive parent, poor job prospects, boredom, impulsivity, school absenteeism or exclusion, homelessness, and experimentation with drugs and alcohol (for discussion see Farrington, 1997). Any purposeful attempt to 'address offending behaviour' must take account of these influences, the reality of their lived experiences.

(Eadie and Canton, 2002:22)

If practitioners are to succeed in 'engaging' young people who offend in planned and structured programmes or interventions, they must first recognise the significance of these 'lived experiences'; in the language of social work practice they must demonstrate

empathy (see the ‘Communication’ chapter), and any approach that neglects them is likely to fail. Farrow et al (2007), reflecting on ‘the challenge for practitioners of understanding and addressing the fluid dynamics, the mercurial nature of a young person’s journey from adolescence to adulthood’ argue that:

...the history of work with young people who offend exemplifies...the need to balance:

- *risks and needs;*
- *control and care;*
- *punishment and treatment;*
- *actuarial, technical approaches and dynamic personal engagement.*
- *arguably, these issues flow from the tension between ‘freedom’ versus ‘control’ or liberalism versus authoritarianism*

(Farrow et al 2007:87–8)

Again, the key to achieving a productive balance between these contrasting orientations is argued to be found in the quality of the relationship between the young person and the practitioner.

We have begun in this chapter to highlight the importance of the relationship between the practitioner and young person in ensuring that the individual needs of the offender are identified and addressed. In the following chapters on ‘Communication’ and ‘Service delivery’ we explore this in more detail.

Individually tailored interventions within a holistic approach

As outlined in ‘General findings’ at the beginning of this review, meta-analyses of effective practice with young people who offend consistently highlight the need for holistic and multi-modal approaches, and we have seen this message emerge when considering ‘Assessment’ (the need for holistic assessment). This theme continues through our following chapters ‘Communication’ (in responding to dimensions of need and developing joint and multi-agency working), ‘Service delivery’ (in providing a case-management and longitudinal approach) and ‘Service development’ (the need to ensure the access to appropriate local provision).

The reviews of effective interventions we have drawn on tell us little beyond the need for a multi-modal approach, but the effective practice reviews help us to demonstrate why individually tailored interventions within an holistic approach are required to engage young people; inappropriate interventions will fail to engage young people and programmes of interventions and support that fail to address the range of (interrelated) needs that young people who offend demonstrate are less likely to achieve positive outcomes.

Keeping Young People Engaged (Cooper et al, 2007) evaluated a project which aimed to support young people within education, training and employment interventions and highlighted how the chaotic lifestyles of young people who offend impacted upon their ability to engage with the interventions they were referred to. The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* title *Accommodation* describes how the lack of suitable

accommodation can negatively impact upon young offenders' engagement with interventions, but also that a range of factors impact upon their ability to access and maintain accommodation itself (Thomas, 2008). Likewise, substance misuse needs to be understood as related to and impacting upon a broad range of aspects of young people's lives (Britton and Farrant, 2008), as do the mental health problems of some young people who offend (Perry et al, 2008).

Therefore, individually tailored interventions are not single interventions but tailored programmes of intervention and support. These programmes should be, as we shall see, premised on, and supported by, a relationship for change.

Communication

In the preceding chapters of this source document we have discussed the importance of a process that begins with assessment, moves on to the identification and agreement, then delivery, of individually tailored interventions that are characterised by a supportive and responsive relationship between the practitioner and young person. Such relationships are formed and sustained through communication and other features of relationships that engage young people, and in this chapter we consider these attributes more fully. We conclude with messages on the importance of communication between partners in the development and delivery of multi-agency interventions.

Before exploring the research and practice literature and the features of effective communication, it is important to note that the centrality of communication in engaging young people who offend (and parents/carers) emerges across the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents. In particular, the *Education, Training and Employment* source document (Hutchings and Levesley, 2008) draws attention to the necessity of relationships that support change, echoing findings from *Keeping Young People Engaged* (Cooper et al, 2007), where young people themselves identified the relationship with their supervisor as key to their engagement; ‘the key factors in working successfully with the young person centred upon the workers’ ability to communicate’ (Cooper et al, 2007:128).

This chapter explores the features of communication and the relationships that engage young people who offend or who are at risk of offending.

Relationships for change: messages from the working alliance with adult offenders and in mental health practice

Considering young offenders subject to community orders, McNeill (2006:133) discusses a number of studies that ‘explore critical questions around the role that community supervision might play in supporting processes of desistance’ from offending. While these studies mainly concern adult offenders, McNeill suggests that their findings can be related to research with young people. Thus he cites a study by Rex (1999) of 60 probationers, 11 of whom were aged 20 or under. Where the probation clients believed their behaviour had changed for the better as a result of community supervision, they described the style of supervision as ‘active and participatory’. Probationers responded positively to probation officers who treated them reasonably and fairly, who showed concern for their well-being and for them as people (rather than as ‘offenders’), and who gave them personal encouragement. McNeill links these findings to studies by de Winter and Noom (2003) and Hill (1999), which suggest that young people especially, need to be treated as ordinary people with a full range of human needs and desires, and not just as examples of a particular kind of problem. He concludes that because young people who offend frequently experience relationships that are ‘characterised by disconnection and violation’, the quality of the relationship with the supervisor is likely to be particularly significant in helping them to sustain desistance from crime (McNeill, 2006:133).

Burnett and McNeill (2005:232) draw on the mental health literature to highlight effective practice they characterise as a 'working alliance' between the probation officer and probationer to achieve positive change. Although focused upon adult offender-practitioner relationships, their suggestions have resonance with the features of relationships we can identify when working with young people. For Burnett and McNeill, a key worker demonstrates their trustworthiness and builds a relationship through their actions, and thus the long-term relationship to nurture change can be developed. They emphasise how Dowden and Andrews' (2004) Core Correctional Practices have been incorporated into the National Offender Management System (NOMS), creating space for such an approach (with adult offenders). McNeill is also lead author on a guide for practice produced for the Scottish Executive Social Work Services Inspectorate (McNeill et al, 2005) that identifies 'Key Practice Skills' for reducing reoffending with adult probation clients, which further develops these arguments. For McNeill et al (2005:34–38) there are four key skill sets for supporting change. In summary, these are:

- Building relationships that support change – to build a working alliance that is person centred, and to have effective relationships whatever the programme of interventions.
- To use the relationship developed to undertake assessments of risks, needs and strengths that focus upon the support the offender requires if they are to desist from offending.
- To base interventions on this careful assessment so that individual theories of change can be developed, enabling a nuanced and subtle case-level support.
- For this long term relationship, to ensure a therapeutic and supported approach so that the authority of the probation officer enables managed change to take place.

There are examples from research exploring psychological therapies for people with mental health problems that have begun to examine the 'what works and for whom' elements of therapies in a more detailed way than the offending interventions literature (McGuire, 2002). These studies explore the importance of relationships in the 'therapeutic alliance' and may offer useful insights that enable us to better understand the features of relationships working towards change. Wampold (2001) suggests that the quality of the therapist-client relationship is more important than the therapeutic techniques employed in achieving change. Kadzin et al (2006:436) explored the relationship between child-therapist (and parent-therapist) alliance and measures of 'therapeutic change' for children (aged 6–14 years) and their parents who completed a programme to address their 'oppositional, aggressive and anti-social behaviour'. Their findings suggested that the better the quality of the alliance, as rated by the child, the greater the therapeutic change. They also found that the greater the parental rating of the alliance, the greater the improvement in the child. They explored other possible factors and found that they did not offer alternative explanations for these correlations; the greater the quality of the alliance the greater the engagement and outcome.

These findings are challenged by the meta-analysis of Crits-Christoph et al (2006:280) who found that although 'a relatively large body of research has established that the quality of the therapeutic alliance in psychotherapy is associated with treatment outcome', to conclude that alliance is a 'robust predictor' of outcome 'is premature'

(ibid). They found that the effect size of the alliance-outcome relationship was just 4–7% and that alternative explanations were rarely explored. Although Kadzin et al (1996) explored other factors, they did not address a central concern of Crits-Christoph et al (op cit.) that causation is not established in research evidence. For example, early improvement may be a cause of reported positive alliance and subsequent outcomes, or a range of interpersonal factors may be involved, such as trust or comfort with intimacy, that Kadzin et al (op cit.) did not control for.

Despite these insights, which have relevance to us in exploring the role of relationships within interventions for young people who offend or those at risk, as with criminological research and intervention evaluation, more research in this area is required if we are to have firm evidence of the role of the alliance (Crits-Christoph et al, 2006; Kadzin et al, 2006). These studies also focus upon willing participants in therapy and therefore apply to voluntary engagement; how they might apply to unwilling or required engagement is less clear, although other research and practice literature suggests that in these instances interpersonal skills for engagement are even more important.

The practitioner/young person relationship: messages from practice

There is not an established research literature that identifies and demonstrates ‘what works’ in building positive relationships with young people involved in offending or at risk of offending (see Burnett [2004] on the lack of a satisfactory evidence base on the effectiveness of ‘interpersonal practice’), and we now turn to broader practice literature in order to identify a body of knowledge that offers lessons about the process of building positive relationships with young people as the route to effective engagement. Since the factors that can support the development of such effective relationships appear to be generic, the practice literature that we draw on is not limited to the context of youth offending, and we have therefore examined practice texts from the fields of social work, probation and youth justice, and youth work.

Principles and skills

In *Social Work with Children*, Brandon, Schofield and Trinder (1998:71) regard the ability to create a relationship as one of the key factors in working with children and young people; ‘accurate empathy, warmth and genuineness’ are ‘essential precursors for a helping relationship with children’. These ‘precursors’ are explained as follows:

- Accurate empathy requires the worker to see and understand the child as an individual within her own context and to attempt to gain access to the child’s perspective. [The worker should not] presume to know how the child must feel in this particular situation – find out and learn from the child and others who know the child well.
- Warmth can be conveyed to the child through an approachable manner and an attitude of concern and caring. Over-effusive behaviour will not win over many children and taking over is not [the worker’s] role since parents or carers will have day-to-day care and should not be undermined.
- Children are adept at spotting authenticity and genuine interest and feel let down by adults who they feel do not have time for them...a genuine interest will help the

child talk to the worker, who in turn needs to listen to the child and contain and anticipate the child's ambivalence (ibid: 72–3).

These authors also state that in general the principles that shape effective social work methods are applicable both to children and young people and to adults. In light of this, it is helpful to refer to one of the major texts on the skills and knowledge base of social work – Pamela Trevithick's *Social Work Skills: a practice handbook* (2005) – in order to expand on what is required in the formation of constructive relationships between professionals and service users.

Trevithick (2005) follows the practice literature generally in asserting that the relationship that is built between practitioner and service user is central to achieving change. While she warns against the establishment of a practitioner/user relationship being viewed as an end in itself, she notes that:

...there are situations where relationship building is central to the task of establishing a 'corrective relationship': a reparative experience that is created to compensate for previous unsatisfactory or painful relationships and failures.

(Trevithick, 2005:148)

Moreover, the establishment of a positive relationship can lead to 'psychological growth' on the part of the service user, which 'can be recognised in terms of five observable phenomena':

- feeling a greater sense of 'zest' (vitality and energy)
- feeling more able to act and being able to act
- acquiring a more accurate picture of herself/himself and of other people
- feeling a greater sense of worth
- feeling more connected to other people and a 'greater sense of motivation for connections with other people beyond those in the specific relationship' (ibid: 149–50, citing Miller 1986:3).

These changes lead to motivation to engage in change. Closely linked to this area of practice is 'rapport'. 'Rapport' is one of the key building blocks in the formation of effective relationships for change; it is:

...the state of harmony, compatibility and empathy that permits mutual understanding and a working relationship between the client and the social worker.

(Barker, 2003:59, cited in ibid:147)

Trevithick (2005) suggests that when such a state prevails, the service user is able to begin to develop confidence in the practitioner, and thus the potential for the user's 'engagement' in ongoing work is created:

...[rapport] creates the favourable conditions necessary for people to be able to discuss and reveal problems or difficulties, successes or failures, and strengths or weaknesses in ways that aid understanding and allow for a realistic plan of action to be created.

(Trevithick, 2005:148)

At the same time, she recognises that this kind of rapport is likely to be difficult to achieve when the user is reluctant about being involved or has been coerced into participating with the practitioner – an issue clearly of relevance in seeking to engage young people who offend. Here, skills of ‘persuasion’ and ‘being directive’ become important for the practitioner.

Although social work has a long tradition of ‘non-directiveness’ in many of its client-centred approaches to practice, Trevithick argues that ‘there will always be situations that warrant our being directive’ and gives examples of occasions when it is necessary to persuade someone away from danger or for the worker to use their knowledge and experience ‘to direct someone towards a course of action that could be of benefit’ (Trevithick, 2005:201). While youth offending is not a context that Trevithick explicitly addresses, such guidance seems highly relevant and applicable to work with young people who offend where directive approaches are necessary. However, in attempting to be persuasive or directive, the practitioner should take account of the power differentials between themselves, as a figure of authority, and the service user:

Failing to acknowledge inequalities of this kind can mean that we create or reinforce feelings of poor self-esteem or personal inadequacy. It is important that these feelings, and the reality of power differentials, are addressed.

(ibid: 201)

And addressing such issues is more likely to be possible, and to result in positive outcomes, where an effective relationship between practitioner and user is established:

Being directive and persuasive is more likely to be successful where we have a good relationship with the individual in question, where the person is open and responsive to our viewpoint and where we feel we have sufficient knowledge and experience to steer people in the ways suggested.

(ibid: 202)

Thus we are led back to the question of the kinds of skills required of practitioners to establish constructive relationships with service users, even where the latter may be unable or unwilling to experience any mutual rapport (see also the ‘Motivation’ section in this chapter).

This issue is explored in more depth by Trotter (1999) in a book explicitly addressing the challenge of working with ‘involuntary clients’; these are people who:

...have not chosen to receive the services they are being given. In fact these clients might be actively opposed to receiving the service ... The clients receive the service offered either because of a court order or the threat of some other legal sanction.

(Trotter, 1999:2)

Trotter makes the important point that practitioners working with involuntary clients have a dual role; on the one hand they have a legal enforcement role, ensuring that the client fulfils the requirements of any court order, and on the other hand they have ‘a

helping, therapeutic or problem-solving role' (ibid: 3). He suggests that reconciling these two roles is a major challenge for practitioners.

The necessary first step in meeting the 'dual role' challenge is for the practitioner to enable explicit clarification of the roles of both herself and the client.

This involves ongoing discussions about issues such as authority and how it might be used, the dual role of the worker as helper and social controller, the aims and purpose of the intervention from both client and worker perspectives, as well as issues relating to confidentiality.

(ibid: 18)

Trotter cites various studies that demonstrate that when such clarity of roles is achieved, better outcomes from the intervention are obtained. Implicit in his discussion is the sense that clients can only become properly 'engaged' with the intervention once they understand the part that both they and the practitioner are expected to play:

...the prospective client becomes a client only when she accepts and understands how the worker can help and what is expected of the client in the process.

(ibid: 19)

In terms of sustaining an effective relationship with the client over time (i.e. maintaining engagement), he suggests that discussion and clarification of roles needs to be ongoing, and in particular that honesty and openness about the appropriate balance between the controlling and the helping functions is essential. This includes explicitly addressing what is negotiable and what is non-negotiable in relation to the client's engagement with the intervention, for example, the nature of the 'ground rules' covering the clients' attendance for scheduled appointments or sessions.

Trevithick (2005) offers a precise list of the skills that she regards as central to the process of forming an effective working relationship, and in so doing reinforces points made by Brandon et al (1998) in relation to social work with children and young people, and other key sources in the practice literature. These skills are:

- conveying an acceptance of the individual
- demonstrating an empathic understanding
- conveying a sense of genuineness and authenticity
- demonstrating a concern for the issue of service user's self-determination
- showing the professional ability to decide which information needs to be kept confidential and which does not
- demonstrating a concern for the service user's individuality
- showing an interest, conveying warmth, generating an atmosphere of trust (Trevithick, 2005:150).

The following sections examine such skills in more detail, drawing again on a range of practice literature.

Empathy

The ability to demonstrate ‘empathy’ with the service user appears to be a central feature of effective practice in social work. Trevithick draws on work by Kadushin and Kadushin (1997) and Shulman (1999) to suggest that being able to empathise with others:

...describes an attempt to put ourselves in another person’s place, in the hope that we can feel and understand another person’s emotions, thoughts, actions and motives. Empathy involves trying to understand, as carefully and sensitively as possible, the nature of another person’s experience, their own unique point of view and what meaning this carries for the individual.

(Trevithick 2005:153–4)

Similarly, Brandon et al (1998) quote Wilson et al (1992) in defining empathy as:

...the ability to feel with those who are seeking help, and articulate these feelings, so that the client feels understood, and is helped in turn to a greater understanding of these feelings.

(Wilson et al, 1992 in Brandon et al, 1998:72)

One aspect of this empathic response involves the practitioner ‘suspending disbelief or similar reactions’ and instead indicating their comprehension of the other’s feelings (Trevithick, 2005:154). What may be important here, from the perspective of building relationships with young people who offend, is what these authors do not say that empathy entails. It does not entail sympathy with or tolerance or approval of any actions that the service user may have committed, or of particular behaviours; rather it is concerned with understanding the subjective experiences of which those actions or behaviours form a part, and recognising the feelings and meanings that the experiences generate in the user, in order to be able to establish an effective relationship with the user. Viewed in this way, empathy should be seen not as a general ‘way of being’ but as a specific ‘communication process or skill’ (Egan, 1990:123 cited in Trevithick, 2005).

Trotter (1999), in his discussion of work with involuntary clients, reiterates the importance of empathy as an element of practice, although he draws on some limited research to suggest that empathy, on its own, does not lead to greater effectiveness. However, other research provides:

...some evidence that empathy skills are valuable if accompanied by the use of other effective practice skills, such as the use of a pro-social approach, problem solving and appropriate role clarification.

(Trotter, 1999:113)

In other words, it may be that empathy is significant in helping secure the co-operation and engagement of the client, as a foundation upon which other techniques can construct effective outcomes. Overall, the practice literature suggests that practitioners’ ability to demonstrate empathy seems likely to be a crucial factor in successfully engaging young people.

Trust and respect

Findings from the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund¹ provide insights into what children, young people and their families themselves regard as important and valuable in building effective relationships with practitioners. The findings highlight that 'relationships based on trust and respect are essential to enable children and parents to effectively engage with the support offered' (Evans et al, 2006:32). The researchers found that:

Children and parents tended to talk about Children's Fund projects in terms of their relationship with project workers ...They identified trust, respect and sustainability as common principles which constituted positive relationships with project workers.

(ibid: 40)

The research identifies a number of ways in which these general principles were put into practice by Children's Fund workers, and suggests that the following were:

...what children and parents valued about their relationships with project workers as means to engaging them in services and supporting their pathways towards social inclusion.

(ibid: 40)

- 'Children valued project workers who were informal and approachable' and 'appreciated an appropriate balance between setting rules for behaviour and also being respectful towards them. For example, young people accessing a participation project liked the way that project staff corrected their behaviour by talking and explaining rather than shouting' (ibid: 40–1).
- 'Children are listened to and treated with respect' – children felt able to confide in project workers about problems they were experiencing, valued confidentiality in discussing such problems and appreciated the way that their concerns were taken seriously by project staff (ibid: 41).
- 'Children feel cared for and have positive adult role models' – demonstrations of 'warmth' and 'care' towards young people by staff was appreciated, as was the ability of male project workers to provide positive role models for boys (ibid: 42).
- 'Project worker as a "professional friend"' – many parents valued their project worker as someone with whom problems or difficulties could be discussed, highlighting the benefits of a relationship with 'a professional who was easy to talk to, responsive and available during and outside of usual project contact time' (ibid: 42).
- 'Independent and non-judgemental' – these were qualities viewed as important by parents who had had poor experiences of previous interventions with their children; in particular, that Children's Fund workers were perceived as independent of statutory service providers who had pre-determined value positions (ibid: 42–3).

¹ <http://www.ne-cf.org/>

- ‘Cultural appropriateness’ – some parents linked the effectiveness of engagement with services with aspects of the services’ cultural sensitivity and relevance, for instance in relation to language, advice giving or gender aware provision, where having a practitioner from the same cultural background as themselves was seen as valuable. However, the research also found that for children and young people, the issue of support from a practitioner of the same cultural background was less significant; ‘Children from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities developed relationships of trust with project workers from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to their own, and commented on the positive experience of receiving support from practitioners’ (ibid: 43).
- What emerges strongly from these findings is the extent to which the professional status of the Children’s Fund project workers, as organisationally separate from and, to a greater or lesser degree, operationally independent from the mainstream statutory services, provided the foundation for the creation of the kinds of relationships of trust, care and respect described in the research. Trust and respect are, as we shall see, identified as key to effective youth work practice and has implications for preventative as well as formal interventions and programmes.

Motivation

One way of understanding the challenge of ‘how to engage young people’ is to see it as a question of motivation: how can the practitioner motivate the young person to become engaged in work that will lead to changes in behaviour? In addition to the themes outlined above, the technique of ‘motivational interviewing’ may be particularly relevant. Trevithick (2005) contrasts the approach of motivational interviewing, which incorporates ideas about empathy, the use of directiveness and belief in the possibility of user-led change, with approaches grounded in assumptions about problem behaviours being caused by individual deficiencies and the use of ‘blaming and shaming’ methods to change people’s motivations. She states, drawing on the core work by Miller and Rollnick (2002:187), that motivational interviewing ‘is an important technique for enhancing people’s motivation to change their behaviour’.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a technique that has been developed as a method for working with people with addictive behaviours in particular substance misuse and problem drinking (see Britton and Farrant’s [2008] effective practice review for guidance on the effective use of the technique with these groups), although over the past decade or so it has spread in application to other areas including social work and probation (Miller and Rollinick, 2002). However, there is little evidence of its effectiveness with these different groups (Harper and Hardy, 2000). MI is a directive, client-focused method for eliciting motivation to change by helping clients explore and resolve ambivalence to confronting and resolving their behaviour (Miller and Rollinick, op. cit.). Given the origins of the technique, research on the aspects of MI is focused upon practice within medical and treatment settings where there are numerous studies of its effectiveness in bringing about change (Harper and Hardy, op. cit.), although even within this sphere there are questions about its efficacy with different groups within this diverse range of clients, e.g. those of different ages, or with different needs etc (Carroll et al, 2005).

MI rests on the premise of being directive and facilitating clients’ reflection on their own behaviours where they are ambivalent and reluctant to accept the need to change.

MI aims to be a collaborative approach, allowing clients maximum space to talk about their motivations and about changing their behaviour. The skills include asking open questions, affirming positives, reflecting back the meaning of what has been said and summarising statements (Forrester et al, 2006, discussing Miller and Rollinick, 2002). Harper and Hardy (2000) undertook a study of MI as a technique to aid probation officers in their assessment and supervision of clients, again with substance misuse problems. Their findings indicate that offenders whose officers had been trained in MI achieved significant changes in attitudinal measures when compared to those in their control group. Nonetheless, they also found that for all clients increased contact with their probation officer, whether they had been trained in MI or not, positively affected these measures. They conclude that the technique is:

...easily integrated into current practice 'although it was time consuming and probation officers felt it was not always practical within 'a busy probation setting'.

(Harper and Hardy, 2000:399)

MI may be a technique that encapsulates features of engaging practice identified in the discussion of this chapter: open and honest, supportive relationships with young people offend that are focused upon change and that are developed and maintained over time. Indeed, Miller and Rollinick (2002:34) who originated the technique describe it as a way of working in supervision that is 'a way of being with people' and describe the 'spirit of motivational interviewing' as collaborative, based in eliciting the client's own perspectives, and agreeing with them a programme for change (ibid: 35). In this way, we suggest the benefits of an 'MI approach' may be obtained without strict adherence to an MI model. MI may formalise the skills we have identified here as central to relationships for change. Certainly, more research is required in employing the technique with offenders and young offenders in particular in order to establish the effectiveness of the technique outside of practice with those with substance misuse problems.

Youth work techniques and approaches: messages from youth work practice

We now turn to messages that emerge from the literature relating to youth work practice. Youth work services have historically centred on a universal and preventative approach to working with young people, although their work is increasingly targeted at young people 'at risk' (Barry 2005; Merton et al, 2004). In common with other areas explored for this review, there is a lack of research that is able to establish the features of effective practice in achieving measurable outcomes in the form required for systematic review. Nonetheless, there are some sources of research evidence on which to draw alongside the broader practice literature.

Features of youth work

Youth work is a distinctive area of practice, with a history reaching back into the nineteenth century (Young, 1999). Youth work is universal, being open to all young people and focusing upon their personal and social development through the provision of opportunities and activities that enable (Merton et al, 2004: 117):

- association

- active citizenship
- aspiration and achievement
- empowerment.

This broad and general focus has always been employed to work with particular groups in order to create young people who are responsible members of their communities and thus society (ibid; Young, op. cit.), and as such has targeted particular groups of young people who we today understand conceptually as ‘at risk’, in order to achieve outcomes we can group under the concept of ‘social inclusion’. Recognition of the effectiveness of youth work in supporting these young people has led to increasing use of youth work to target particular groups; indeed, this has created tensions within youth work practice and amongst professionals and practitioners about the nature of youth work itself (Barry, 2005; Merton et al, op. cit.). At the heart of youth work is the voluntary participation of young people in activities that they enjoy (Huskins, 1996); this is central to their engagement.

Despite the qualities of youth work being seen by many, including practitioners, as elusive (Young, 1999), there is a consensus about the distinctive features of youth work from other forms of practice with young people that emerges across the youth work practice literature. This consensus is echoed in the only evaluation of the impact youth work practice across England, undertaken by Merton and colleagues for the Department for Education and Skills (2004):

Youth work has come to mean a combination of methods or interventions (such as educational group work), marked out by distinctive characteristics (such as voluntary engagement, active involvement, informal education and professional flexibility) and underpinned by a shared set of values... It promotes the voice and influence of young people. Fundamentally, youth work with individuals and groups stems from negotiation and mutual agreement. It serves as a springboard for social learning – in its broadest sense – that young people can use to express and achieve their aspirations.

(Merton et al, 2004: 29)

We can identify youth work’s key features as:

- voluntary
- participatory and negotiated
- enjoyable
- empowering
- educative.

Effective youth work is based upon the relationships that youth workers are able to develop with young people. The features that are essential to this relationship share common messages from other areas of research and practice discussed earlier in this document in that they:

- are based in mutual regard and respect

- are characterised by honesty and trust
- involve agreement through negotiation of the goals and outcomes to be reached and the methods in which to achieve them. (Young, 1999; Huskins, 1996; Merton et al, 2004)

What makes youth work relationships distinctive from other forms of work with young people is that they are based upon voluntary engagement and are participatory; that is that the engagement and the features of within it are not imposed upon young people. Choice and negotiation are essential, and youth workers professional ethos has this at its centre. In this respect, youth work relationships are different to those developed in youth justice or other service settings.

The key messages to emerge from youth work literature are consistent with those from research and other areas of practice that we have identified here; committed and skilled practitioners are required, and that at the heart of this are the communication skills required when working with young people. Work with young people requires practitioners to be able to communicate effectively with people from a range of backgrounds about a range of issues in a non-judgemental way. It requires practitioners to have the ability to listen and to empathise, to be able to understand the realities of young people's lives, and to set boundaries within which engagement takes place. Supportive, engaging, relationships develop motivation for change, in both compulsory and voluntary settings. As such, these messages from youth work contain insights for those working with young people who offend in a programme of change (see the 'Service delivery' chapter).

Communication for multi-agency working

In achieving holistic support for young people, youth justice practitioners are likely to need to refer to other agencies and organisations to ensure that their inter-related needs are met (Baker, 2008; Cooper et al, 2007; Ghate et al, 2008; Hutchings and Levesley, 2008; Perry et al, 2008; Sherman et al, 2008; Thomas, 2008), or as we saw in 'Assessment', joint assessment may be required for those with mental health problems and young people who sexually abuse (Grimshaw, 2008; Perry et al, 2008). Wikstrom and Treiber (2008), in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source document *Offending Behaviour Programmes*, emphasise the importance of communication within joint working and multi-agency partnerships in order to share knowledge of effective programmes and practice and build a shared knowledge base. As we saw in our discussion of 'Individual needs', individually tailored programmes of interventions and support engage young people through an ongoing and holistic approach; ensuring effective multi-agency and joint working is therefore important in engaging young people who offend.

Multi-agency and partnership working is an area of research and academic enquiry in itself (e.g. Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002) and was too broad for inclusion in the reviews of literature undertaken for this source document; nonetheless the effective practice reviews and the recent publication of *Keeping Young People Engaged* (Cooper et al, 2007) offer useful messages for effective joint working. A key finding to emerge from these reviews is the importance of clear communication amongst partners of roles, responsibilities and expectations. Protocols or service level agreements are an essential part of developing the joint working arrangements required in developing holistic

programmes, and provide clarity for information and data-sharing. Such agreements provide clarity over referring arrangements and requirements, and formalise communication routes and procedures, but are likely to take time to develop. They require strategic level leadership from strategic and senior managers, but also the realities of practice require discussion, negotiation and agreement at the operational level (Ghate et al, 2008; Hutchings and Levesley, 2008; Perry et al, 2008; Sherman et al, 2008; Thomas, 2008).

Service delivery

In this chapter we build on the previous chapters to explore how services and supervision can be provided on the basis of supportive relationships for change. As we have seen, effective programmes for young people who offend are multi-modal and holistic. Interventions should be provided as part of a programme of support that can be defined as ‘a structured sequence of opportunities for learning and change’ (McGuire 2002: 24). Here we draw on evidence from particular service interventions and the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* reviews to build further on the implications for practice.

The importance of relationships within service delivery: research evidence

Features of interventions for young people who offend

A small number of studies identified for inclusion in this review attempt to understand the features of effective practice beyond intervention content and design to focus upon delivery and implementation. These focused studies highlight the importance of developing relationships between the offender or young person and those supervising or working with them. In his review of effective interventions and subsequently proposed ‘comprehensive framework’ for reducing youth offending, Howell (2003) draws attention to the importance of a single co-ordinator for the range of interventions that are part of effective multi-modal programmes. This role ensures that an overview of the programme designed for the young offender is developed and maintained, with information shared across agencies and organisations and emerging need responded to. This message also emerges within the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents, in particular *Substance Misuse* (Britton and Farrant, 2008), *Education, Training and Employment* (Hutchings and Levesley, 2008) and *Restorative Justice* (Sherman et al, 2008) identify the importance of flexible provision and co-ordination across interventions in supporting a holistic approach. We explore case management approaches in more detail below.

Recent reviews of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (YJB, 2006) and Home Office measures to tackle anti-social behaviour more broadly (NAO, 2006) both drew attention to the importance of negotiation with the young person. Where orders or interventions were imposed without involvement of the young person or without being rooted in the experience of practitioners, conditions were established that were not achievable and led to negative outcomes. For practitioners who took part in both pieces of research, such conditions limited their capacity to engage young people and therefore to effect change by focusing instead upon the compliance or breach of imposed terms.

The relationship aspect also emerges from a study of the *Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP)* (Moore, 2004). This study explored different surveillance approaches available within this programme to assess which were most effective. ISSP can use voice verification, electronic tagging, human tracking (being accompanied and checked by someone in person) or a combination of these. The evaluation found that where human tracking was used in combination, the impact of the

tracking was increased. While there were problems with the electronic tag, it was the most effective intervention when used alone. But there were dramatic increases in outcomes when it was combined with the human element. Key to the success of such interventions was:

...the ability of the 'trackers' to develop positive relations with the young people, thus closing the divide between the supervision and surveillance elements of the programme.

(Moore, 2005:30)

In their review of mentoring schemes, Newburn and Shiner (2006:23) draw on all published research and their own study, which was 'the largest British study of mentoring schemes to date'. Tracing the development of mentoring as an intervention, and the lack of conclusive evidence available from the range of small-scale research prior to their own, they conclude that well-designed, focused (and theorised – that is the rationale and purpose is clear and linked explicitly to outcomes) programmes can have positive impacts for participants. Yet they fail to establish what it is that mentors do, the ways in which they engage young people beyond the relationships that they form so that mentors support and challenge young people to make changes in their lives. Their focus is on the relationships between attendance of the programme and measures of social inclusion including offending.

The YJB *Mentoring* (Newburn, 2003:3) source document for the previous *Key Elements of Effective Practice* series says little about mentoring as a practice beyond its principle as a 'supportive, challenging relationship' featuring 'active listening', 'trusting relationships' and 'constructive attempts by the mentor to affect the behaviour of the young person' (ibid:4). Features of effective mentoring interventions are identified as a flexible structure matching young people's assessed needs to available resources within local settings, goal setting, regular reviews and planning that fosters an achievement culture. And high levels of contact are associated with greater levels of success in achieving positive outcomes. Catalano et al (1998) in their discussion of mentoring schemes suggest that mentoring based solely on the establishment of a supportive relationship, which engages the young person in the programme, will be ineffective if it does not target behavioural and other changes. Successful engagement in a programme, and the development of a relationship between mentor or other adult and young person does not by itself lead to successful outcomes. We can see here then an echo of the features of effective interventions highlighted in the meta-reviews earlier, in that assessment must be linked to intervention. The *Keeping Young People Engaged* evaluation (Cooper et al, 2007) found that although there were differences in the professional backgrounds and roles of youth justice and Connexions service staff supporting young people, young people found the mentoring, ongoing nature and at times informal approach taken by practitioners to be key to their engagement, suggesting it is these features of practice that are effective rather than the formal roles and responsibilities of those working with young people. What was important in ensuring young people engaged were long-term, ongoing (that is they are continuous and sustained) relationships offering support that was flexible and responsive to young people's needs (emerging as well as ongoing). These findings suggest a case management approach to the support and supervision of young offenders, and we return to this theme at the end of this chapter.

The role of sports and activity interventions

Research and evaluation of sport and activity programmes were explored for this review as they are increasingly identified within practice as a means of engaging young people, particularly as preventative measures. A number of research studies were identified that have explored the role of sports and activity interventions in engaging young people who offend or who are at risk of offending. As we shall see, evidence about the effectiveness of such programmes as a means of reducing crime is partial and inconclusive. Nonetheless, there are studies that have highlighted the role of sports and activity interventions as a means by which to engage young people in relationships for change, and therefore we suggest that they are likely to be features of effective multi-modal programmes. In the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* title *Education, Training and Employment*, Hutchings and Levesley (2008) identify sports and activity programmes as ‘enrichment activities’ that can accompany formal learning provision as part of a holistic and engaging programme.

Hartmann and Depro (2006) looked at evidence of crime reduction in relation to ‘Midnight Basketball’ schemes across the United States (US). They highlight the growth of these programmes across US cities as a means of engaging young people in constructive activity during high-risk times and in high-risk places. ‘Midnight Basketball’ is so-called as the schemes take place from 10pm onwards. Leagues and competitions are run in high-crime neighbourhoods and aim to divert young people from involvement in crime through occupying them at the times most youth offending is committed. Hartmann and Depro argue that the schemes are based on a theory of crime prevention and reduction that centres on this diversion and the cultural belief that sport is a positive and progressive social force. They found that property crime rates fell where the programmes were in place, but violent crime did not. This quantitative study is the only high quality one identified, and it fails to distinguish what features may make such programmes effective in engaging young people. The authors hypothesise that where programmes exist within a community:

Community members would be less likely to commit crimes...not for fear of being caught but because they want to participate in these programs, want them in their communities, and feel more directly connected to those around them and more positively served by law enforcement and social services because of them.

(Hartman and Depro, 2006:192)

This notion of sport as a means of engaging young people on a voluntary basis, that is they are not required or coerced to attend, is reflected in other research but evidence of effectiveness in reducing offending or reoffending is difficult to establish.

Jones and Offord (1989) studied an after-school programme for ‘at risk’ youth in Canada (cited in Catalano et al, 1998). Children and young people on a public housing estate were recruited to a range of courses aimed at developing skills in sports, music, arts and other activities, then to progress to competitive and other more advanced levels of participation. The programme lasted 32 months, during which time the numbers of arrests among resident young people declined very significantly in comparison with a control group from another estate lacking such activities. Yet the study found that positive outcome effects were not sustained once the programme ended, suggesting that positive outcomes require ongoing provision.

Considering programmes targeting young people who offend as well as those ‘at risk’, Nichols and Crow (2004) draw on their research with seven different programmes to highlight the difficulties in establishing the links between such interventions and reductions in offending. This is in part due to the range of programmes, their target groups, the length of time they run for and therefore the nature of young people’s engagement with them. Similarly, Smith and Waddington (2004) review evidence of sports programmes that have been used to engage young people involved in crime and, their primary focus, those with who misuse drugs. They highlight the differing rationales for such programmes, and how:

Few ‘sport in the community schemes’ have built in techniques for monitoring their impact on levels of crime and drug use; as a result it is difficult to be sure what impact, if any, they have.

(Smith and Waddington, 2004:293)

The evaluations of sport and other programmes that are available highlight the intended role of these interventions as a means by which to engage young people in order to develop relationships that can be utilised to provide support with, or to target, elements of young people’s lives and related problems or risk behaviours. The three-year evaluation of the Home Office ‘Positive Futures’ programme describes the programme of sporting activities in 37 projects within targeted communities as:

A relationship strategy, using sport and other activities to establish relationships with young people who are regarded as being ‘socially marginalised’.

(Home Office, 2006:15)

The programme was also designed to have research and evaluation at its centre in order to demonstrate impact. Positive findings include high numbers of participants (although the numbers as proportions of participants are less clear) moving on to education and training, and reported improvements in relationships with project staff leading to staff being able to offer support and advice. The evaluation also sought to understand the features of programmes that led to impact, and central to this is a consideration of ‘workforce’ issues. The evaluation highlights:

- that projects did not employ an archetypal ‘community sports coach’ but rather a range of staff with a range of skills and backgrounds
- that staff who were local, rooted in and knowledgeable about local history or who share a background with participants, were able to make stronger connections with young people
- that central to positive relationships is respect between staff and participants
- that levels of sport skill are less important than skills in working with young people. Staff surveyed did not highlight sports skills as the most important, but rather ‘those that allow staff to engage, relate to and influence young people’ (Home Office, 2006:30).

Unfortunately, the authors do not discuss these skills or attributes in any detail.

The Home Office's (2002) study of Summer Splash schemes was able to obtain impact data in relation to only three of six case studies focused upon. The study is able therefore to tell us little about the features of effective practice from this large-scale, England and Wales-wide initiative although it does highlight difficulties for projects in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff to engage young people in the projects. Similarly, a DfEE (2001) review of summer activities for 16-year-olds that aimed to engage young people through the transition from secondary to further education (and thus minimise disruption and the negative effects disengagement can have) highlights that:

Staff...need to relate well with the young people, and build trust and respect if they are to encourage young people.

(DfEE, 2001:54)

Relating more directly to young people who offend, Mason and Wilson's (1988:139) review of the literature for the Australian Sports Commission recommended 'high quality staff' who are able to use challenging sports and activity programmes as learning situations; but they do not provide detail about what constitutes these necessary skills. Taylor et al (1999) reviewed 'programmes of demanding physical activity' in place for young offenders under probation supervision for the Home Office. They sought to understand the number of projects in place and a number of questions about impact and the role of the probation service in supervising and developing such schemes. None of the research questions focused on what makes projects effective, the skills of staff or techniques used within them. They found that 34 probation services were operating 54 schemes with differing rationales, but which broadly grouped as being concerned with activities as a medium for social and personal development. Although evidence of impact is weak and inconsistently available across the projects, their qualitative work leads them to highlight features of good practice that include issues relevant when considering staff practice for engagement. Although it continues to be underdeveloped, the authors highlight that there are 'particular and demanding qualities required of staff' (Taylor et al, 1999:42) and that:

In many of the programmes it was apparent that a key factor in their success with young offenders was the staff's attitude to them. This amounted to treating young offenders with respect and... the non-judgemental attitude from staff was emphasised.

(Taylor et al, 1999:42)

Each of these studies explores sport as a means for engaging young people in order to develop supportive relationships. But some authors have also highlighted the possible negative effectives of employing sport in this way. In their critical review of published studies, Smith and Waddington (2004) argue that:

...if enhanced self-esteem is a consequence of winning then what, we may ask, is the impact on the self-esteem of those who are losers?

Smith and Waddington (2004:293)

In their small-scale study of sport within a secure unit Andrews and Andrews (2003) raise similar concerns, arguing that the use of masculine and aggressive sporting activities may have negative outcomes. The studies and reviews of Smith and

Waddington (2004), of Positive Futures (2006), Andrews and Andrews (op. cit.) and Taylor et al (1999) draw attention to the benefits of sport introducing rules, authority and discipline into the lives of young offenders or for those at risk. In addition to the need for 'skilled staff' to deliver the programmes, this emerges as an important element. Smith and Waddington (2004) draw on a Home Office study of sport interventions with drug users to argue that:

Workers should have authority in the eyes of young people attending these projects but... they should not be seen as authority figures; their authority must lie in relevant knowledge and practice.

(Smith and Waddington, 2004:288)

An evaluation of a theatre-based project for young people involved in or on the edges of the youth justice system in Australia highlighted the lack of research in this developing area of practice (Walters, 1997). In the 'Big hArt' programme, artists and actors worked with a group of young people to develop a play through participatory methods (i.e. the content and form was participant-led) that was then performed across a range of venues and to a range of audiences. The programme was developed to address a range of issues, for example domestic violence, and received endorsements from, among others, John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister at the time. Although focused on the particular target group of young offenders and those at risk, the programme was explicitly based upon a 'multi-faceted approach to youth work' (Walters, 1997: 24). Although details of the evaluation methods are not provided, it is reported that in a 12-month follow-up of engagement with the programme only 1 of 22 participants had reoffended. Without these details we should treat these findings with caution. Nonetheless, it is reported that the evaluation concluded that theatre could be a catalyst for change; it could be the basis through which relationships for change are developed.

Similarly, an evaluation of an arts programme across Washington's (US) youth correctional facilities emphasised the role of arts and creative activities in engaging young people to develop skills and to lead to the primary and consequential changes distinguished above (Ezell et al, 2003). Although not a youth work programme, the arts are posited as providing 'rich opportunities for personal growth' (ibid: 108) and are again identified as an under-researched area. The programme operates on the rationale that arts activities occupy young offenders' time (in this instance, those imprisoned for their offences), offers opportunities to learn new skills, provides space for reflection and that such an opportunity has a range of benefits for participants' social development and thus can lead to reduced offending upon release. Crime prevention and changes to offending behaviour are achieved through an educative framework provided by arts activities. The programme is run by artists rather than youth justice or other youth workers, and the evaluation reported reduced incidents of misbehaviour or rule breaking amongst participants during the length of the programme (according to institutional records), as well as reduced recidivism in a six-month follow-up study, although this should be treated with caution due to the methods involved (Ezell et al, ibid).

It is important to note that meta-analyses have demonstrated that on their own, outdoor activity and wilderness programmes have been shown to be ineffective in reducing offending (McGuire et al, 2002) and this appears to apply to the sports, activity and recreation programmes discussed here. The evidence suggests that sports and activity programmes may offer a means in which to engage young people and young people

who offend, rather than providing the basis by which to reduce offending in themselves. This available evidence again reflects a relationship aspect to practice with young people who offend and those at risk. As stated in ‘General findings’, young people need to perceive programmes as having relevance to their lives and as being worthwhile, and therefore sport and activity programmes should be provided as part of multi-modal holistic programmes.

Prevention and diversion: the potential value of youth work approaches

Youth work relationships aim to engage young people in order to achieve change, and are located within a framework of informal education that is not structured by a fixed curriculum or set of outcomes but that works towards social development and life and social skills. Youth work is ‘educative for life’ (Huskins, 1996:4). There are two identifiable elements to the educative change that youth work aims to support:

- primary change – changes in attitudes and behaviour
- consequential change – change that stems from primary changes, for example re-engaging with education following changes in attitudes to learning.

(adapted from Merton et al, 2004)

Youth work’s educative process is focused upon raising young people’s awareness of themselves, their community and their place within it, and within society. It therefore has a function of moral education (Young, 1999; Merton et al, 2004). In their 1996 review of the youth justice system, the Audit Commission highlighted that ‘understanding right and wrong is a major determinant of behaviour’ (Audit Commission, 1996:88) for young people and emphasised that public services and communities should ‘ensure that children have the opportunity to become responsible and capable citizens’ (ibid.). In her review and theorisation of youth work, Young (1999) states:

...youth work is a process through which young people come to increasingly understand their values and integrate those values with their sense of identity and their actions in the world... the process of moral philosophising through which young people gain the skills and dispositions to deliberate about what is ‘good’, not only for themselves in particular respects, but in terms of what is conducive to the ‘good life’ generally.

(Young, 1999:4)

Youth work achieves this broad outcome through programmes of structured activity which, similarly to features of effective interventions with young people who offend discussed earlier, are appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the young people they engage. Effective youth work is structured and outcome-focused (Huskins, 1996; Merton et al, 2004), nonetheless it is qualitatively different from structured programmes that young people are required to engage with and it is this difference that is seen as essential to their successful engagement with young people.

As a universal service, youth work is preventative and diversionary. By engaging young people in activity that has an informal and moral education agenda, youth work prevents problems emerging by providing young people with a source of support in personal and social development (Merton et al, 2004). By engaging young people in activities that are

enjoyable and attractive, youth work develops relationships that aim to prevent young people from developing into citizens who are socially irresponsible (Young, 1999). This function of youth work can also be diversionary by providing activities for young people and raising awareness of opportunities for they can pursue; the consequential change referred to above. Within the broad framework for educative goals, youth work has always provided more support for some young people than others, developing this more focused and intensive support through the relationships built with young people. This has led to an increasingly targeted focus within youth work practice and as a result, to tensions between practitioners who believe in a purely universal and open-access approach and those that recognise benefits for young people at risk from a youth work approach (Barry, 2005; Huskins, 1996). In their evaluation of youth work practice across England Merton et al (ibid:119) conclude ‘targeted work presents crucial opportunities for young people at risk of social exclusion to engage in purposeful relationships for change’.

They emphasise that such targeted work’s interrelationship with universal provision is essential in order that it remains within a youth work framework.

The potential of youth work is recognised in the growing number of partnerships and service level agreements that youth work services have with youth offending teams (YOTs) and others focused upon work with at risk youth and young offenders (Audit Commission, 2004; Barry, 2005; Merton et al, 2004). And in the past 20 years, youth work has increasingly been presented as an essential element of crime prevention (Findlay et al, 1990 (for ‘Crime Concern’); Huskins, 1996; Merton et al, 2004). There are two elements to the potential of what we might term ‘youth work approaches’ for working with young people who offend. The first is that the basis in structured enjoyable educative activities means that young people are engaged in outcome-focused programmes; the second is that the primary focus of a youth work approach is the development of relationships for change. As we have seen throughout this source document, the features of such relationships are increasingly recognised within the youth offending literature despite being underdeveloped in research and evaluation of effectiveness.

These themes provide us with an important link to those highlighted earlier in this chapter – the role of activities as a means of engaging young people rather than a means of achieving change *per se*. Youth work approaches are highlighted within the practice literature and by their advocates as focusing upon young people’s self-image, their self-esteem, and their moral reasoning (sense of right and wrong). A focus upon self-esteem is identified within the literature concerning effective interventions for reducing offending as an ineffective approach; a focus upon these non-criminogenic needs – the provision of activities for activity’s sake, and a focus upon self-esteem – will not lead to change if they are the sole and primary focus (Dowden and Andrews, 2004). Youth work approaches take a focus upon self-esteem within a broader approach, one that is based in providing capabilities for moral learning and reflection and which aims for social development (primary change), and the further change that stems from this (consequential change). This holistic approach echoes messages about multi-modal programmes and their effectiveness above, and suggests a place for youth work approaches within programmes for young people who offend when we understand a programme as a ‘a structured sequence of opportunities for learning and change’ (McGuire, 2002:24).

Case-management: engaging young people who offend within and across interventions

The themes we have discussed and described thus far as emerging from research and practice literature suggest the need for a case-management approach when working with young people who offend. The importance of sustained case management relationships is indicated by the findings from Goldstein et al (1994), who found greater effect sizes when a ‘significant other’ works alongside offenders during the length of their programme. Support across a holistic programme of interventions that engage a range of partners builds on initial assessment and is maintained through ongoing review, with a relationship for change as the purposive feature, can be developed and maintained through an approach that has a single practitioner at the centre. The 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents provide a range of messages and findings to support this suggestion, and it is to these we now turn to conclude this chapter and bring these themes together.

Keeping Young People Engaged (Cooper et al, 2007) found that the range of influences on young people’s lives meant that young people were vulnerable to periods of disengagement from interventions leading the authors to recommend long-term, flexible approaches to supporting young offenders in order to prevent this and sustain engagement. They recommend a one-on-one case work approach, where practitioners with a limited caseload are able to act in the supportive, mentoring role highlighted above, and emphasise the complexity and time-consuming nature of this task. In a youth justice context, we might understand this as a case management approach. As we have seen, the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents consistently highlight the importance of relationships and the need to develop multi-agency working for holistic support. *Key Elements of Effective Practice – Education, Training and Employment* (Hutchings and Levesley, 2008) and *Key Elements of Effective Practice – Accommodation* (Thomas, 2008) draw attention to the need for (case) workers who are able to fulfil brokerage and advocacy roles on behalf of the young offenders they support, something also highlighted in *Keeping Young People Engaged* (Cooper et al, op cit.). A ‘casework’ approach, the features of which can be achieved within the case-management approach we advocate here, is also suggested in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents *Substance Misuse* (Britton and Farrant, 2008), *Young People who Sexually Abuse* (Grimshaw, 2008), *Restorative Justice* (Sherman et al, 2008), *Parenting* (Ghate et al, 2008) and *Mental Health* (Perry et al, 2008).

Practitioners need to be knowledgeable about the range of provision available locally in meeting identified (non-YOT provision) needs if they are to refer young people appropriately, but also the range of requirements, criteria and bureaucracy related to accessing for services and support can be perplexing and confusing for young people particularly when they are vulnerable or experiencing a period of uncertainty. In order to ensure young people engage with interventions, they may require support in accessing elements necessary for a holistic programme. In this way, the messages about engaging young people relate not only to practice within supervision or individual interventions, but across the programme of intervention themselves. In some instances, specialist workers are the most appropriate people to offer support or advice to young people, or to advocate or broker on their behalf. Both the *Education, Training and Employment* source document (Hutchings and Levesley, 2008) and *Accommodation* (Thomas, 2008) identify the need for very specialist knowledge in understanding and brokering access.

Yet, this does not negate the need for a case management approach; rather, case management accesses specialist provision as required, while retaining an overview and providing continual support.

A case management approach also enables the ongoing assessment and review process necessary to effective work with young offenders (Baker, 2008). A number of the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents recommend that young people's progress is tracked and rewarded through ongoing support (Baker, 2008; Hutchings and Levesley, 2008; Wikstrom and Treiber, 2008) and a case management approach facilitates this. Again, recognition of achievement and progress was highlighted as an essential feature within *Keeping Young People Engaged* (Cooper et al, 2007).

Recognition may be in the form of accreditation or enrichment activities, but can also be gained by the young person, where a relationship for change has been developed, simply from their case manager's recognition of their achievements and support and encouragement in building upon this. Supportive and engaging relationships develop motivation for change in both compulsory and voluntary settings.

Transitions

In this chapter we consider issues related to ensuring effective transition for a young person between custody and the community and between youth justice services to mainstream services at the end of an order. This was not an area that emerged from the literature reviewed for this source document, and we draw primarily on messages from the other 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents to highlight practice that engages young people across transitions (issues relating to adolescence as a transitional stage of development were outlined in ‘Individual needs’) and the importance of a case management approach.

Transition as a period of vulnerability: case management and co-ordination

As noted in the *Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision* source document, the evaluation of *Keeping Young People Engaged* (Cooper et al, 2007) found that the transfer of *Asset* data and sharing information between YOTs and YOIs was poor. As a model of good practice, ‘transition documents’ were identified as an effective means of ensuring information remained current and progress updated. The documents can be accessed by both community and custody workers, facilitating joint working to identify needs and to ensure that support is in place for and during the young person’s release into the community. We have seen throughout this source document the importance of sustained supportive relationships in engaging young people; the transition stage is a period of vulnerability for young people as this continuity is at risk. Information may not be shared and a range of workers may be involved without a case manager to take an overview and manage the transition. Thus, there are risks that the young person will become disengaged. In the *Key Elements of Effective Practice – Substance Misuse* source document, Britton and Farrant (2008:35) draw on evidence that demonstrates that ‘case management has been found to assist the transition from residential care to aftercare programmes, improve retention and reduce substance misuse.’

Similarly, *Education, Training and Employment* (Hutchings and Levesley, 2008) identifies a range of evidence for supporting effective transitions. They highlight the importance of protocols in providing clarity about the roles and responsibilities of youth justice and community partners and in ensuring that the holistic approach required to work with young people who offend is maintained. They also draw on evidence to recommend that practitioners offer continuous support and a community caseworker with whom the young person has the opportunity to develop a relationship prior to release, takes responsibility for their post-release support. *Accommodation* (Thomas, 2008) identifies a number of particular points when young people are vulnerable. In *Mental Health*, Perry et al (2008) draw attention to evidence of the need to provide ‘wraparound’ services for this group. ‘Wraparound’ services involve a range of practitioners in a co-ordinated network working to ensure that the multiple needs of the young person are met. Although they present a particular model, the notion of co-ordinated holistic provision across transitions has resonance within the broad framework developed over the course of our preceding chapters for all young people who offend. Grimshaw (2008:38), in *Young People who Sexually Abuse*, when

considering young people who sexually abuse, states that ‘effective coordination of services is as important on release as it is for assessment and treatment’.

Engaging Young People who Offend recognises the vulnerability of transition as a stage when knowledge, relationships, and multi-agency and joint working arrangements can be lost and takes a co-ordinated case management approach in order to ensure appropriate support and provision is ongoing. Messages from the previous chapter that centre around the need for a case management approach are particularly relevant here. A case manager or co-ordinator role enables relationships developed to be maintained and to be continuous across periods of transition or change, ensuring that information is shared, but also that transfer of responsibility between professionals, organisations and agencies are supported.

Training

In this chapter we consider issues related to training for effective engagement of young people. Here we reflect on the themes that have emerged in the preceding chapters from the reviews undertaken for this source document, including messages from the other *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents. All of these reviews emphasise the importance of staff that are well trained in assessment, working with young people and in delivering effective interventions; well trained staff is an essential element of effective engagement. Training is required for staff delivering interventions, as well as those supervising young people who offend and taking case management roles.

Communication and practice skills

We have seen how relationships are at the centre of effective engagement of young people who offend, and the ‘Communication’ chapter gave a comprehensive outline of key communication skills for practice. The importance of communication skills is highlighted in the *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children’s Workforce* (HM Government, 2005), produced to inform all work with children and young people under the duties of *Every Child Matters*. The first ‘Skill Set’ allies communication directly with engagement itself; the first area of expertise is ‘Effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers’ (HM Government: 2005:6). It states:

A key part of effective communication and engagement is trust... To build rapport with children, young people and those caring for them, it is important to demonstrate understanding, respect and honesty.

(ibid:6)

In this set of non-statutory guidance (which is not explicitly linked with research or evaluation evidence but based upon consultation with employers and practitioners led by the DfES (now the Department for Children, Families and Schools [DfCFS] and has been used in the development of YJB’s National Qualifications Framework), engagement refers to the participation of children, young people and their families in the design and agreement of programmes of support, again highlighting the importance of a collaborative approach in effective relationships for change.

There is a lack of researched training programmes related to engagement with young people. Youth work and practice literature highlights key skills as features for training, rather than specific training programmes, and we suggest that training is developed and provided to enable practitioners to develop the skills for communication and supportive relationships that we have highlighted throughout this review. Training should also consider multi-agency working techniques, methods and requirements. Workforce development is an increasingly dominant theme developing from the *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters* agendas, and it may be appropriate to develop joint training with partners, particularly where joint working is at the centre of provision due to the nature of the offence or young person’s need (such as work with young people who sexually abuse [Grimshaw, 2008] or mental health [Perry et al, 2008]). Perry et al

(2008) suggest that ‘wraparound’ provision is more effectively provided by (a network of multi-agency) practitioners who have been trained in the features of effective practice. In the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice – Parenting* source document, Ghate et al (2008) advise that non-youth justice staff require training in youth justice practice and procedures, as well as the background to youth offending, in order to engage effectively with YOTs.

Ghate et al (2008) also propose that ongoing training is provided, with ‘booster’ sessions for all staff to ensure that skills and practice are up-to-date and maintained. Both the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents for *Mental Health* (Perry et al, 2008) and *Restorative Justice* (Sherman et al, 2008) recommend experiential training – active experience with reflection entailing learning through doing – as well as the techniques of role play and other forms where skills can be practised and developed. On the basis of the themes developed throughout this review, we also suggest training in case management practice, managing caseloads and engaging with partners for change. Practitioners need to have, or have access to, detailed knowledge of local provision and training, which should also cover key local provision and any bureaucratic requirements for access, as well as providing practitioners with guidance about where more specialist support can be obtained. Resources should be developed that provide detail on local provision, and these must be maintained and kept up-to-date.

Management

In this chapter we consider issues related to the management of practice to engage young people who offend. We found no research of management practice to support engagement, and the wealth of literature relating to management and organisational practice is outside the scope of this review. Nonetheless, we are able to make inferences from the themes we have identified and developed, and draw on the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents for messages where they occur. In summary, reviews of effective interventions highlight the importance of well managed, well resourced (and trained) staff, but there is often little detail beyond this. As noted in the previous chapter ('Training'), workforce development is an increasingly important issue across services for children and young people and it is the responsibility of managers to ensure their workforce is well trained, well supervised and well managed. Managers also have a duty to ensure that monitoring and evaluation is developed and maintained, and that there is space to reflect upon and refine practice on the basis of regular review.

Management for engagement practice

Managers need to ensure that up-to-date and ongoing training is provided for practitioners, drawing on the themes outlined in the 'Training' chapter. YOT staff need to be supported in case management practice, and managers need to take an overview of caseloads and make certain that practitioners are able to work in this way to provide long-term, flexible and tailored support for young people who offend. To be effective supervisors, frontline staff themselves require effective supervision and Perry et al's (2008) *Mental Health* source document refers to research that indicates that good quality supervision and support structures are required for staff, offering evidence beyond the more general assertions found in the intervention literature.

Management for holistic provision

Keeping Young People Engaged (Cooper et al, 2007) emphasises the importance of managers taking a role in the strategic engagement of partners in order to secure provision and raise awareness of youth justice priorities and joint responsibilities. Managers can lead on the negotiation and development of protocols with partner agencies, developing formal agreements, practices and procedures as outlined in the 'Service delivery' chapter. We explore the importance of the development of, and access to, local provision in the 'Service development' chapter, but it is worth noting that Thomas' (2008) *Key Elements of Effective Practice* title *Accommodation* highlights the importance of this role for managers, as accommodation falls outside the primary provision of YOTs. Thomas also identifies the role of specialist officers within YOT teams and how these can take different forms in different YOTs. Hutchings and Levesley (2008), in the *Education, Training and Employment* source document, also stress the role of specialist officers working alongside case managers. Thomas (op. cit.) emphasises the importance of clarity of roles and we suggest that for a case management approach to be effective such clarity is essential.

Service development

In this chapter we consider issues relating to how provision that engages young people who offend should be developed. As this source document relates to practice rather than particular interventions, we do not consider particular forms of provision, but rather reflect on the implications for provision on the basis of our key chapters exploring 'Individual need', 'Communication' and 'Service delivery'. Each of the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents focuses upon a particular form or area of provision, or on the range of provision appropriate for addressing particular needs. We recommend the reader consult those documents for the comprehensive detail and review of evidence that each of them offer.

Effective interventions

As we have seen throughout this source document, programmes of support that engage young people are individually tailored and based upon effective interventions. Across the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents, there is a consistent message that only those interventions that demonstrate effectiveness or that can be classified as 'promising' on the basis of the available evidence should be developed by YOTs and their partners. Services and programmes delivered should be scrutinised through monitoring and evaluation and the supervision and management process, drawing on *Asset* to provide data on client outcomes, in order to review their effectiveness and make refinements as necessary. Effective interventions require well trained and well resourced staff, as there are lower effect sizes for services when delivered outside of demonstration settings. Staff need clear guidance on how to deliver interventions as designed (Wikstrom and Treiber, 2008). A case management approach can support young people across and within interventions.

Holistic programmes

In providing holistic programmes of interventions for change, YOTs need to draw on local provision and work with partners to develop it where required, for example in ensuring a range of accommodation is available or securing access to local education, training and employment provision. In order to meet individual needs, a range of provision is required so that there are options available to young people who offend and their families (Ghate et al, 2008; Hutchings and Levesley, 2008; Perry et al, 2008; Thomas, 2008). In this way, multi-modal programmes should be developed that enable young people who offend or those at risk of offending to access a range of interventions, including mentoring and sports and other activities as appropriate, on the basis of assessment an agreed with them.

Managers (primarily) need to work with local partners to raise awareness and demonstrate need. *Keeping Young People Engaged* (Cooper et al, 2007) draws attention to the competition for places on high quality local ETE provision, and discusses the problems youth justice clients can experience in accessing places in comparison to non-offending young people; their offending history and often lack of formal qualifications places them at a disadvantage with employers and providers. Work is required in

developing positive relationships with providers, building on positive outcomes achieved where young people are effectively supported and therefore engaged within interventions. As we saw in 'Service delivery', young people who offend can require those who manage their cases to advocate and broker access on their behalf.

Monitoring and evaluation

At the outset of this source document, we drew attention to the lack of research evidence on effective techniques for engaging young people who offend ('General findings'). See the Appendix for more detail on the process developed within this review. Each of the 2008 *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents also draw attention to the scarcity of high quality research evidence that details the features of effective practice, and each recommends that monitoring and evaluation of interventions developed and delivered is established and maintained as an essential element of effective practice. We endorse this advice, and direct the reader to these documents for specific advice in relation to interventions and provision for particular groups. As a caveat, it should be noted that there is a lack of evidence relating to offenders from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, and female offenders. Where it is considered, meta-analysis has shown ethnicity to make no difference to effect sizes (Lipsey, 1995) and female offenders rarely appear as the focus of studies. On the basis of our review, we suggest that future research should specifically address this lack of rigorous and robust evidence and explore the different needs of different groups beyond the requirement to have 'culturally sensitive' approaches. The YJB adheres to and advocates the joint RDS/NOMS-YJB research standards for all impact and reconviction studies, and where research is developed or commissioned, it should be within this framework².

'Monitoring' is the routine collection and subsequent use of data related to service delivery, use, outputs and outcomes. Data collected is used to indicate progress against intended outputs and outcomes. Our 'Service delivery' chapter highlighted the need to track progress on an ongoing basis, and *Asset* profile information can be an important source of outcome data, providing detailed information on the experiences and outcomes for young people (Baker, 2008). As with all areas of practice it is important that practitioners are given not only the data, but also the time and space to reflect on their effectiveness in securing positive outcomes in forums that enable the development of future procedures and processes.

'Evaluation' uses monitoring and other information to make judgements and to make changes to a service or intervention in light of this. Evaluation includes a range of data from a range of stakeholders, and should focus upon the views of practitioners as well as young people. *Keeping Young People Engaged* (Cooper et al, 2007) is a piece of in-depth and detailed research the scope of which is beyond routine and local practice. Nonetheless, resources should be made available for the collection and analysis of data that might not lend itself to the statistical monitoring of outcomes in order to identify the features of supervision and case management practice, as well as experiences of interventions themselves. Providers of services and interventions from outside YOT direct provision should be expected to provide evidence of effectiveness and of routine monitoring and evaluation to scrutinise, review and reflect upon practice so that YOT

² For information on these standards see Annex A of the YJB Research Strategy on the YJB website at <http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/yjb/Whatwedo/Research/>

practitioners in case management roles can be confident in the support programmes they design for their clients.

Conclusions and recommendations

This source document has focused upon effective techniques for engaging young people who offend. We have seen how, despite a growing body of evidence identifying ‘what works’ in addressing youth offending, there is little research evidence on the features of practice that engage young people within these interventions. Engagement is not an end in itself; as an analogy, a teacher who engages a class still has to teach them. In order to achieve positive outcomes, young people need to be engaged within interventions, but also across them through holistic programmes for change.

We have seen how the limited amount of research evidence can be supplemented and supported by practice literature, from youth and adult justice but also social work and youth work, to identify the features of practice that engage young people. Young people’s engagement begins with an appropriate and engaging assessment that leads to action through a programme that is agreed with the young person and with their parents or carers. Assessment should be ongoing and track progress, enabling achievement to be recognised and rewarded.

Relationships between practitioner and young person are at the centre of effective engagement. Relationships do not in themselves lead to change; relationships are required to support the achievement of change. Young people who offend or who are at risk of offending often lead chaotic lives and a broad range of interrelated issues impact upon young people’s offending behaviour. Individually tailored holistic or multi-modal programmes of support are required in order to address offending behaviour. Support needs to be provided that is active, participatory, long-term and flexible in order to ensure that multiple needs are identified and appropriately met. Supportive, engaging, relationships develop motivation for change in both compulsory and voluntary settings.

Relationships with young people who offend need to be based upon empathy, warmth, trust, respect and rapport, which enable supervisions to be focused upon achieving and maintaining motivation and action for change. Supervisor and client should be engaged in a working relationship, and young people may require advocacy and brokerage on their behalf. These relationships and activities are best achieved through a case-management approach, with clear roles and expectations for both supervisor and client. Transitions between custody and the community are a period of vulnerability for young people and a case management approach should ensure that information, knowledge and relationships are maintained.

Multi-agency working is required in providing and accessing appropriate provision and this takes time, skills and effort to develop. Frontline workers need the support of managers in ensuring that protocols are developed and adhered to. Multi-agency or joint working is likely to be required around particular issues, such as accommodation or other areas that are not primary functions of YOTs, or particular groups of young people who offend, for example those with mental health problems or those that sexually abuse, who have particularly complex needs and do not fall under the responsibility of a single primary agency.

Sports and activity programmes can be an effective means by which to engage young people who offend in holistic programmes of interventions for change, and messages

from youth work practice in particular identify the benefits of such interventions that provide both the basis and support for relationships and motivational development. While youth work is a distinct area of practice, it offers lessons for other work with young people, including young people who offend, that are consistent with the need for sustained relationships where authority is achieved through knowledge and action.

Training for youth justice practitioners needs to be based upon the features of relationships explored in detail in the 'Communication' and 'Service delivery' chapters. As well as supporting multi-agency working and working to ensure a range of services and provision is locally available, managers have a responsibility to ensure their staff are well trained, well managed and well resourced. Managers also have a responsibility for developing and maintaining monitoring and evaluation and enabling practitioners to reflect on their own case management, and to review their engagement techniques in light of data, including that from young people and their families, in order to continually refine their work to achieve positive outcomes.

There is a lack of evidence on techniques for engaging young people. Research must focus upon this, alongside routine monitoring and evaluation. In particular, there is a lack of evidence of effective techniques for offenders from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and female offenders, and this should be a priority focus within research developed and commissioned.

Appendix A: method

Scope of the review

This study aimed to conduct a systematic review of research undertaken regarding techniques for engaging young people who offend and those at risk of offending, in order to inform a *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source document. The focus of the review was:

Studies that evidence the impact of approaches to engaging young offenders or those identified as at risk of involvement in offending.

This scope was subsequently reviewed and developed (see below), and this process is outlined below. From the outset, the review was to include:

- research in the English language
- research published after 1996, giving coverage across 20 years; this was intended to ensure that the period of substantial research in the area of youth justice was included alongside the most recent research findings, and was to be reviewed once an initial ‘scoping’ stage had been completed
- research focusing upon young offenders as well as those identified as at risk of offending.

Quality assessment

Two frameworks were selected for assessing the quality of research identified through the review process, in order that evidence could be organised to focus upon the highest quality research, with lesser quality research only included where necessary and clearly delineated.

The first framework to be used was the Scientific Maryland Scale (SMS) (Farrington, Gottfreson, Sherman and Welsh (2002), which ranks evaluation studies on a five-point scale according to several criteria. The scale applies to quantitative studies, including evaluation studies. While it was developed for crime research it has been adapted for other studies, in particular a DfES (now the Department of Children, Schools and Families) study of parenting support (Moran et al, 2004). However, the framework is only suitable for these quantitative studies. In summary:

- **Level 1:** Includes studies reporting outcome measures with an intervention group assessed at one point in time only.
- **Level 2:** Includes pre- and post- intervention measures (i.e. measures at two points in time), but with no control group.
- **Level 3:** Pre- and post-intervention measures and also treatment and control group.
- **Level 4:** Pre- and post-intervention measures and treatment and control group, and analysis also controls for (takes into account) other factors that influence outcome.

- **Level 5:** Randomised controlled trial (RCT) i.e. pre- and post-intervention measures and treatment and control group, with participants randomised to treatment and control group.

In agreement with YJB, the ‘Global Assessment and Evaluation of Quality’ (GAEQ) framework developed by Moran et al (2004) was identified as a complementary and appropriate one to be used in conjunction with SMS in order for assessments of the quality of qualitative studies to be made on a similarly systematic and transparent basis.

Table 1: Global Assessment and Evaluation of Quality (GAEQ)

	Dimension	Quantitative studies	Qualitative studies
1	Measures/ data collection tools	Standardised (i.e. validated) or well-designed measures	Specified and standardised data collection tools (e.g. written topic guides, aide memoirs etc.)
2	Sample representativeness	Response rate reported	Adequate representativeness of sample relative to analytic dimensions (in sense of cross-section, not statistical representativeness) e.g. not all ‘volunteers’; not all one type of person when intervention is delivered to a range)
3	Sample size	Adequate sample size in relation to conclusions drawn	Adequate sample size in relation to conclusions drawn (especially re: sub-groups: not less than n=5)
4	Analytic methods	Appropriate statistical methods	Proper data capture methods (tapes, notes) and appropriate and specified methods of analysis (e.g. grounded theory; content analysis; framework analysis; thematic etc)
5	Programme integrity	Programme integrity taken into account in conclusions	(No qualitative equivalent)
6	Type of evaluation	External or independent evaluation	External or independent evaluation

As outlined below, the review process identified a lack of research focusing upon techniques for engaging young people who offend. Thus, these frameworks were not used to organise our sources, which were included on the basis of relevance rather than research quality, with this noted and reflected in the narrative and analysis.

Research process

The study was designed as a systematic review, with a focus upon studies able to demonstrate impact in relation to offending. The design was to entail:

- An initial scoping stage, where general search terms were used across databases in order to give an indication of the breadth of material relevant for inclusion and to

develop search terms to form the basis of the review itself. Forms of practice, such as ‘mentoring’, to be explored and bibliographic searches undertaken.

- A systematic review of research databases, with the results of search terms recorded and the material collated within an Endnote file.
- Studies to be categorised across a range of criteria, including research quality. The abstract to be used, with a reading of the full text where necessary.
- ‘Grey literature’ to be identified for possible inclusion, where relevant.
- Inclusion and exclusion decisions to be made, checked by a second reader.
- Full texts identified for inclusion.

The YJB was to be involved throughout this process, having the opportunity to guide the development of search terms as well as the database of sources and inclusion/exclusion decisions. The databases identified for inclusion within the scoping exercise and subsequent review were: ASSIA, IBSS, Zetoc (MIMAS), COPAC, CSA, CJA, NCJRS and PAIS International. Online searches were also included through Policy Hub, Social Science Online and Google Scholar.

As the review developed it became clear that there is a paucity of research that focuses upon the techniques for engaging young people within interventions and programmes that aim to address offending behaviour. The scoping stage involved extensive searching across databases using both general terms and those relating to particular interventions or practices. Extensive searching identified few relevant studies. And studies of interventions, including meta-analyses, only sometimes identified the components of practice that allowed us to understand the techniques used to engage young people, or their effectiveness. It became clear that some evidence was available in relation to some interventions or programmes, but it was outside the scope of the review to undertake systematic reviews of the range of interventions with offenders and those that have preventative aims (by targeting those at risk) in order to identify evidence where it did not emerge within a focus upon techniques for engaging young offenders.

An issue therefore emerged for the study team; should the document remain as a systematic review of evidence of effective techniques for engaging young people who offend and those at risk, resulting in a study unable to identify much of use to the practice and policy communities, or, should consideration be given to adapting the study so that it became a literature review that included non-research based material? It was also recognised by the study team that a series of companion systematic reviews for the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* series had been commissioned by YJB and that these focused upon a range of interventions, groups of offenders, as well as assessment, planning interventions and supervision.

The study team proposed to the YJB that in order to provide a substantive, relevant and useful resource for youth justice practice the study moved away from the tight parameters of the systematic review to a literature review, which included practice literature and the findings from and messages within the other *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents in the series. It was subsequently agreed that the study should be reconfigured so that:

- Research evidence where available is included, with any issues emerging from ‘quality’ noted appropriately.
- The study includes practice and ‘grey’ literature exploring the elements of practice with young people who offend and those identified as ‘at risk’ of offending.
- The study consolidates the messages from the set of commissioned *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents to identify messages about effective techniques for engaging young people across different interventions and client groups.

As such, the systematic review process was only partially completed. Searches were undertaken but sources identified as relevant were not classified according to research quality criteria. Those identified as relevant were supplemented with material from practice and *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents. Evidence and material was selected for inclusion primarily on the basis of relevance rather than research quality. The nature of the source and of the research has been taken into account and noted throughout the review. Where we have drawn on other *Key Elements of Effective Practice* source documents, the reader will need to refer to those documents for the inclusion and exclusion decisions and other features of methodology, as some of these reviews faced similar issues over available research and research quality. We have been careful to note throughout our document the nature of the evidence and material we have included.

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