EVALUATION OF REACH OUT PROJECT

March 2004
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would have been impossible to prepare in the timescale without the help of the following people: Sue, David, Shanwaz and Gillian from Reach Out and Gwen, Faye and David from Crime Concern, thank you for your hard work and support.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reach Out Project is a crime prevention project funded by the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). The project covers the sub region of West Yorkshire, which includes the cities of Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield, as well as the towns of Huddersfield and Halifax. The project is aimed at vulnerable young people at risk of becoming involved in crime or disengaged from their school or community. Reach Out engages young people in their penultimate year of compulsory education (year 11) and offers a programme of personal development and extended work experience, with the additional support of a mentor within the workplace. The aim of the Reach Out Project is to assist the regeneration of West Yorkshire by reducing youth crime.

The project originated as a West Yorkshire Police project but received SRB funding in 1999, it helps to support Yorkshire Forward’s mission of revitalizing the regions economy, and its priority of enhancing the quality of life of local people in areas of need by reducing the gap between deprived and other areas and between different groups. The project seeks to identify vulnerable young people by using an identification matrix completed mainly by teachers, and to intervene in young people’s lives by targeting those most at risk to strengthen some of the protective factors and to reduce the impact of the risk factors associated with young people becoming involved in crime, substance misuse or other problem behaviour.

The methodology for this evaluation is a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, with a desk review of a number of relevant national and regional strategies to give the project strategic context. A series of questionnaires were used to obtain information from some of the main stakeholders.

- The current cohort of participants, (year 5)
- Past participants, (years 2 to 4)
- Schools
- Businesses
- Project staff
- Management Board

Sample sizes were designed to produce statistically significant results, although in some cases this has been difficult to achieve. The evaluation also looked at the staffing structure, the programme timetable, project worker selection, mentor training, the identification process and the monitoring system in order to produce some key findings that could be applied to other similar projects of this nature.

With regard to young persons feedback from the existing cohort of project participants (year five of the project), the main finding were that:

- 86% felt the work placement was positive
- 27 young people have secured employment following school
- Over half are planning to undertake further training
• 33% said their school attendance had improved
• 53% felt they were more employable

Of the past participants contacted, (years two to four):

• 75% felt positively about their placement, the same percentage praised their mentor at the work place
• 84% have gone into further education or employment
• 75% said the project met their needs
• 31% said their school attendance had improved

Of the schools surveyed:

• 80% thought the referral process to be appropriate
• 61% thought the positive changes observed in the young people were attributed to the project
• half the schools were looking to develop similar links with businesses

With regard to the businesses contacted:

• 35% continued with the placement for the allocated period
• 77% felt they had benefited from providing work placements and over half did not have any negative experiences during the placements
• Of those who did have some negative experiences, they experienced poor attendance and poor punctuality and in 41% of respondents, behavioural problems with the young person.
• 81% felt that the young person benefited from work experience; and
• 78% said they would like to be involved in a similar scheme again

The Reach out project targeted vulnerable young people and those at risk of offending but did not aim to target persistent offenders or those already in the criminal justice system.

Offending data on past participants is not available for two years after completion of the programme, (summer 2006) but data available for years one and two shows 76% of those young people completing year one did not offend within 2 years of completing the programme and for those completing year two, 75% did not offend within two years. This trend seems to indicate that the project looks very likely to achieve the target of 70%.

The figures show a 3% increase in the number of young people offending two years after completing the programme as compared to before the programme and a 80% increase in young people offending when comparing figures of young people offending during Reach Out and post Reach Out 2 years after completing the programme, although this equates to an additional 36 young people only.
However there was a significant reduction of 43% in the number of young people offending during the programme and only 4.3% of participants in years one and two persistently offended prior to, during and after the programme.

In interpreting this data, it should be recognized that in the two years following the programme it is impossible to say what other influences impacted on the participants’ behaviour; it is difficult to know if those participants who offended after the programme would have gone on to offend regardless of the projects intervention. In addition, with the exception of the 14 persistent offenders engaged in the programme, the other young people who committed offences pre, during and post Reach Out were not necessarily the same young people.

The projects monitoring information shows that the project has exceeded, met or is likely to meet, (when the final information becomes available) all of its key targets and has built up a significant network of contacts and wealth of good practice experience. The closure of the project due to a lack of continued funding means that although some of this experience will be lost, other Partnerships and organisations with similar approaches i.e. that of Connexions, will have the benefit of employing some of the Reach Out project workers and building on the contacts and networks already established.
1. INTRODUCTION

The Reach Out Project is a crime prevention project funded by the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). The project covers the sub region of West Yorkshire, which includes the cities of Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield as well as the towns of Huddersfield and Halifax. The project is aimed at vulnerable young people at risk of becoming involved in crime or disengaged from their school or community. Reach Out engages young people in their penultimate year of compulsory education (year 11) and offers a programme of personal development and extended work experience, with the additional support of a mentor within the workplace.

1.1 Mission Statement

The Mission Statement for the project as outlined in the original SRB bid is as follows:

“To contribute to the regeneration of the community by motivating ‘vulnerable young people’, to have respect for themselves, regard for other people and their property and to take responsibility for their own actions”.

However, the Management Board amended this during the second year of the project

“ To work with Young People towards a positive future”

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the Reach Out Project is to assist the regeneration of West Yorkshire by reducing youth crime.

This aim is supported by the more specific aims:

- To help raise vulnerable young people’s self esteem
- To help equip vulnerable young people for adult life to encourage local businesses and vulnerable young people to participate in community regeneration

The aims are to be met through the following objectives:

- SO1, To enhance the employment, education and personal development opportunities for vulnerable young people
- SO1, To provide an adult mentor for vulnerable young people thereby enhancing the skills of the local workforce.
- SO2, To address the social exclusion and enhance the opportunities of vulnerable young people
- SO5, To tackle crime and improve community safety
The success of the objectives will be measured by the following outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SO1</th>
<th>2,000 students participating in the scheme will develop skills to assist their employment prospects through participation in prolonged work-experience. Of those, 400 will get jobs as a consequence of that training.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,200 will be motivated to return to or remain in the education system for the scheme year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All these students will be offered the opportunity to enter continued education at the end of compulsory education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal development programmes will assist 2,000 students with self advocacy giving them an ability to make positive life choices and thereby avoid involvement in offending behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The use of appropriate adult mentors will provide all students with good role models and confidants.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By the end of the scheme 800 companies will participate in mentoring young people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SO2
A programme within the scheme will be completed by 60% to 70% (1,200 to 1,400) of participating students.

Of those completing a programme 60% (720) will either be in work or full-time education within 6 months.

All students will be introduced to and encouraged to participate in community-based activities.

SO5
70% (840) of the students completing a programme will not offend within a two year period.

The following strategies were used in the Reach Out Project to achieve the above objectives:

- Identification of appropriate young people
- Arranging personal development activities
- Providing work extended work experience or work related learning
• Encouraging social interaction
• Ensuring there is ongoing group work and a structured reward system

1.3 Brief history of the project

The concept of the project was developed in 1995 with a Youth Service Officer based at Pudsey Police station who had a vision to support and develop ‘at risk’ young people at a time when they are most likely to become involved in crime and anti social behaviour. It began with twelve young people and over the intervening years has grown from one division to all West Yorkshire Police divisions; in 1999-2000 the project's target was 140 young people. At this stage, Outward Bound formed a significant part of the Reach Out programme delivered through two residential, one at the beginning of the programme and one at the end.

In 1999 an existing secondee from Barclays Bank to West Yorkshire Police, and a West Yorkshire Police Inspector applied to SRB Challenge Fund Round 5 for five years funding. This successful bid provided £2.7 million to secure the project's operation until the end of March 2004. The growth of the project inevitably meant that the structure, management and delivery of the project changed, the existing Project Manager, Sue North was appointed in 2000.

As an SRB scheme, the project moved away from its purely police origins, formed a Management Board consisting of multi agency representation and went through structural changes, both in terms of staffing and in focus, from a diversionary scheme to a prevention programme.

1.4 The SRB bid and Yorkshire Forward

SRB Round 5 provided resources to support regeneration initiatives in England carried out by local partnerships. Its priority was to enhance the quality of life of local people in areas of need by reducing the gap between deprived and other areas and between different groups. Yorkshire Forward, the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Development Agency, was created in April 1999 with the mission of revitalizing the region's economy. Yorkshire Forward are involved in many aspects of the region's economic regeneration, including administering SRB funding, attracting inward investment and jobs into the region, funding community based regeneration schemes to ensure opportunities for Yorkshire and Humber's most deprived areas, increasing the availability of training for the region's workforce and promoting the whole region to the nation.

The SRB bid recognised the number of neighbourhoods in West Yorkshire that have a significant crime problem, and that the proportion of young people in these neighbourhoods cautioned for or convicted of a criminal offence is much higher than the average for the whole sub region. The graph below (British Crime Survey 2003) illustrate that offences, when calculated as a rate per 1,000, are higher in all districts

1 From www.crimestistics.org.uk which shows all crime for Yorkshire & the Humber and West Yorkshire
for April 02 to March 03 than the rate per 1,000 for England and Wales and that within West Yorkshire, Leeds and Bradford have the highest number of offences per 1,000 population. However, these figures were not available when the original bid was submitted.

The bid also outlines other features of the area, for example high rates of truancy and exclusion, high unemployment rates and a struggling local community sector.

The bid includes statistics relating to the incidence of crime in relation to young people and some of the risk factors associated with offending behaviour. The bid addressed all the scheme’s level objectives but in particular focussed on enhancing the employment prospects, education and skills of local people and tackling crime to improve community safety.

The outputs of the bid can be found at appendix 1, these link into the objectives of the bid, which can be found in section 1.2 of this report. It is clear that in order to meet the requirements of the SRB thematic funding stream, the bid had to focus on an economic reason for working with vulnerable young people and that the target number of participants had to be relatively high in order for the bid to demonstrate ‘value for money’.
In addition, the project outputs illustrate that project growth year on year was ambitious, however the project manager negotiated a reduction in the project worker/participant ratio at the start of the SRB funding by re profiling the budget in order to recruit more workers. This resulted in ratios being reduced from 1:40 (including police officers) to 1:34.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target numbers of young people</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>1394</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority figures</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>(119)</td>
<td>(209)</td>
<td>(300)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.5 Risk and protective factors

The original bid did identify risk factors associated with an increased risk of problems in school, drug and alcohol misuse and criminal behaviour. Research carried out since the bid shows that the following risk factors are significant: (Sarah Beinart et al, 2002).

Family
- Poor parental supervision and discipline
- Family conflict
- Family history of problem behaviour
- Parental involvement / attitudes condoning problem behaviour
- Low income and poor housing

School
- Low achievement, beginning at primary school
- Aggressive behaviour, including bullying
- Lack of commitment, including truancy
- School disorganisation

Community
- Community disorganisation and neglect
- Availability of drugs
- Disadvantaged neighbourhood
- High turnover and lack of neighbourhood attachment

Individuals, friends and peers
- Alienation and lack of social commitment
- Attitudes that condone problem behaviour
- Early involvement in problem behaviour
- Friends involved in problem behaviour
However other factors protect young people from difficulties, even when they are heavily exposed to risk. This evidence has established the potential for strategies to promote children’s positive development based on the risk and protective profile of the neighbourhoods they live in:

**Protective factors**
- Strong bonds with family, friends and teachers
- Healthy standards set by parents, teachers and community leaders
- Opportunities for involvement in families, schools and the community
- Social and learning skills to enable participation
- Recognition and praise for positive behaviour

The above Communities that Care (CtC) model describes the 17 major risk factors and 6 major protective factors; these are derived from longitudinal research studies. The CtC model assumes that although children may be born with certain predispositions, their behaviour pattern must be learnt. Community based action to reduce risk in children’s lives and enhance protection can not only enable them to achieve their potential, but also reduce the chances of involvement in crime, substance misuse and other problem behaviour. The method of intervention used by the Reach Out project has been based on these risk and protective factors and seeks to intervene in a young person’s life by identifying those most at risk and strengthening some of the protective factors at a stage when choices about a young persons future, impact on their behaviour.

*Kate’s story*

Kate had a schools attendance record of 72% when she started on the project. She already had a local company in mind for a placement but they were not keen to take her on. Eventually they agreed to a two-week trial and she did really well. They decided to keep her on for one day a week and during the next few months her confidence and communication skills improved. She became confident in answering the phone and speaking to customers. The company increased her placement to two days per week and her school attendance increased to 98%. The company have now asked to keep her on as an apprentice and are paying for her to go to college.

2. **THE EVALUATION**

2.1 *The scope*

The evaluation of the Reach Out Project will look specifically at whether the project has met its aim and strategic objectives and reached its lifetime targets to satisfy the funding requirements. The scope of the evaluation is to include the following –
Has the project achieved its aim
Has the project achieved its strategic objectives
Did Reach Out succeed in engaging with young people and the businesses community
How successful has Reach Out been
Did Reach Out fit with the Regional Economic strategy
Did Reach Out provide value for money
Recommendations on how best the findings can be utilised

The report and its main findings will be presented to the final meeting of the Management Board on 26th March 2004, three days before the final project closure. The report will be stored on disc for future reference, distributed to interested parties and a copy given to Yorkshire Forward as the main body responsible for the funding administration.

2.2 Evaluation methodology

The agreed methodology has included a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The project has been monitored consistently since SRB funding was received and can demonstrate progress against outcome using the existing monitoring database.

In order to obtain qualitative information, a series of questionnaires where used to obtain the views of the following stakeholders, appendix 2

- The current cohort of participants
- Previous project participants
- Referring schools
- Businesses who have offered placements
- Project workers
- The staff management and administrative team
- The management board

Desk research will assist in putting the project into strategic regional/national context, the strategies to be included are listed below and summarised at appendix 3

- The Government Green Paper – Every Child Matters
- A Better Education for Children in Care
- Education and Skills – A Strategy to 2006 (Revised December 2002)
- Learning & Skills Council – Local Strategic Plan: West Yorkshire
In order to gain as comprehensive a picture as possible over the 4 years of project delivery, the following sample sizes were agreed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current cohort</td>
<td>200 young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous participants</td>
<td>200 young people, reduced to 21 after parental consent was obtained and addresses verified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring schools</td>
<td>15% random sample of all participating schools (15 schools)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Companies                         | • 10% random sample of participating companies from across 4 years (128 companies)  
|                                   | • All of the 13 businesses recognised by the project as particularly supportive |
| Project staff                     | All 14 staff to be interviewed prior to leaving                              |
| Management and administrative staff team | Team of 4 based in the project administrative base in Wakefield            |
| Management Board                  | Questionnaires sent to all the Board and 2 Board members interviewed        |

It was necessary to obtain parental consent to obtain the views of previous participants and it was agreed that an incentive of a £10 music voucher would be offered. No incentives were offered to the existing cohorts as both project staff and the manager considered their participation in the evaluation as part of their exit from the project. A £100 prize draw was offered as an incentive to schools and businesses to return questionnaires and this was seen to have been successful with the following return rates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>% of questionnaires returned or completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current cohort</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous participants</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring schools</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 The project was of five year duration but it was agreed that for the purposes of this evaluation not to contact young people or companies from year one
2.3 Limitations of the evaluation

The main limitation of this evaluation was the timescale for completion. Crime Concern was approached to conduct the evaluation at the end January 2004 with a completion deadline of 26th March, approximately eight weeks.

The consequences of this short timescale are primarily that it has been a challenge to collect the information within the timescale. Whilst most of the areas to be addressed have been covered, it has meant that the piece of work has been relatively rushed. Given more time, unreturned questionnaires would have been followed up and more face-to-face interviews with respondents would have been carried out.

In addition, the qualitative evaluation, especially in relation to the young person’s attitudes, would have had greater significance if this information had been collected and recorded throughout the life of the project. Most young people had an Individual Learning Plan, (ILP) prepared at the start of their contact with the project. An ongoing evaluation of the project would have been assisted by the introduction of ILP reviews and an exit evaluation with each cohort of participants; this information would have provided an excellent indicator as to the progress made by individual young people.

The exit questionnaire used in this evaluation with the existing cohort and previous participants of the project, took into account some of the questions asked by the project workers in the ILP. Similar scoring was used to indicate their feelings of self-esteem and confidence. However, there are a number of specialist tools on the market to give a picture of soft indicators of a project’s success, for example a young person’s increase in confidence. One of these tools is The Rickter Scale, a method of evaluation that requires no ability to read or write and relies on a kinetic approach in order to indicate how the young person feels in relation to a series of questions. An ongoing evaluation of the project could have included an evaluation tool of this nature, which could have given an added dimension to the excellent quantitative monitoring.

It is relatively more difficult to obtain information from those previously involved with the project a year or two after their exit from the programme, than from current participants. This applies not only to young people who may have changed addresses, but also to schools and business contacts who may have moved to different jobs or left completely. An ongoing evaluation may have been able to capture attitudes and opinions at the time or could have planned for a longitudinal study of a particular cohort of young people and the people/organisations they had contact with.

It was decided that the project workers would administer the exit questionnaires with the existing young people as they already had arrangements to meet the young people. This had the advantage of a known project worker obtaining information from a young
person they had had a previous relationship with. The disadvantage is that information may be potentially skewed because of the impact of their relationship. More time to obtain the views of the participating young people would have meant that more creative methods to obtain the information could have been used. For example, an interactive on-line questionnaire, interactive group or individual exercises (games) devised to engage the young person and obtain their views, focus groups or a planning for real approach. It would also have been illuminating to obtain the views of parents and carers about the impact of the project on the lives of their son or daughter.

**Sukvinder’s story**

Sukvinder had a poor record of school attendance but turned up for her placement twice a week and at the weekend. She is highly thought of at her placement and well liked by the other members of staff; they are prepared to give her a job after she leaves school

3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Reach Out project applied for and received funding from SRB in 1999. The bid followed bidding guidance for the funding stream available and was successful in meeting the criteria. However, since then the regional and national picture in relation to young people and the world of employment, training and education (ETE) has developed significantly. There has been recognition that ETE and work placements for young adults are significant, not only in making an economic contribution to a community and the region but also in terms of improving an individuals self esteem, confidence and reducing the likelihood of becoming involved in future offending. It is clear from the following documents that the Reach Out project philosophy of intervening in vulnerable young peoples lives in order to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors, is significant in relation not only to regional economic regeneration, but also in terms of regional and national strategies to improve skills, make a positive contribution, increase the amount of time in education and realising potential.

3.1 Education, unemployment and crime

A report by the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU 2002) concluded that just over half of male ex prisoners (52%) and 72% of female ex prisoners had no qualifications at all. The level of reading skills of half of all prisoners, and the writing skills of 80% was below level 1 (the level expected of 11 year olds). The numeracy skills of two thirds did not achieve this level. Poor literacy and numeracy increases the risk of offending and adults with poor basic skills are five times more likely to be unemployed and over represented in YOI’s and prisons. Two thirds of prisoners were thought to have no work at the time of imprisonment and two in three of those who had jobs on entering prison, lost them prior to release.

Waiting lists, interrupted or otherwise unfinished courses are seen as a particular problem in achieving additional qualifications, and discrimination by employers on the basis of a criminal record was also prevalent. A person with a disclosed criminal record
is unlikely to be recruited for approximately half to four fifths of vacancies depending on the nature of the offence, the rehabilitation period and whether the person had been imprisoned. The link between unemployment and acquisitive crime is significant (Gill1997), whilst these figures are based on ex prisoners or those already within the criminal justice system and not vulnerable young people, they highlight the importance of addressing ETE issues as a preventative measure significant in diverting young people from future offending.

3.2 Regional and national strategy review
The following documents are some of the relevant regional and national strategies with regard to this project. These strategies have all been developed since the Reach Out project began but it is clear that Reach Out was making, and could have continued to make, a contribution to the strategic aims and objectives from a range of perspectives.

Please see following table.
SUMMARY OF REGIONAL AND NATIONAL RELATED STRATEGIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>Reduce Educational Failure</th>
<th>Reduce Anti-social behaviour &amp; offending through ETE</th>
<th>Increase educational attainment of young people in care</th>
<th>Improve ETE experience and improve skills</th>
<th>Reduce truancy</th>
<th>Engage employers in work for development</th>
<th>Reduce economic disadvantage and contribute to regeneration of region</th>
<th>Achieve full potential/raise participation of young people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YORKSHIRE FORWARD REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNEXIONS – A VISION FOR 2006</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING SKILLS COUNCIL – LOCAL STRATEGIC PLAN 2002-2005 (WEST YORKSHIRE)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION &amp; SKILLS A STRATEGY TO 2006</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A BETTER EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN CARE</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVERY CHILD MATTERS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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</table>
The Youth Justice Board has also produced national targets for Youth Offending Teams (YOT) for 2003/4 and 2005/6 - the most relevant target in relation to the Reach Out project is number 7 which asks YOT’s to ‘ensure that at least 90% of young offenders are in suitable full time education, training and employment at the end of sentence by March 2004’. This target builds on the three Home Office aims:

- To reduce crime and the fear of crime, tackle youth crime and violent, sexual and drug related crime, anti social behaviour and disorder, increasing safety in the home and public spaces
- To ensure the effective delivery of justice avoiding unnecessary delay
- To deliver effective custodial and community sentences to reduce re offending and protect the public

It is clear that the project fits with the above strategies and could have continued to be an established vehicle for working with vulnerable young people to achieve targets set not only by the Regional Economic Strategy but also others featured above.

Max’s story

Max was always in trouble at school and with the police. He secured an apprenticeship following a work placement and is now attending a college course

4. STAFFING AND DELIVERY STRUCTURES

4.1 Staffing Structure

The staffing structure changed and developed considerably when SRB funding was obtained, this began with the appointment of the Project Manager who has been in post for the life of the project funding. On taking up the post, the Project Manager re-appraised the distribution of the budget and transferred more money into staffing and less into the personal development budget. This enabled more project staff to be appointed; at full staffing the project had two Operational Team leaders, a Business Development Team leader with two Business Development Team officers, 16 project workers and four peripatetic support workers. The project workers’ geographical locations were agreed according to the sub regional crime statistics, which indicate the high crime areas. This meant that five workers were allocated to Leeds, four to Bradford, three to Kirklees, two to Wakefield and one in Calderdale. The Project Manager was accountable to the Management Board that met quarterly. As the chances of additional project funding became less likely, some staff left the project for alternative employment but in order to stem the flow of staff completely, retention payments were paid as an incentive for the remaining workers to stay to the end of the project. This has been an extremely successful strategy and helped to maintain the delivery of the project to within a month of closure.


4.2 Project worker selection

Initially, project staff selection was based on a ‘Youth Worker’ type job description requiring the associated skills and experience. However, as the project grew, recruitment of the right kind of project staff became more problematic, especially in relation to the salary scale on offer which meant that more experienced youth workers could obtain a better salary elsewhere. As a consequence, the job description was reviewed and changed to incorporate a wider range of skills and experience; this enabled the project to have more flexibility in recruitment.

The consequence for the project was that some project staff did not have the necessary skills and experience but were recruited for their attitude and willingness to learn. However, because of the pressure to deliver against monthly targets, those staff recruited towards the end of the project had limited opportunities to shadow more experienced workers.

4.3 The Business Development Team

One of the members of the Business Development Team had a dual role as the project finance officer and one of the other part time Business Development Officers was responsible for identifying suitable companies to take young people on extended work placements. The approach tended to be that of either cold calling or using existing networks and links. The Business Development Team made the initial approach and then ask to meet with a Company representative. It would be at this stage that the nature of the project was discussed and the requirement for a mentor within the company to link with the young person. The individual interviews with the project staff group revealed that there was a difference in approach between the Business Development Team and project workers, the former approaching employers ‘suited and booted’ whilst the latter generally had a more ‘youth worker’ style approach. By September 2003 the two Business Development Officers had left the project because of the threat of closure and were not replaced. Some of the project workers interviewed during the final weeks of the project reported that they preferred to use their own networks and links to identify suitable employers. However, this was not necessarily the case throughout the lifetime of the project and certainly during the early years of the project, project staff seemed much less confident in approaching employers.

4.4 Reach Out timetable

The project operated on an annual cycle in recruiting the cohort of young people, the table below is an example of the process although timescales were modified slightly year to year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October to December</td>
<td>Teachers information day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Recruitment of young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan to Easter</td>
<td>Home visits, Individual learning plans completed. Contact with previous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cohort ceases at Easter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter to August</td>
<td>Maintain contact with young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September to Easter</td>
<td>Work placements start and personal development starts with individuals or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January to February</td>
<td>residential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The implication of this cycle is that the project workers worked with two cohorts of young people from January to Easter, with one group finishing their placements and the next being recruited. The teacher information days took place the previous October to December in order to encourage schools to identify the young people as early as possible. However, some schools had to be further encouraged to provide the young persons details. Inevitably this had a knock on effect on the process, which sometimes resulted in delays in contacting the young person and their parents or carers. In addition, work placements were scheduled to begin in early September to give the young people the fullest chance to gain benefit from the placements. In reality, project workers reported that this was very difficult to achieve with most placements not starting until October or later.

One major change to the programme as the project progressed has been the timing of the residential. Originally this took place at the beginning of the programme but experience showed that some young people did not then continue to commit themselves to the remaining programme and work placement. In addition, many of the young people found a week away from home with almost complete strangers to be too much of a challenge, and many of them reported that they were not satisfied with the residential because they had not had chance to build a relationship with project staff. The decision was made to move the residential to the end of the programme when young people knew each other and the project workers better and to act as an incentive to participate fully in the programme. The style of the residential also changed from Outward Bound to a wide range of Personal Development Programmes including Earth Centre, City Farm and a Motor Project. There was also a recognition that some young people find larger groups difficult so small group or individual Personal Development Programmes were developed, i.e. art based work supported by a Psychologist and First Aid courses. Every effort was made by the project to meet the individual needs of the young people involved.
4.5 Identification/ referral process

The scoring sheet featured in appendix 4 was used to identify young people who may benefit from the project. This form was originally adapted from the YOT referral form and was reviewed and refined each year. Teachers were asked to score the individual young person based on:

- Statutory education status
- Living arrangements
- Care history
- School attendance
- Perception of self and others
- Thinking and behaviour

If scores totalled more than 300 the young person was considered too involved in offending to benefit from the project. If less than 100 they were considered to be not vulnerable enough to benefit from the project and between 100 and 300 the young person could be considered for the project. Once referred, the project worker made the decision about participation, some schools discussed the referral with a wider range of agencies and some preferred to keep the process within the school. The project workers view on the process can be seen in more detail in section 5.8. Generally, they felt that the process should have included the young persons’ views more often and the views of other organisations like the police. The process is not dissimilar to the multi agency matrix used to identify vulnerable young people for inclusion in Youth Inclusion Programmes; experience has shown that the more refined and inclusive the identification process, the more likely the young person is to participate in a positive way.

The project manager suggested to the Board who took the decision in the early years of SRB funding, not to include persistent young offenders in the programme although each young person was considered on their own merit. It was felt that these young people had already become the remit of the YOT’s and would require more input from project staff than was realistic to give; the project did not want to set young people up to fail. This is why the decision to exclude people with a score of 300 or more was taken. If a young person was referred with a conviction, reprimand or final warning, they were referred to the West Yorkshire Police Community Safety Officer to make an assessment of whether it was appropriate to include them in the project. This decision was made according to the offence committed and relevance to the employment sought by the young person.

4.6 Project monitoring

The monitoring database used by the project is comprehensive and relates directly to project outputs. The database was devised and developed by Reach Out staff in partnership with West Yorkshire Police and has helped to produce some consistent and comprehensive quantitative information. Each project worker returned monitoring
information, which was then followed up in supervision, especially if there were problems or targets hadn’t been met. Each project worker had monthly targets for the number of days on placements calculated according to the requirements of the bid. Other information collected monthly relates to:

- Number of young people recruited
- Numbers left the project
- Number of Individual Learning plans completed
- Number of mentors trained
- A summary of personal development plans
- Number of attendances at work experience
- Number of school visits
- Number of home visits

The database produced excellent quantitative information, useful for the purposes for which it was required; to monitoring progress against outcomes and the performance of the project staff. The project workers views however, were that the project was too driven by these ‘hard’ outcomes and not enough attention paid to the ‘softer’ aspects of the project like progress made by young people.

4.7 Mentor training

In this context, mentors are defined as:

‘People who, through their actions and work help others to achieve their potential’ (Shea, GF).

The Reach Out project required all young people on an extended work placement to be linked with a mentor in the work place (not necessarily their line manager) who could give them individual guidance and support. All mentors were police checked and if any doubts arose the placement was not pursued.

The definition of mentoring for the project is as follows:

‘A process by which an older and more experienced person, within the workplace, takes a younger person, on a work experience, under their wing, offering support, assistance and encouragement. The older person (the mentor) becomes amongst other things, an advocate and a role model who inspires the young person’s (the mentee) (Basic Mentor Workbook).

The project’s philosophy for using mentors was to increase the involvement of local businesses working in crime reduction.

Originally, mentor training was to be provided by Leeds Metropolitan University but that more formal route to learning proved unpopular with mentors, especially as the role was normally carried out as an addition to the volunteer’s main roles and tasks and the
training took the mentor outside of their usual workplace. In response to this, a mentor’s basic workbook was produced covering a comprehensive range of relevant information including child protection, health and safety and boundaries. Each project worker and mentor was asked to work through the book in a situation that was appropriate to the circumstances and at an appropriate time. The feedback from the project staff was that this was not always carried out and that often the workbook was left for the mentor to look at in their own time. The material in the workbook is accessible and comprehensive but not accredited therefore not giving the mentor a recognised certificate on completion.

Jimmy’s story

Jimmy was totally disengaged from education and would not even leave the house. The project worker found him a work placement and after many failed attempts, took him for an interview. For the first month the project worker took him to work and collected him every day, 18 months later he is employed in a garage and attending college on a regular basis.

David’s story

David is dyslexic and has behavioural problems at school. He was always getting excluded and was in trouble every day. He has a placement for 2 days a week at a large nationwide garage where his behaviour has improved. They describe him as pleasant and well liked and he has really surprised his teachers and mentor - the garage are offering him an apprenticeship.

5. EVALUATION FINDINGS

5.1 Young persons’ feedback

The following is a summary of the information gained from the current cohort, (Year 5) of young people, charts showing this information can be found at appendix 5.

- 149 of the 160 young people completing the questionnaire received an extended work placement.
- 86% of young people describe their work experience placement as positive (14% of young people did not enjoy their placement and 13% felt it was boring).
- 27 young people have employment following complete their schooling (in some cases the employment is weekend/part time to support the young person in further education/training).
• Over half (56%) of the young people are planning to undertake further training/study;
  o 58 young people (36%) are planning to attend college (and stated the course they would be completing)
  o 32 young people (20%) are planning to undertake an apprenticeship in a named trade.

• 85% of young people did not request any careers advice/skills development. 5% requested support with interview skills and 5% with apprenticeships.

• Of the 134 young people who responded to the question “did you get what you wanted out of the project?” 87% said yes and 13% no.

• Of the 135 young people who commented on their school attendances as a result of the project, 33% said it had improved, 59% stayed the same and 8% got worse.

• The young people surveyed participated in 276 activities during their time with the Reach Out project. 173 of these were activities that the young person had not previously experienced.

• Out of 136 young people, 94 (59%) felt that their work placement had helped them decide on their future career. 10 (6%) young people felt that the work placement had not been of use in making decisions about their future and 32 (20%) were unsure.

• Out of 139 young people, over half (53% or 85 young people) felt that they were more employable as a result of the Reach Out project. 5% felt they were no more employable (8 young people) and 29% (46) didn’t know.

• On a skills improvement scale of 1-10, 83% of young people ranked themselves at level 6 or above, with 1 being not very confident their skills had improved and 10 being very confident their skills had improved.

5.2 Past participants’ attitudes

It was agreed that we would try to obtain the views of some of the past participants, (years two to four) of the project. The same evaluation questionnaire was used with young people contacted by telephone. See methodology section 2.2.

All of the 15 young people contacted had an extended work placement and all felt that they had developed a range of skills through that experience. Only 3 out of the 12 felt negatively about their placement, mainly because they did not like the people they were working with or that the tasks they were asked to perform were menial and boring. 75% of respondents praised the mentor at the work placement. The following table shows
the destinations of the young people on leaving school and shows that 84% have gone into either further education or employment; only 2 young people are currently unemployed or not involved in further education.

Destinations of past participants contacted

When asked what was the best thing about the project the replies were as follows

- 'The holiday'
- 'going to work'
- 'making new friends and working as a team'
- 'I learnt new skills and got involved in lots of new activities'
- 'helped me decide what I wanted to do’
- 'building up my confidence’
- 'It was all good, being with other people was good’
- 'it changed me, helped me make up my mind’
- 'the personal development stuff’
- 'the placement was awful, I was treated like a gofer’
- 'It got me out of school, the project worker was good’

When asked what the worst thing was the replies were

- 'getting up early'
- 'getting pulled off for not attending school’
- 'the awful work placement’
- 'the interview and the first day at the placement’
53% said there was nothing on the programme that they didn’t like and only 2 respondents (15%) said that they didn’t get what they wanted from the project. The remaining 10 said that it had met their needs. 69% reported that their school attendance had stayed the same and the remaining 31% said it had improved. When asked if the experience had helped them decide what job they wanted to do, 23% said no, 61% said yes and 15% said they didn’t know. Finally, when asked how confident they were that the experience had improved their skills on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being very confident, only 1 person scored themselves at 5, the remainder ranged from 7 to 10.

5.3 Schools’ attitudes to the project

The sample of schools surveyed was relatively slow to respond and required some follow up in order to obtain the information below. The questionnaires were sent, where possible, to the learning mentor or the person who has had most contact with the project. The feedback from schools shows that all respondents became involved in the project in order to provide alternative education for pupils in danger of becoming involved in ‘inappropriate behaviour’ and to give young people the potential to succeed outside of the usual curriculum. Charts showing the following are at appendix 6

- A total of 13 schools completed and returned the school survey.

- All 12 of the schools responding to the questions about the referral process felt that the process was appropriate and successful in identifying those young people who would benefit most from participating in Reach Out.

- 61% of the positive changes observed in the young people were attributed to participation in the Reach Out project.

- Just over half (7) of the schools completing the questionnaire said that the school was looking to develop links with local businesses to provide vulnerable young people with the opportunity of work experience. An additional school would like to develop links with businesses, but felt it lacked the knowledge and resources to do this. Fours schools said they already provide this service to young people.

- Half of the schools felt that delivery of the Reach Out project could have been improved. High staff turnover and the length of time it took to place students were two areas cited for improvement.

- 7 of the 13 schools commented that it was unfortunate that the Reach Out project was coming to an end. One school stated there was “…first class liaison between Reach Out worker and school. I was very impressed with the philosophy, organisation and support from the project”.

27
Another school commented “…most students gained skills/confidence which has been invaluable to them. Social events helped bring some students together.”

5.4 Businesses’ attitudes

The following information is a summary of the responses received from companies who provided work placements for young people.

• A total of 36 companies completed the questionnaire;
  o 17 were completed by the mentor (47%)
  o 13 were completed by the company contact (36%)
  o 6 were completed by the mentor and the company contact ³ (17%)

• A total of 95 young people were provided placements by the 36 companies completing the questionnaire.

• 33 young people (35%) continued with the placement for the allocated period.

• 77% of companies felt they benefited from providing work placements to the young people participating in the Reach Out project.

• Half (50%) of the companies surveyed did not encounter any negative experiences by providing work placements to young people. 47% of companies have some negative experiences as a result of the project.

• Of the 17 companies having negative experiences;
  o 11 (65%) experienced poor attendance by the young person
  o 9 (53%) experienced problems with punctuality
  o 7 (41%) encountered negative attitudes from the young person (including 2 cases of unsuitable behaviour)
  o 2 (12%) companies felt they lacked support from the Reach Out Team.

• When asked about the benefits of the work placement to the company and young person (see graphs, appendix 7) one company representative stated, “… a good employee has gained a job and we have gained a good worker”.

• Another reason given in the ‘other’ section was to strengthen links between the school, local community and company.

• 44% of companies felt that the negatives factors they experienced reduced with time.

³ Please note it is unclear if the mentor and company contact were separate individuals, or the same person.
• Just over half (53%) of the companies experiencing negative factors took advice from the Reach Out Project. 35% (6) companies discussed the areas of concern with the young people. Other interventions included alteration of tasks assigned to the young person (2) and verbal discipline (2). Two companies said the young persons attitude and behaviour improved without any intervention.

• 81% of companies felt that in general the young person benefited from the work experience provided.

• 78% (28) of companies said they would like to be involved in a similar project in the future. Of the remaining 8 companies, 1 was unsure about future involvement. Reason given by the 7 (19%) projects not wanting to participate in a similar scheme included:
  o Attendance problems (3)
  o Lack of support from Reach Out (1)
  o Amount of staff input required (difficult for a small company) (1)

• One of the mentors is now personally involved with working with young people and therefore feels they don’t have the capacity to be involved in a similar work placement scheme.

5.5 Offending of past participants

The Reach Out project is a crime prevention project designed to target vulnerable young people at risk of future offending. Section 4.5 outlines the identification and referral process used and an explanation of why those young people who had already entered the criminal justice system were, for the most part, excluded from the project. Offending data for past participants is currently only available for those young people participating in years one (129 completers) and two (191 completers) and shows the following.

• The number of young people involved in offending reduced by 43% during participation in the Reach Out project (compared to those young people who were offending prior to participating in the project).

• There was also a 52% decrease in the number of offences committed by the young people during participation. (A reduction of 55 offences).

• Comparing the number of offenders pre and post Reach Out shows
  o In year one there was a reduction of three young people offending post Reach Out
  o In year two there was an increase in the number of young people offending post Reach Out by five
In years one and two an additional two young people offended post Reach Out, an increase of 3% on the pre Reach Out figure.

- However when comparing figures of young people offending during Reach Out and post Reach Out 2 years after completing the programme, there was an 80% increase in the number of offenders. This equates to an additional 36 young people for cohorts 1 and 2, see appendix 8 for graph showing the data.

- The number of offences committed by the young people in cohort years 1 & 2 two years after the programme finished increased by 32 from the number of offences committed pre Reach Out.

- In the first years’ cohort, 10 young people offended pre, during and post participation in the Reach Out project. In year 2, four young people offended pre, during and post participation in the project. Therefore a total of 14 or 4.3% of young people persistently offended prior to, during and after participation in the Reach Out Project out of a total of 320 young people.

In summary, the Reach out project targeted vulnerable young people and those at risk of offending but did not aim to target persistent offenders or those already in the criminal justice system.

The figures show a 3% increase in the number of young people offending two years after completing the programme as compared to before the programme and a 80% increase in young people offending when comparing figures of young people offending during Reach Out and post Reach Out 2 years after completing the programme, although this equates to an additional 36 young people.

However there was a significant reduction of 43% in the number of young people offending during the programme and only 4.3% of participants in years one and two persistently offended prior to, during and after the programme.

In interpreting this data, it should be recognised that in the two years following the programme it is impossible to say what other influences impacted on the participants behaviour, it is difficult to know if those participants who offended after the programme would have gone on to offend regardless of the projects intervention. In addition, with the exception of the 14 persistent offenders engaged in the programme, the other young people who committed offences pre, during and post Reach Out were not necessarily the same young people.

Based on figures available, 76% of those young people completing year one did not offend within 2 years of completing the programme and for those completing year two, 75% did not offend within two years.
5.6 Progress against outcomes

The following information has been provided by the project and shows the project’s progress against objectives see schedule A below.

Over the course of five years the project has met or exceeded the following targets:

- Student participation in the project
- Students completing Reach Out and therefore remaining in education
- Students participating in personal development programmes
- Business providing work based mentors
- Students participating in community based activities

The final position in relation to the targets below will not be known until the information becomes available at the beginning of 2005, but there is every indication that the targets set will be significantly exceeded.

- After year 4 of the project, 445 are in work against a target of 400, a further 233 continued in education.
- Between 60 and 70% of the intake will complete Reach Out and of those completing the programme, 60% will be in work or education within 6 months.
- 70% of those completing will not offend within two years, the current figures show that in years one and two, 76% and 75% respectively did not offend within two years but the final position will not be known until summer 2006.
### ORIGINAL BASELINE POSITION

SO1 a, b, c, RES Objectives 4a 4b

To enhance employment, education and personal development opportunities for ‘vulnerable’ young people

Few of the target group are likely to find employment following compulsory education.

### POSITION AT 31 March 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>129 of 138 young people completed Reach Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43 young people were in employment 6 months after completion of Reach Out. This represents 33% of those young people completing Reach Out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 young people returned to full time education within 6 months of completing Reach Out. This was 28% of those completing Reach Out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>192 of the 246 year 2 students completed Reach Out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62% of the 192 were in work (73) or in learning (46) within 6 months of completing Reach Out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>305 of 416 year 3 students completed Reach Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56% of the 305 were in work (112) or education (59) within 6 months of completing Reach Out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### POSITION AT END OF SCHEME

- 1983 students have participated in Reach Out against a target of 2000
- 445 are in work after year 4 against a lifetime target of 400. A further 233 continued in education. The position will be further improved once the disposition of the year 5 young people is known at the beginning of 2005
- 1533 students completed Reach Out and to do this they had to remain in education. The target to retain 1200 students in education has been exceeded.
- 1983 students participated in personal development programmes against a target of 2000.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Completion Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>457 of 612 year 4 students completed Reach Out. 68% of the 457 were in work (217) or education (93) within 6 months of completing Reach Out. The number of students completing Reach Out (457) was higher than the target (360). The numbers in work or education was (310) against a target of (216). Cumulative Years 1 to 4 1083 of the 1412 total starters, have completed Reach Out. 63% of the 1083 were in work (445) or learning (233) within 6 months of completing Reach Out. The number in work or education was 678 against a target of 504.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>450 of 571 students completed Reach Out (79%).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SO1 RES Objectives 4a 4c 5d 5f
To provide an adult mentor for “vulnerable” young people thereby enhancing the skills of the local workforce.
At the outset a limited number of businesses were aware of the benefits that mentoring can bring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Staff Training Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

737 Businesses had received the necessary staff training to enable them to provide work based mentors.

921 Businesses have provided work base mentors against a target of 800.
### Schedule A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SO2 RES Objective 5b</th>
<th>Year 5 184</th>
<th>Total 921</th>
<th>a) Between 1200 and 1400 students will complete Reach Out. That is between 60% 70% of the intake.</th>
<th>b) We are confident that this target will be exceeded once the year out turn is known. The target was that of those completing Reach Out 60% (720) will either be in work or engaged in education within 6 months.</th>
<th>c) All students (1994) introduced to and encouraged to participate in community based activities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To address social exclusion and enhance the opportunities of &quot;vulnerable&quot; young people.</td>
<td>a) 1533 of 1983 students completed Reach Out 78% of those who started.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The target group of young people is on the verge of social exclusion as evidenced by their failure to participate in education and their identified potential for offending behaviour.</td>
<td>b) After 4 years 678 of the 1083 were in work (445) or in learning (233) within six months of completing Reach Out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) 1983 students were introduced to community based activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SO 5 RES Objective 5b</th>
<th>67% of the Young People who completed Year 1 of Reach Out in the summer of 2000 did not offend within the following two years.</th>
<th></th>
<th>Whilst we are very much in line to achieve this target. The final position will not be known until the summer of 2006.</th>
<th>The target is that 70% (840) of the young people completing Reach Out will not offend within two years.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To Tackle crime and improve community safety.</td>
<td>77% of the Young People who completed Year 2 of Reach Out in the summer of 2001 did not offend within the following two years.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The target group of young people is identified as at risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour.</td>
<td>To date an average of 73% have not offended within the two years after they completed Reach Out.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5.7 Management Boards views

At the time of this evaluation, the Management Board consists of seven members drawn from a range of organisations and meeting quarterly. The Board is responsible for the management and implementation of the West Yorkshire Reach Out Partnership Scheme, West Yorkshire Police act as the Accountable Body and the Director of Finance and Facilities, is responsible for the financial systems.

The organisation’s currently represented are: West Yorkshire Police as the Chair, a former High Sheriff, two representatives from the private sector, Princes Trust/voluntary sector representative, the National Probation Service and the Youth Service/Wakefield District Council representative. Two of these members have been involved with the project since its origins in Pudsey, others have joined throughout the life of the project. It was commented that because the role of Chair is performed by West Yorkshire Police, there have been some inconsistencies because of personnel changes. It is clear that the Board have had the utmost confidence in the project manager and have taken on board most of her suggestions and recommendations to develop the project over time.

All Board members felt they made a contribution to the strategic direction of the project and all felt that work experience worked very well or well and provided a positive addition to school based activities. It was noted that the matching process between the mentor and mentee had improved and that this had contributed to its success. One person felt the personal development programmes did not work so well and two others commented that the personal development programme had improved in the last four years, for example a wider choice of activities rather than just the Outward Bound option. It was acknowledged that the project had changed significantly since its police origins and that the personal support available to the young people was one of the areas where most improvements had been made.

When asked what the they would include or exclude if they were involved in a similar project in the future, the comments were as follows:

- I would seek to lower the ratio of project workers to young people as this pressure has led to a high staff turnover
- Target more precisely and reward more appropriately
- Grow more organically but this depends on the pressures brought to bear by the funding stream
- Look at securing a wider partnership especially with Local Authorities to give greater security for long term planning
- Look for more secure/long term funding

Board members recognised that the project had benefited employers and that employers were largely motivated by either wanting to offer a learning experience for the mentor or as a means of encouraging more people into the industry. No one thought it was seen as a good promotional opportunity for employers although one
person felt very strongly that employers were motivated by goodwill and a feeling of social responsibility with regard to the local community. With regard to young people, it was felt that the project had met its objectives in contributing towards an increase in confidence, providing something to do, increasing employment opportunities, providing ideas for future careers and developing new and transferable skills; one person thought the latter was the most useful aspect of the programme for those involved.

All but one board member thought that the project’s aims and objectives had been clearly defined and that the lines of accountability were clear, also reporting mechanisms to the Board were seen as being effective.

Most thought that the project’s systems were good and that the project had become more professional and organised, policy and practice guidelines and staff training have all developed considerably since the project’s original format.

With regard to the reasons for the project not being refunded, it was overwhelmingly felt that this was because the project was too large and expensive to be refunded by one organisation and that funding for existing services is not readily available. The emphasis for many funding streams is on an innovative approach and the project was not able to demonstrate this. Initially it was expected that the project would be taken over by Connexions but when this did not materialise, other avenues for funding were limited. In addition, two people thought that the project was too closely identified with West Yorkshire Police and that the implication of this for other organisations was that it was not seen as a truly independent or voluntary sector project and that West Yorkshire Police would refund if no other routes were available.

5.8 Project workers views

The questionnaire was distributed to project workers and followed up by 1:1 interviews, which revealed additional information included below.

84.6% of the project workers interviewed had no contact with Connexions Personal Advisors in linking their young people into a mainstream organisation as part of an exit strategy from the project. Whilst the Connexions Service has been operational in West Yorkshire for a relatively short period of time, there is an obvious overlap in the services provided by both Project Workers and Personal Advisors. Of the remaining 15.4% of staff who had contact with Connexions personnel, this was because they had attended an area team meeting in order to make the linkages between the services. Generally speaking the attitude of the project staff to Connexions was quite negative although three of the existing staff have jobs with Connexions on leaving the project.

69 % of project workers had no contact with Careers at all and of the remaining workers who did have regular contact, this was because in there particular area, Kirklees and Calderdale, where Careers are responsible not only for finding suitable Employers for work placements, but also for carrying out the associated Health and Safety checks. The Careers Service in these areas charge £125 per placement, paid for by the
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37 schools, which had an impact on the number of placements an individual could access if the first one was inappropriate.

The majority of Project Workers used either the projects internal Business Development Service to find suitable Employers for work placements, or their own of contacts and networks.

69% of project staff interviewed had been employed by the project for less than two years, with 55% of them employed for less than a year. The remaining 4 project workers or 31% had been with the project for two years or over. All project workers commented on a high turnover of staff and the difficulties of taking over case loads from previous workers, both In terms of forming links with the young people but also being able to support schools and businesses in an effective manner.

The caseloads of project workers seem to be similar in terms of numbers but project workers interviewed felt there was no account taken of the differences between areas in terms of the problems accounted by young people and the ease of obtaining work placements.

All project workers thought that the various elements of the programme had worked well or very well and whilst this was generalisation, most could give examples of young people where the different aspects had helped them in terms of finding employment or had improved confidence. In terms of the personal development activities, the project workers overwhelming thought that the experience of the Earth Centre had been the most beneficial to the young people. Most were not employed by the project at the time of the Outward Bound residential but still seemed to prefer the Earth Centres approach. This seems to back up the decision by the Management Board to replace the Outward Bound section of the original programme with less physically demanding and arduous activities.

76% of project workers would have preferred to see a wider range of personal development activities available, whilst the remainder thought the activities were appropriate, although thought that the timing of the events was not always appropriate, i.e. in school holidays or Ramadan when the young people had other plans. Of those who thought a wider spread of activities should have been on offer, most indicated that they would have liked more access to arts and drama based activities; it should be noted however that this information relates to project staff who were relatively new to the project and had not experienced the range of activities on offer previously. In addition, many of the project staff commented that in general personal development courses did not always cater for minority ethnic participants, which either stopped them engaging in the first place, or prevented their inclusion in personal development events. One example cited was that of Asian young women who were either not allowed or didn’t want to participate in residential, or some of the other sports based activities, although it should be noted that appropriate alternative arrangements had been offered. All but one of the project workers felt that the referral process worked to identify the most appropriate and vulnerable young people, however the following comments illustrate the complexities and differing views on the identification and referral process.

37
Project workers comments on the identification process

‘In order to reach our targets we needed to be able to fish in a bigger pool, my impression is that we have worked mainly with young people who have confidence issues rather than vulnerable to future offending. We should have worked with those who had already offended’

‘The project has been a dumping ground for schools, it hasn’t been sold well to schools, the teacher information day wasn’t enough and they have taken advantage’

‘Our monthly targets have been hard to reach so we have had to balance working with the most needy young people and those that will help us reach our targets. We may have missed the most vulnerable young people because of that’

‘We were definitely working with the right young people’

‘We did work with the right young people but were often unable to address their multiple problems and needs’

‘The project should have aimed at working with younger students over a longer period of time’

Project staff were also asked if they would include or exclude anything if they were to be involved in developing a similar project in the future. The following comments give a good indication of their views.

‘More time for personal development and more varied opportunities like art and drama, also more activities for girls especially Asian girls’

‘A recognised accreditation for both the young people and offered to mentors if they wanted it would have been useful’

‘We should have worked with less young people and gone for quality not quantity, also we need time to network more with other organisations like Connexions’

‘Accreditation recognised by employers would have been good but this would have meant us working with them for much longer, I think this would have been better’

‘I think each area should have had a base to be able to meet young people like a drop in centre, being on police premises was ok but we couldn’t meet young people there’

‘They should have been able to attend work placements more often than once a week if the school agreed, it would have helped to build confidence and get a job more easily’

‘One session in school per week with the young person would have been good’
Project staff felt that Reach Out had benefited young people in all or most cases in all the areas outlined in the questionnaire, and where project workers were able to comment, most felt that the biggest change in emphasis over the last four years has been the fact that residential placements have been moved from the beginning to the end of the programme, (seen as a positive move), that the systems and administration had improved to ensure more effective working. The most consistently made comment about the projects change in emphasis over the years was that it had become more focussed on monitoring and delivering monthly targets. One project worker commented that although there was an agreed format for files and the collection of information, this was not enforced consistently.

46 % of project workers have already obtained employment on closure of the project, one with a local Youth Offending Team (YOT) and the remainder with Connexions in West Yorkshire. Of the rest without secure employment, one is registered for a teaching certificate and planning to travel in the meantime, the rest are looking for work or further training.

92% thought that they had received appropriate support from the project with only one worker feeling that the support had not been as expected, all felt that their skills had been enhanced in some way.

Generally speaking project staff felt that their targets were clear and supervision was timely, structured and productive. However, a number commented that supervision had been too focussed on the meeting of targets which had already been presented in writing and too little time spent on discussing the progress of individual cases.

Sam’s story

Before Reach Out, Sam was frequently in trouble at school, not focussed on academic studies and had no direction. He had minimal support from home or school. He got a placement at a car bodywork company where his mentor now describes him as a model worker. He is no longer causing trouble at school. He has attended all the personal development activities and fully participated; he has mixed well with people from other cultures and his confidence has increased. He no longer has problems in school and is going to college to study car maintenance and bodywork in the future.

Rachel’s story

Rachel came from a family where no one had any qualifications; she was a persistent truant and her future employment prospects looked bleak. She now has an apprenticeship after school organised by the project at the work placement and should gain 2 GCSE’s if her mock results are a good indicator.
5.9 Project managers views

The views of the project management team and administrative staff were obtained through interview. Their comments and views have been taken into account throughout the body of this document and some issues will feature in the key findings section.

6. KEY FINDINGS

The key findings in the following section are based on the information gathered from this project evaluation and relate to the five-year SRB funding schedule.
KEY FINDINGS

The bidding process
- Involve staff with a working knowledge of the subject area at an operational and strategic level in the bid writing phase
- Include an achievable growth plan, including phases of consolidation rather than year on year growth
- Build in a development phase before monitoring begins and some flexibility to renegotiate staffing levels, priority of objectives etc if needed
- Include time to pilot approaches in a small geographical area or with a sample group of young people
- Negotiate annual reviews of targets and approaches with the funder to incorporate some project flexibility in order to take into account national or regional strategic developments
- Appointment of an independent project evaluator at the start of the project to work alongside the project managers, staff and management board and to help inform the annual review with the funders
- Impact can be measured not only by the achievement of quantitative targets but also by measuring ‘soft’ or qualitative outcomes for example the progression of a young people towards their goals or change in attitude. In this project, a work placement which resulted in a young person leaving the project early in order to return to school and finish exams, was not recorded as a success against quantitative targets
- The impact of labour market need and local and regional skills shortages should be taken into account during the planning and delivery.

Staff recruitment
- Incorporate some flexibility in staff recruitment to assist in addressing recruitment problems. For example, if potential workers have a positive attitude but lack direct skills and experience, the project should be able to accommodate a learning plan that includes time for workers to shadow colleagues as well as participate in more formal learning programmes. This would enable projects to ‘grow’ their own staff group
- Recognise the range of skills required by project staff; is it realistic to expect to find all these skills in one worker? An alternative approach for this project may have been to split the tasks as follows
  - One team of workers to take responsibility for recruiting and supporting employers, mentors and matching and supporting young people in the work placement phase. The workers relationship with employers is crucial as is ensuring that the young people participating are ready to make choices about work experience. Marketing and training skills would be required to engage with employers and mentors as well as experience in matching and supporting young people through the work placement.
  - A separate team of workers to focus on the personal development element of the project. The personal development aspect of the programme requires youth worker type skills to engage, motivate and encourage vulnerable young people and facilitate them to make informed decisions about work choices

Staffing and delivery structures
- Whilst the role of the Business Development Team was based on the recognition of
the marketing skills needed and an understanding of the business world, this arrangement seemed to be limited in its effectiveness. The Development Team were unfamiliar with the approach of the project workers and the latter had limited ownership in the success of the work placement because they had not initiated and nurtured the relationship with the employer. A split in roles according to task as described above may have been one solution

- Locally based team leaders with responsibility for team performance and reporting direct to the project manager
- Project workers supervision to address progress towards quantitative targets and allow time for discussion and guidance on the approach to individual young people and employers.
- Whilst worker/case load ratios were reduced at the outset, the ratio of 1:34 cases is still relatively high. A further reduction would have meant more time to assist the most vulnerable young people but would have had a cost implication. This ratio did not reflect the likelihood that some areas were more difficult to work in than others and that this changed over time
- Networking with other organisations is crucial to address the multiple problems and needs presented by some young people. The extent of multi agency networking seemed variable and dependant on personality; some project workers could have improved this upon.
- A greater use of ‘soft’ assessment tools would have assisted project staff to identify the needs of young people, especially in the area of personal development. A tool which could have been administered on an regular basis would have helped to track individual progress against personal aspirations
Training and quality assurance

- Formal staff training has been comprehensive but a staff turnover requires core training, i.e. child protection and health and safety should be repeated regularly. These and other core elements should form part of a comprehensive induction process for all staff.
- Whilst the Mentor Training manual is very comprehensive and an excellent training tool for mentors, its application has been variable. The quality and consistency of mentor training requires comprehensive monitoring as this information is crucial for ensuring good quality mentors.
- Whilst an externally provided mentor training course proved unpopular, accreditation of the training could have been achieved through the external accreditation of the training manual, this may have proved attractive to some mentors and employers in terms of personal development.
- External accreditation of the young persons work and personal development programme (ASDAN) would also have provided added value for project participants. Whilst work experience placements may not be long enough to achieve NVQ accreditation, transferable work related elements could have been recognised through accreditation i.e. health and safety at work, communication skills, team skills.
- Whilst comprehensive project systems were in place, their application seemed to vary, for example case files and the recording of information. Quality checks on files may have helped to improved consistency and refined the approach of project staff.

Young person recruitment and diversity

- Interviews with project staff revealed that whilst most of them were aware of diversity issues within the project, some did not take action to address the issues. Greater young person participation in formulating the programme may have impacted on the range of opportunities available.
- More emphasis on outreach work with minority ethnic communities may have increased the participation of young people living in those communities, although this would need to take into account the attitude of schools in referring and parents in giving consent to participate.
- A review of the ILP’s completed at the start of the projects intervention revealed that many young people had low expectations about their future or followed their peers in making decisions about work placements. Some project staff did not challenge stereotypical views of participants. For example, a high proportion of young women taking part said they wanted to enter into hairdressing and the young men wanted to work in a garage. Whilst these placements worked for those who were very clear about their future direction, others might have benefited from wider ranging experiences and taster work placements.

Employers and schools

- Initially, the advice from Yorkshire Forward was that suitable Employers would be difficult to recruit; in reality the project did not encounter the anticipated difficulties in employer recruitment. However, what proved to be more of a challenge was the fact that some young people were not ready to make decisions about work placements.
and required more guidance and personal development. One solution to this may have been to introduce more flexibility into the programme, for example, six months skills based course at a FE college followed by a six-month work placement. Alternatively a series of work place taster placements in a variety of work place settings may have been beneficial

- Encouragement to take up work tasters or training courses in areas where employers are experiencing skills shortages would not only assist in plugging skills gaps and address labour market need but also potentially improve the young persons chances in gaining employment on leaving the project
- The quality and consistency of support provided to employers and mentors was crucial in keeping employers on board with the project even if placements did not work out with one or two individuals
- Most employers became involved in the project because either they saw it as a way of developing the mentors or as way of attracting young people to the industry or company. The employers social conscience was also a key motivating factor as some saw it as a means of assisting the local community
- Where appropriate to the individual young person and the school, flexible arrangements were negotiated to increase the number of work placement days from once a week up to three days a week which seemed to be effective in engaging some of the most at risk young people.
- The relationship with schools seemed to be most effective where project staff had a direct relationship with Learning Mentors or non teaching staff who had more time to support the young person in their contact with the project. Where the relationship was with the head of year or teaching staff, contact seemed to be less frequent
- Targeting the most vulnerable young people was an issue for the project and the school. Some project workers felt that some schools used the project as a ‘dumping ground’ for disruptive students, whilst some project workers tried to engage the least disruptive referrals in order to achieve their monthly targets. Achieving a mutual understanding of the projects aim and approach clearly takes time and patience on both sides to achieve
- More positive links with local FE colleges may have been beneficial in providing appropriate courses giving transferable employment skills, local provision is crucial to motivate young people who are not used to travelling long distances
- Links with FE colleges would also assist in introducing young people with low levels of confidence to a further education environment and help them to make decisions about continuing in education
CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that the Reach Out project has been well monitored and organised and has achieved the outcomes as required by the funders. 1983 students have participated against a target of 2000; after year 4, 445 are in work against a target of 400; a further 233 have continued in education although the figures will be further improved following year 5 results. 1983 students participated in personal development against a target of 2000. The target of between 60 to 70% students completing Reach Out will be achieved and of those completing, 720 or 60% will be in work or education within 6 months. With regard to businesses and schools involvement, the overall picture is also a positive one, 77% of companies surveyed felt they had benefited from providing work placements to the young people participating and half of the companies did not encounter any negative experiences. Of those who did have a negative experience, only 12% felt they lacked support from the Reach Out staff. The majority of businesses involved thought the project to be a positive way to improve the skills of vulnerable young people and 921 businesses have provided work-based mentors against a target of 800.

The Reach out project targeted vulnerable young people and those at risk of offending but did not aim to target persistent offenders or those already in the criminal justice system. The figures show a 3% increase in the number of young people offending two years after completing the programme as compared to before the programme and an 80% increase in young people offending when comparing figures of young people offending during Reach Out and post Reach Out, 2 years after completing the programme, although this equates to an additional 36 young people only. However, there was a significant reduction of 43% in the number of young people offending during the programme and only 4.3% of participants in years one and two persistently offended prior to, during and after the programme.

In interpreting this data, it should be recognised that in the two years following the programme it is impossible to say what other influences impacted on the participants behaviour, it is difficult to know if those participants who offended after the programme would have gone on to offend regardless of the projects intervention. In addition, with the exception of the 14 persistent offenders engaged in the programme, the other young people who committed offences pre, during and post Reach Out were not necessarily the same young people. Based on figures available, 76% of those young people completing year one did not offend within 2 years of completing the programme and for those completing year two, 75% did not offend within two years. The full picture in relation to offending within two years of completing the programme will not be known until summer 2006 but given the data from years one and two, the project looks very likely to achieve the target of 70%.

Other qualitative information gathered, indicates that the young people who completed the programme did gain significantly from the project in terms of personal development and a greater insight to the world of work. 86% described their work placement as positive and 27 young people have gained employment following compulsory education, 36% are planning to attend college and 20 have an apprenticeship in a named trade to
attend. 59% felt that the project had helped them decide on their future employment even if the placement they were in had not been a positive experience.

The project has been distinctively branded and has moved away from its police origins over the course of the last five years. However, West Yorkshire Police has remained committed to this project, providing not only practical support in terms of finance, administration and office bases, but also personnel in terms of the Chair of the Management Board and assistance and advice with criminal records checks for young people and mentors. The links with the police have meant that some processes, especially the personnel function, have been frustrating because of the size and complexity of West Yorkshire Police. However, the project manager has dealt with and overcome most of these frustrations through sheer determination, hard work and the backing of her staff group and Board members. The strength of Reach Out has undoubtedly been in its management, the project manager has had vision and commitment to ensure that targets have been achieved, the finance officer and operations manager have also shown commitment to the project right until the end. Recruitment of the right project staff has sometimes been a challenge although not uncommon in this type of project. The qualities and skills required by project workers have been wide ranging and the job demanding, it has not always been possible to recruit staff with the right range of skills for the salary available. The turnover of staff is reflective of the demands of the role, especially to meet monthly targets. It is clear that most remaining project staff interviewed felt this to be a pressure and that the balance between achieving the quantitative outcomes and the softer outcomes in relation to the progress and development of the young people involved, was not always possible to achieve. However, it is testament to the project workers, managers and the Board that the remaining staff group, even when facing imminent redundancy were motivated, cheerful and still operating as a team and it has clearly been a very positive experience for all those involved.

The original bid submitted in 1999 was proposed at a time when the idea of extended work experience for 15 to 16 year olds was not common. It is clear from the schools responses that this approach has been adopted by many of the schools and that extended work experience will continue to form a part of the curriculum for some young people. This should be considered a major success for the project, as the experiences gained by participating schools in the last five years will help them formulate their approach to businesses in the future.

There has been a great deal of strategic change in recent years in relation to addressing social exclusion and improving the skills of vulnerable young people. Chapter 3 of this report shows a summary of some of the recent relevant regional and national strategies. It is clear that the Reach Out programme has included a wide range of elements that feature in the strategies summarised. In particular the Yorkshire Forward Regional Economics Strategy, 2003 to 2012 provides a framework of common priorities around which businesses, public agencies, voluntary groups as well as communities, can focus their investment and effort. One of its aims and objectives is to radically improve the development and application of education, learning and skills, in
particular high-quality vocational skills. One of Yorkshire and Humber’s top ten priority actions between 2003 and 2006 is to:

“Connect 10,000 young people from deprived communities into jobs and education through stronger links between local businesses and educational institutions, higher graduate retention and more local people attending university.”

The Reach Out project was indeed making a significant contribution to this priority action and with renewed funding, could have continued to develop this approach building on the past five years experiences. In evaluating the project, even in such a limited timescale, it is also clear that the nature of the work delivered through the lifetime of this project has overlaps with the delivery of the Connexions Service. The Connexions Service national Vision for 2006 says:

‘Connexions brings together a wide range of existing agencies that deliver services to 13-19 year olds (including Health services, police, probation, youth services, social services, youth offending teams, drug action teams, voluntary and community organizations as well as other relevant agencies in different parts of the country). Its services for all 13-19 year olds focus on those who need it most, arranging specialist services where necessary, to ensure that young people are no longer passed on from one agency to another.’

The key area where Connexions need to achieve measurable outcomes is to reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment and in 2006, progress will be measured by the proportion of young people who make a successful transition into further learning at 16, the proportion who stay on at 17, and the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are in either learning or work. The outcomes set by Connexions are:

- Improvements in young people’s behaviour and a reduction in the number of young people who become involved in crime;
- Better outcomes for young people from black and ethnic minorities; and
- To improve the overall effectiveness of services in meeting young people’s needs

To achieve these outcomes, Connexions partner agencies will:

- Ensure that effective, coherent arrangements are in place for assessing young people’s needs and for planning and reviewing progress.
- Improve the quality and timeliness of the advice and support available pre-16, identifying and targeting help on those at risk who are less likely to make a successful transition. Preventative work with the younger age group.
- Identify those who are vulnerable in post-16 learning, and provide help immediately before they reach the point of dropping out.
- Continue to work with young people who have dropped out of learning and work to help them re-engage.
In developing and setting out their business plans, local Connexions strategies will need to reflect the reasons why some young people are more likely to be out of learning or work than others, where they are located and which interventions make a difference. In partnership with local LSC’s they must plan a range of suitable post-16 provision which minimizes drop-out and helps target resources to where they can make the most effective impact on young people’s lives.’

The Reach Out project was already delivering a programme that meets the above outcomes with the advantage of having a proven successful track record. The approach to Connexions for further funding was unsuccessful partly because of the cost of replicating the existing project. However, an alternative solution may have been to maintain the effective elements of the project to be delivered locally using existing management structures.

The project has achieved it aim and objectives as stated in the original bid and has in the main engaged successfully with schools and businesses. The project was fortunate to receive five years funding, the advantage being that five years is a reasonable amount of time to develop the programme and impact on young people and other agencies. However, the objectives were negotiated in 1998, which has meant that the project was unable to respond flexibly to national change in emphasis in this area of delivery over the last five years. As a consequence, some re funding opportunities may have been missed; for example the Prevention Agenda and the use of 25% of the Children’s Fund budget to deliver a menu of preventative measures, or the Government’s long-term policy objective to ensure that every child in care is able to fulfill his or her potential. A proposed target in this strategy is to “Improve Life Chances for Children”, by substantially narrowing the gap between the education attainment and participation of children in care and that of their peers by 2006. Whilst the project did not routinely monitor the number of looked after children involved with the project, it is likely that a large proportion of participants were in this category. The emphasis of the Reach Out project was essentially to contribute to the economic regeneration of the sub region by improving skills and reducing social exclusion. The requirements of the funding stream meant that the measurement of hard outcomes took priority with less priority given to the softer outcomes, like progression and change in attitude, this may have limited further funding opportunities.

The evaluation scope included the question ‘has the project been value for money’. In terms of meeting agreed targets for participation and completion both for young people and mentors, the project has demonstrated excellent value for money, in that it has achieved what it set out to do. However, given that the focus of the project is central to the strategic direction of so many new services to reduce the social exclusion and improve skills of young people, the lack of continued funding and the consequent loss of this project’s experience and networks; could be seen as less cost effective in the longer term.

The Reach Out Management Board and staff have been keen to formulate key findings and pointers to best practice, this evaluation took place in a relatively short timescale,
however, it is hoped by all those that have shown such commitment and dedication to this project, that the key findings may prove useful to future projects of this nature.

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