

Introduction

The Community Project Workers Scheme

The Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) Community Project Workers Scheme (CPWS) focuses on supporting agencies working with the most alienated groups of at-risk young people. Specifically, it provides a salary for a worker to work with youth who do not identify with mainstream organisations.

The scheme operates within a community development framework and works with the at-risk young people in their social and community context. CPWS funding is given to agencies varying from small rural based groups to more formally structured provincial or urban organisations. Department of Internal Affairs Community Advisors provide ongoing support and project development advice to the agencies.

Decisions on the location of CPWS projects are made on the basis of an assessment or stock-take of youth needs and services in the region. The stock-take of youth needs and services is carried out by the Department of Internal Affairs Community Advisors in consultation with community organisations and government agencies in the region. CPWS projects are selected in areas of greatest need. If these areas do not have an appropriate community agency already set up, Community Advisors work developmentally with the community toward establishing a project and agency base.

The Crime Prevention Package

In 1997 the Government made funding available for 5 new CPWS salaries under the Budget 1997 Youth at Risk, Crime Prevention package (\$36,800 GST exclusive per project, per annum). These projects were intended to focus specifically on at-risk young people aged 14-20 years who have problems that are likely to lead to offending, and who are failing to respond to conventional helping services. At risk young people are defined as those who have come to the attention of government and community based organisations because they are:

- at risk of offending or are already committing offences;
- attend school sporadically or not at all;
- show symptoms of being “disengaged” or “alienated” from their families and communities.

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

The intended outcomes of the scheme, under the Budget 1997 Youth at Risk Crime Prevention package, are as follows:

Individual

- positive behavioural changes
- increased personal strength and self reliance
- increased positive participation in their communities, whānau and schools

Community

- increased community capacity to effectively deliver programmes and projects targeted to at-risk young people
- improved co-ordination between groups involved with youth at risk of offending

Agencies wishing to access CPWS funding, under the Budget 1997 Youth at Risk Crime Prevention package, needed to fulfil the following criteria:

- targeting youth who are most at risk of offending, or who are already committing minor offences, in specific high-risk communities
- using a youth development approach

- including both individual support and community development activities
- being located within an organisation with the capacity to supervise and support a CPWS worker, and deliver and manage the project effectively
- reaching the most marginalised youth in the area
- co-operating with the DIA monitoring and evaluation process and the evaluator of the Budget 1997 Youth at Risk Crime Prevention package

Five areas were selected for the Youth at Risk Crime Prevention CPWS projects, on the basis of high incidence of youth offending and at risk variables. These were:

- Otago
- Gisborne
- Hamilton
- Christchurch
- Kaikohe

By locating the projects in the most difficult youth crime areas, the Department of Internal Affairs aimed to provide services where they were most needed and achieve robust evidence about effectiveness and transferability of the project approach.

Evaluation Methodology and Context

At the end of each year of operation, each individual project was required to provide a range of data regarding the nature, process, outputs and outcomes of their activities. This was entered onto an annual evaluation form (Appendix A) and returned to their local DIA community advisor. The methods by which this data was collected varied according to project, but each included consideration of client records, case studies, client and stakeholder feedback, CPWS worker observations and activity records. Some projects also undertook structured interviewing and/or external evaluations.

The data provided by the projects was analysed and evaluated by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) Research Unit. In addition, a representative from the Research Unit visited each project annually to advise on data collection, obtain observational information and consult with project staff and community stakeholders. The information collected during these visits was also fed into the evaluations.

Information regarding project outcomes was primarily presented in the form of correlation and temporal sequence observations. None of the evaluations included comparisons between participant and non-participant populations and outcomes were not controlled for extraneous influences. Therefore, it is impossible to say with absolute certainty whether project outcomes were purely the result of the CPWS worker intervention, partly the result of the CPWS worker intervention, or whether they would have occurred regardless of this intervention. Similarly, where outcomes relate to reduced offending, it may be that the majority of the young people would not have re-offended, even if they had not participated in the project. Alternatively, it could be that they have simply become more careful offenders and are no longer getting caught.

In order to assess whether participant outcomes were related to their involvement with the project, project process was compared with evidence from the literature concerning the relative effectiveness of different crime prevention methods. By comparing project process with evidence from the literature, the means by which specific outcomes have been achieved under controlled conditions could be compared with the means used in the CPWS projects. From this comparison, inference could be made about the likelihood that the project contributed to the outcomes.

In terms of the literature used to evaluate the processes of the CPWS projects, specific attention was given to a document entitled "Preventing Crime: What works, what doesn't, what's promising" by Sherman, Gottfredson, MacKenzie, Eck, Reuter and Bushway, in collaboration with members of the Graduate Programme, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Maryland (1998). This document was prepared for the United States National Institute of Justice, in response to

a request from the Attorney General for a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Department of Justice Grants in preventing crime.

In response to this request, the authors of the 1998 publication independently reviewed relevant scientific literature for in excess of 500 crime prevention programmes across a range of community, family, school, labour market, place, police and criminal justice settings. They considered programmes in terms of the strength and number of evaluations conducted for each and the outcomes identified from these. Only those programmes which showed positive outcomes in at least two evaluations using, what the authors referred to as, “strong” evaluation methods were considered effective (the authors said they worked). The minimum criteria for a programme evaluation to be considered “strong” was that it compared two or more units of analysis, one with and one without the programme, preferably controlling for other factors and using random assignment methods.

Although the literature presented by Sherman et al (1998) focuses on programmes specific to the North American context, to date it is one of the most comprehensive of its kind. While there have been numerous evaluations of crime prevention programmes world-wide, the majority have measured effectiveness using correlation or temporal sequence observations. Such methods do not infer causation. Indeed, Sherman et al (1998) indicated that this was also true for the majority of evaluations reviewed by them.

In the New Zealand context, strong evaluation data regarding crime prevention projects is particularly hard to come by, especially for projects developed in community settings. This is due in part to limited resources and in part to the fact that the communities involved are often very small. It is also due to the fluid and changing nature of youth populations, changes in the demographic make-up of an area, and the fact that the subject matter is particularly difficult to measure. Indeed, it is much harder to measure the absence of crime than it is to measure its presence.

There are a number of ways to measure crime and each is subject to various flaws and biases. For instance, police crime figures are not only influenced by levels of offending, but also by a range of social and economic variables. These variables include the size and effectiveness of the police force, the skill of the offenders, willingness of victims and witnesses to report crimes, and ease of offender mobility within and outside of a community. Indeed, increases and decreases in police crime rates may be as much due to changes in any of these factors as they are to changes in actual offending. In addition, police figures are typically reported by station and these do not always conform to the communities identified for intervention.

In contrast, self report may be influenced by social conditions, with offenders less likely to report criminal activity to individuals that they do not trust, or to those who they do not want to disappoint. There is some research evidence to suggest that reporting by proxy (i.e. behaviour reported by others) yields better results for all sensitive questions. However, this is also influenced by the relationship between the offender and the reporting individual, and how much contact the two have (Clark and Schober, 1992). Indeed, reporting by proxy has been shown to be less effective where parents report the behaviour of their children.

Furthermore, there is a general reluctance of project providers (many of whom are given the responsibility to collect data) to exclude individuals from their project in order to provide a comparison or control group. Indeed, doing so actually changes the nature of the projects. The fact that many of the US community projects (that have been evaluated) focused on urban communities reduced this problem somewhat. Given the large number of young people residing in cities there is a lower likelihood that comparison group members will come into contact with the programme participants, and an increased likelihood that, for small scale projects at least, some would have been excluded anyhow. This fact should be kept in mind when considering the following evaluations, as urban US communities are likely to differ significantly from rural New Zealand ones.

Few of the evaluations identified in North American analyses of crime prevention initiatives deal specifically with the issue of culture and how it relates to behaviour and at risk status. Sherman et al (1998) indicate that when studies control for the effects of poverty, ethnicity fails to demonstrate influence over offence levels. However, this conclusion does not consider the reasons that specific

ethnic groups are more likely to suffer the effects of poverty than others. In New Zealand, social analysis has pointed to a number of factors, including the effects of colonisation, which have contributed to this trend.

Indeed, New Zealand based evaluations have shown that the use of culturally appropriate workers is a major influence on the effectiveness of interventions aimed at Māori and Pacific Island youth (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 1998). Specifically, it is important that programmes develop pride and involvement in cultural identity, and work to erode negative cultural stereotypes. Within Pacific Island groups, this includes recognition of the differences between different Island cultures and the difference between New Zealand and Island-born Pacific Island people (Anae, 1997).

These findings are supported by research investigating so called “protective” factors. Protective factors are those which build an individual’s resilience to at risk behaviours. In an analysis of research concerning these factors, Resnick (2000a) identified a “sense of connectedness” to family, school, community, and non familial adult role models as a significant influence in reducing “quietly disturbed” and “acting out” behaviours of young people. Similarly, in a New Zealand evaluation of “Six Māori Community Initiatives for Youth At Risk of Offending” it was shown that young people are more likely to respond to positive achievements and pro-social behaviours modelled by members of their own communities and ethnic groups, than those modelled by individuals with whom they do not identify (Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry of Social Policy and the Crime Prevention Unit, 2000).

Other protective factors identified in both local and overseas literature include:

- access to an available, adequate, emotional relationship with a caregiver or significant other in the familyⁱ
- Māori young people having whakapapa, whether acknowledged or not, which binds them to a potentially caring whānau and communityⁱⁱ
- an optimal level of social support via social networks e.g.: extended family and community groupsⁱⁱⁱ
- having a personal spiritual faith^{iv}
- being in therapy^v
- positive school experience^{vi}
- external interests and affiliations i.e. strong interests outside the home^{vii}

In addition, it has been shown that fostering certain dispositional attributes in young people increases their resilience to stressful life events and other factors associated with at risk behaviours. These attributes include:

- having a good fit between a young person’s temperament and their familial and cultural environment (in western society this includes adaptability, persistence and a reasonable quality of mood and activity level)^{viii}
- having an internal locus of control such that the young person feels in control of their own destiny (the opposite of learned helplessness)^{ix}
- good self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-efficiency^x
- intelligence and problem solving abilities^{xi}

US Crime Prevention Literature

US crime prevention literature identifies a range of factors that are associated with an increased risk of criminal behaviour within communities. These include:

- high rates of non-working adults
- widespread poverty
- high rates of persons with criminal histories
- high rates of single parent families
- high rates of unmarried or divorced adult males
- high rates of teenage males
- high rates of drug and alcohol use

- social and physical disorder (communities where both people and buildings appear disorderly or run down)

While these factors may be perceived as relating only to individual circumstances, it is their concentration in specific community settings which makes them important in terms of crime prevention. Indeed, despite widespread prevalence of many risk factors (e.g. teenage males, single parents and unmarried men exist in most communities), North American research shows that the majority of violent crime is committed by a small proportion of individuals, in a small proportion of neighbourhoods (Sherman et al, 1998). Police crime statistics suggest that this is also the case in New Zealand (Crime Prevention Unit, 2000).

What is important about communities characterised by high levels of risk factors is that they are more likely to develop specific structural features leading to individual isolation and alienation from social and economic activities. These features include:

- low community capacity to maintain adult networks of informal control of children
- high prevalence of unsupervised male teenage groups
- low density local friendship networks (few networks with little overlap between them)
- low levels of voluntary association membership

Sherman et al (1998; chapter 2, p 6) identify research which demonstrates that “each person’s bonds to family, community, school and work create....informal social control”. This social control manifests itself in “pressures to conform to the law that have little to do with the threat of punishment”. In order to maintain these pressures, it is essential to reduce the likelihood that alienation and isolation will develop. In order to achieve this, intervention must simultaneously address multiple risk factors (Sherman et al, 1998). In particular, research has demonstrated that effective primary prevention processes should focus on:

- increasing involvement in (and identification with) mainstream economic and social life, including family, education, work, and volunteer associations
- increasing prevalence and density of social networks and friendship groups
- addressing structural conditions contributing to high concentrations of high risk social attributes in hyper-segregated communities
- providing positive role models for youth (especially male role models for “fatherless boys”)

The following methods have been shown to facilitate these processes (Sherman et al, 1998):

- long term frequent home visits to families of young children, combined with effective pre-school education
- intensive behavioural programmes working with children and families to address severe problems
- programmes aimed at clarifying and communicating norms about behaviours (particularly by way of consistent positive reinforcement)
- comprehensive instructional programmes that focus on a range of social competency skills (e.g. developing self control, stress management, responsible decision making, social problem solving, and communication skills) that are delivered over a long period of time to continually reinforce skills
- programmes aimed at keeping young people in school and/or educational activities
- out of school skill building and community recreation programmes
- community based mentoring programmes providing frequent contact between adult/young adult role models and young people

Such processes depend on co-ordination between a range of organisations and groups. Indeed, Sherman et al (1998; p2:4) state that a “necessary condition for successful crime prevention practices in one setting is adequate support for the practice in related settings”. In particular, they point to the interdependency of seven main social institutional settings: communities, families, schools, labour markets, places (specific locations with their own pattern of social organisation, such as public bars, street corners, etc.), police agencies and other agencies of criminal justice.

Unfortunately, in communities where crime is greatest, the strong institutional context required for crime prevention efforts does not exist. Therefore, it must be developed. However, research shows

that only when such development efforts work to provide links between community agencies and those operating outside of the immediate context, are community members able to influence the larger issues surrounding labour markets and access to resources (Hope, 1995; cited in Sherman et al, 1996). Examples of agencies working outside of the immediate community context include government organisations such as those responsible for labour, health and welfare initiatives, and other service providers, especially in the communications area.

Furthermore, in such communities alienation and isolation are usually already evident amongst community members and, especially in communities where participation in mainstream social and economic activities (such as employment and education) is low they are frequently associated with a pattern of “oppositional culture”. Oppositional culture involves a reversal of societal norms so that behaviour traditionally considered undesirable is considered desirable, while generally accepted behaviour comes to be viewed as unacceptable.

It is hypothesised that “given the apparent rejection of community members by the larger society, the community members reject the values and aspirations of that society by developing an ‘oppositional identity’ (Cohen, 1955; Clark, 1965; Braithwaite, 1989; Massey and Denton, 1993: cited in Sherman et al, 1996). As such, community values come to oppose factors such as marriage, family, education, work and obedience of the law, and efforts to gain respect in such “cultures” may actually rely on demonstrating this opposition.

Crime prevention programmes aimed at responding to offending which is already occurring, requires that the nature and influence of oppositional culture be addressed. Such programmes must therefore involve an aspect of re-socialisation, both

individually and at the larger community level. Processes found to be effective in responding to offending include:

- facilitating involvement in mainstream social and economic activities
- breaking community ties between offenders and negative role models/at risk peers
- providing access to alternative networks and relationships
- developing social, academic and behavioural skills
- reducing drug, alcohol and gun use

Methods which have been shown to be effective in developing these processes include:

- dedicated residential units with highly trained staff and well designed and implemented programmes
- long term, residential, vocational programmes attached to the labour market
- substantial, intensive, meaningful contact between programme participants and pro-social role models
- structured and focused rehabilitation programmes that use behavioural (including cognitive behavioural) methods to improve young people's reasoning skills and social behaviours
- programmes which include reinforcements for positive behaviours that are clearly identified and overtly expressed behaviours
- programmes that are designed to address the characteristics (attitudes and behaviours) of the offenders that can be changed and are associated with individual criminal activities

These methods should include:

- continuous improvement of the quality interventions through provider development, staff training, improved infrastructure and better knowledge of best practice.
- a holistic approach which works with young people in the context of the major influences on their lives - their family, school or employment, peer group and neighbourhood, etc. (multi-systemic theory)
- an ability to identify accurately the children and young people most at risk so that the most intensive services can be targeted to them, combined with a graduated system such that young people are able to access lower contact programmes as their level of risk decreases

Furthermore, there is significant research evidence to show that those methods which are most effective in accurately identifying differences between individuals (such as risk level) tend to be culturally specific to the individuals concerned. They are developed for, and within, a specific cultural context (Estrin, 1993; Dana, 1998).

It also appears to be important that interventions avoid the use of some methods. These methods have been shown to have either no effect, or a detrimental effect, on at risk behaviours and crime in the long term (Sherman et al, 1998):

- community mobilisation against crime in high-crime inner-city poverty areas without sufficient intervention aimed at establishing vertical links with institutions operating outside the community, but exerting their influence over it
- offering youth alternative in-school activities such as recreation and community service, in the absence of more potent prevention programming
- short term job placement and training programmes
- pre trial diversion programmes that do not focus on rehabilitating offenders
- rehabilitation programmes that emphasise specific deterrence such as 'Shock Probation' and 'Scared Straight'
- rehabilitation programmes that use vague, non-directive, unstructured counselling
- community restraints (i.e. intensive supervised probation or parole, home confinement, community residential programmes, drug testing) without structured programming and rehabilitation services
- programmes emphasising structure, discipline and challenge in the absence of effective rehabilitation (i.e. correctional boot camps using old-style military model, wilderness programmes for juveniles)
- non-directive counselling focusing on insight, self esteem, or disclosure

In line with the conclusions regarding the negative effects of punishment and shock based interventions, Lawrence et al (1998; cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999) indicate that a significant component of preventing crime involves police showing greater respect to arrested offenders. Similarly, Karabanow (1999) shows that negative treatment of young people resulting from judgements and labels regarding their “anti-social” activities is a significant factor in perpetuating those activities.

How to read this report

The first part of the report discusses the overall effectiveness of the Crime Prevention Package’s CPWS programme. This discussion includes identification of themes and issues that were consistently presented across projects. Recommendations for the ongoing development of the CPWS programme, and administration of community crime prevention programmes generally, are also made. These recommendations concern the role of government in administering such projects.

The report then presents each of the CPWS projects as individual case studies. Each case study provides details of the need for the project. Project need is identified both in terms of identification of the project location as a crime “hotspot” under the Crime Prevention Package, and in terms of location-specific variables which appear to contribute to this identification. The case studies provide information about the agencies responsible for the CPWS workers, the workers themselves, and the initial project proposals, including objectives, set by these agencies. Each case study then describes the process by which the projects developed, including any difficulties encountered during this process, and the activities undertaken to meet project objectives.

The effectiveness of the projects in meeting the outcomes identified under the crime prevention package is then measured against both project process, and specific changes made by project participants, whānau, and community during or following their involvement in the project.

At the end of each case study, the information presented in the case study is drawn together as a set of conclusions about the overall effectiveness of the project in preventing crime. These conclusions also discuss specific issues relevant to the project’s progress. Some recommendations for the ongoing development of each project are made in response to these issues.

ⁱ Egeland and Erickson, 1987; Honig, 1986; Kellam et al, 1977; O’Grady and Metz, 1987; Quinton et al, 1984; Rutter et al, 1974: cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Youth Affairs, 1998; cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

ⁱⁱⁱ Crittenden, 1985; Hickox and Furnell, 1989: cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

^{iv} Baldwin et al, 1990; cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

^v Egeland et al, 1988; Moeller et al, 1993; Dunn, 1993: cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

^{vi} Rutter et al, 1974; cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

^{vii} Jenkins and Smith, 1990; cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

^{viii} Berger, 1985; Carey, 1982; Cowen et al, 1990: cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

^{ix} Herrenkohl et al, 1994; Luthar, 1991; Luthar and Ziglar, 1988; Moran and Eckenrode, 1992; O’Grady and Metz, 1987; Parker et al, 1990; Werner and Smith, 1982: cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

^x Werner and Smith, 1992; Parker, 1990; Moran and Eckenrode, 1992; Herrenkohl et al, 1994: cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.

^{xi} Herrenkohl et al, 1994; Kandel et al, 1988: cited in The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, 1999.