

# **New approaches to youth homelessness prevention**



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**A qualitative evaluation of the  
Safe in the City cluster schemes**

**Sarah Dickens and Kandy Woodfield**



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# Foreword

Centrepoint welcomes the publication and dissemination of this evaluative report funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, an independent research charity.

In 1998, Centrepoint and the Peabody Housing Trust established Safe in the City as a joint venture to investigate the causes of youth homelessness and research their models of working to tackle the causes and provide early intervention. Funding constraints led to the closure of Safe in the City in March 2004. The venture was funded primarily at the outset from the Single Regeneration Budget; it was planned to run until the end of March 2004. In December 2003, the two partner bodies decided that continued independent work through its Safe in the City vehicle was neither suitable nor financially viable.

Centrepoint has now taken work on prevention into its mainstream activities – of direct services, work with local partnerships to tackle youth homelessness and work to influence public policy, in this context – working with Peabody and other partners.

We will now take forward the learning and understanding about how to prevent youth homelessness. We will continue the debate about what works, sharpening workable models of early intervention and prevention. Centrepoint's national expertise in partnership working and capacity building with local organisations means we are well placed to build on Safe in the City's learning and extend the impact of this work across the country.

Prevention has now been given much higher priority than when Safe in the City was launched, for example with the Homelessness Act (2002) and the Children Bill (2004). Key within this framework is the intention to prevent crisis occurring in young people's lives, through providing joined-up responses to meet young people's needs and reduce social exclusion. The programme Safe in the City has made a valuable contribution by providing six years of significant action research, which statutory and voluntary sector agencies can draw on when establishing preventative services.

The initial action research led to the creation of cluster schemes that reflected the findings of the 'Taking Risks' research (Breugel and Smith, 1999). The cluster schemes responded to the risk factors (identified by the research) that lead to youth homelessness. Safe in the City commissioned eight cluster schemes across London to pilot multi-agency and multi-disciplinary responses for the benefit of young people at risk. The evaluation reported here shows that the cluster work was 'fit for purpose' and documents factors that contributed to the effectiveness of the cluster model and those aspects that worked less well.

The successes of the Safe in the City model provided a strong foundation of lessons about preventing youth homelessness. Centrepoin will continue to use them to underpin a prevention project, which will work with local authorities in rural and urban settings to continue to identify and promulgate:

- good practice in preventing youth homelessness
- barriers and solutions to preventing youth homelessness
- better practice of prevention and early intervention.

We and Peabody – and the Board of the now closing Safe in the City organisation – would like to thank the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for commissioning this evaluation.

**Anthony Lawton**  
CEO, Centrepoin  
Safe in the City Chair

# Acknowledgements

Our thanks are due first and foremost to the young people who participated in this research, for their willingness to discuss what could be difficult and painful issues. We would also like to thank the cluster co-ordinators and frontline workers at the four clusters included in this research; without their assistance, the research would not have been possible.

We are highly indebted to Nicola Bacon, Rosemary Watt-Wyness and Marcia Brophy at Safe in the City for their valuable input into the project and to Marcia in particular for the editing of the final report. Many thanks are also due to Theresa McDonagh at Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and the JRF advisory group for their input throughout the project and Mary Carter for her insights during the reporting process.

At NatCen, our thanks are due to William O'Connor who conceived this project along with Nicola Bacon, to Robin Legard for his invaluable input into the fieldwork and recruiting process, Mike Tibble for his assistance with the analysis of the interviews and Carl McLean who conducted some of the interviews with young people.



## **PART 1**

### **Background to Safe in the City and the research**



# 1 Safe in the City: a new approach to prevention

Safe in the City was an innovative response to the problem of youth homelessness. It was set up in 1998 and tasked with piloting new approaches to youth homelessness in London. Building on research findings, it developed an 'early intervention' response to homelessness, which meant that it targeted young people who had been identified as being 'at risk' of homelessness because of their personal circumstances but who were currently in housing.

## The new approach

What puts young people at risk? Research conducted at the inception of Safe in the City showed that a number of factors are associated with youth homelessness, including: difficult family relationships, an unstable housing history, disengagement with school, poor career prospects and family poverty (Bruegel and Smith, 1999). In order to tackle the complex circumstances that combine to place young people at risk, Safe in the City developed a 'joined-up' approach to the problem of youth homelessness, which brought together statutory and voluntary agencies.

After a three-year pilot period, the programme was set up in eight London boroughs. Individual schemes (or clusters as they were known on the programme) were established in each of the participating boroughs. Although co-ordinated centrally by Safe in the City, the schemes were delivered by partnerships between local authorities, the Connexions service and voluntary agencies. They were each headed by a lead agency. Each scheme comprised different permutations of agencies in each borough and, although the schemes followed the same blueprint, their referral and delivery processes had developed in response to local needs. Together, the agencies on each scheme endeavoured to provide a 'seamless' package of support to young people and their families involving intensive, personalised programmes tailored to participants' individual needs.

## The three components of the programme

Each scheme comprised three elements or strands of support, designed to tackle three key risk factors associated with youth homelessness (Bruegel and Smith, 1999). The three strands of support were as follows.

- *Family support*: this part of the programme had been set up in the belief that, for most young people (with the exception of those whose homes are unsafe because of violence or abuse), the family home is the best place for them to live until they are able to leave home safely and confidently. Much broader than

family mediation, the work aimed to help young people and their carers or parents resolve situations that were at or near crisis point before they came to a head and the young person felt compelled to leave home.

- *Personal development*: the personal development element sought to enhance young people's self-esteem and communication skills. The programme assessed young people's communication skills, including listening skills, peer communication and social communication skills. Broad personal development areas included raising self-esteem, confidence-building, learning and knowledge acquisition, and developing independent living skills.
- *Skills and employability*: this element was designed to improve young people's chances of finding and keeping employment, and to enable them to develop a working life that fulfilled their potential. Central to the programme was access to key skills and vocational courses, with priority being given to young people who had been excluded or who were at risk of exclusion from school. Care was taken to integrate with the work of schools and pupil referral units, so that Safe in the City did not undermine schools' actions or become an unmanaged solution for those young people whom education authorities found difficult to accommodate.

### Joining a scheme

Access to the programme was by a number of referral routes, including referrals from education, social services, Youth Offending Teams, Connexions, family members and through self-referral. Once a young person had made contact, their eligibility was assessed using a 'gatekeeping tool', also based on the risk factors identified through the 'Taking Risks' research (Bruegel and Smith, 1999). Young people had to be at risk in two or more areas to be eligible for the programme. The decision about how and whether to work with the young person was made at a joint meeting of the scheme's partnership agencies. Box 1 summarises the eligibility criteria.

#### **Box 1 The Safe in the City gatekeeping tool**

To be eligible to participate in the cluster scheme, young people had to meet two or more of the following criteria:

- had run away from home at least once
- were experiencing severe or chronic family poverty (e.g. parents had been out of work and on income support or benefits for six months or more)

- had been excluded or were at risk of exclusion from school (e.g. had previous fixed-term or permanent exclusions; truanted more than twice a month)
- were experiencing problems at home (e.g. poor relationship with parents, parents unable to cope because of mental health or addiction problems, young person had frequent serious arguments with parents, especially if violence was involved)
- had experienced a disrupted home history (e.g. had moved home frequently or spent periods with different carers).

## **Understanding change: evaluating the clusters over time**

Safe in the City was set up as an ‘action research’ project. This meant that schemes were continuously monitored to find out what helped young people and their families and, critically, how partnerships and services could be improved to better meet participants’ needs. The overarching aim was to establish models of excellence that could be replicated for the benefit of service users and stakeholders.

As part of the action research approach, the schemes were designed to be organic so that their work would evolve in response to local learning and lessons from the ongoing research. Safe in the City had developed an evaluation strategy to capture this development and to provide information relevant to all policy makers interested in ‘joined-up’ approaches to homelessness and social exclusion. Safe in the City benefited from significant public funding through the Single Regeneration Budget and other matched funding, so evaluation and dissemination were crucial to ensuring value for money from this public investment.

The research and development approach comprises two distinct but complementary strands involving quantitative and qualitative data. The first strand involves monitoring individuals’ progress through a bespoke database that provides quantitative information about outcomes and progress. The second strand involves an independent evaluation of the programme. It has two complementary components.

- 1 *The impact evaluation:* a programme of qualitative research exploring participants’ experiences of the programme and its impact on their lives. This report presents the findings. (The project was designed to be expanded into one or more further longitudinal stages if the projects had continued and funding for the evaluation had been secured.) Quantitative data from Safe in the City’s database has been used where appropriate to check the profile of the qualitative sample.

- 2 *The process evaluation* : this will explore the performance of the cluster schemes and of Safe in the City as a co-ordinating body. This evaluation has been carried out by the Office of Public Management.

### **Report outline**

This report of the findings of the qualitative evaluation of Safe in the City's impact is in three parts. The first part describes the programme and the study design. The second part presents young people's accounts of the programme including their referral to a scheme, their experience of the intervention and its impact on their lives. The third part explores the impact of the programme on the factors that place young people at risk of homelessness and identifies implications for service delivery.

### **Summary of background to Safe in the City**

- Safe in the City was established as an action research programme to pilot new and innovative approaches to preventing youth homelessness.
- The intervention involved a 'joined-up' approach to youth homelessness, bringing together statutory and voluntary agencies to deliver schemes in eight London boroughs.
- The schemes focused on three areas: family support, personal development, skills and employability.
- The initiative was designed as an action research project involving different strands of research to monitor the delivery and impact of the programme over time.

# 2 The study

## Aims and objectives

This report describes the findings from the first phase of the research into the impact of Safe in the City on the factors known to place young people at risk of homelessness. To complement information on the programme's impact, the research also aimed to:

- understand participants' experiences of Safe in the City
- examine the programme's influence on participants' needs and circumstances
- explore young people's housing circumstances before, during and after the programme intervention
- identify factors that might help or hinder effective delivery.

## The interviews

The research involved in-depth interviews, conducted between November 2002 and February 2003, with 41 young people on the programme. The interviews provided young people with the opportunity to talk freely about their lives and the risks that they were facing. The topic guide, in Appendix 1, outlines the issues covered by the interviews.

## About the sample

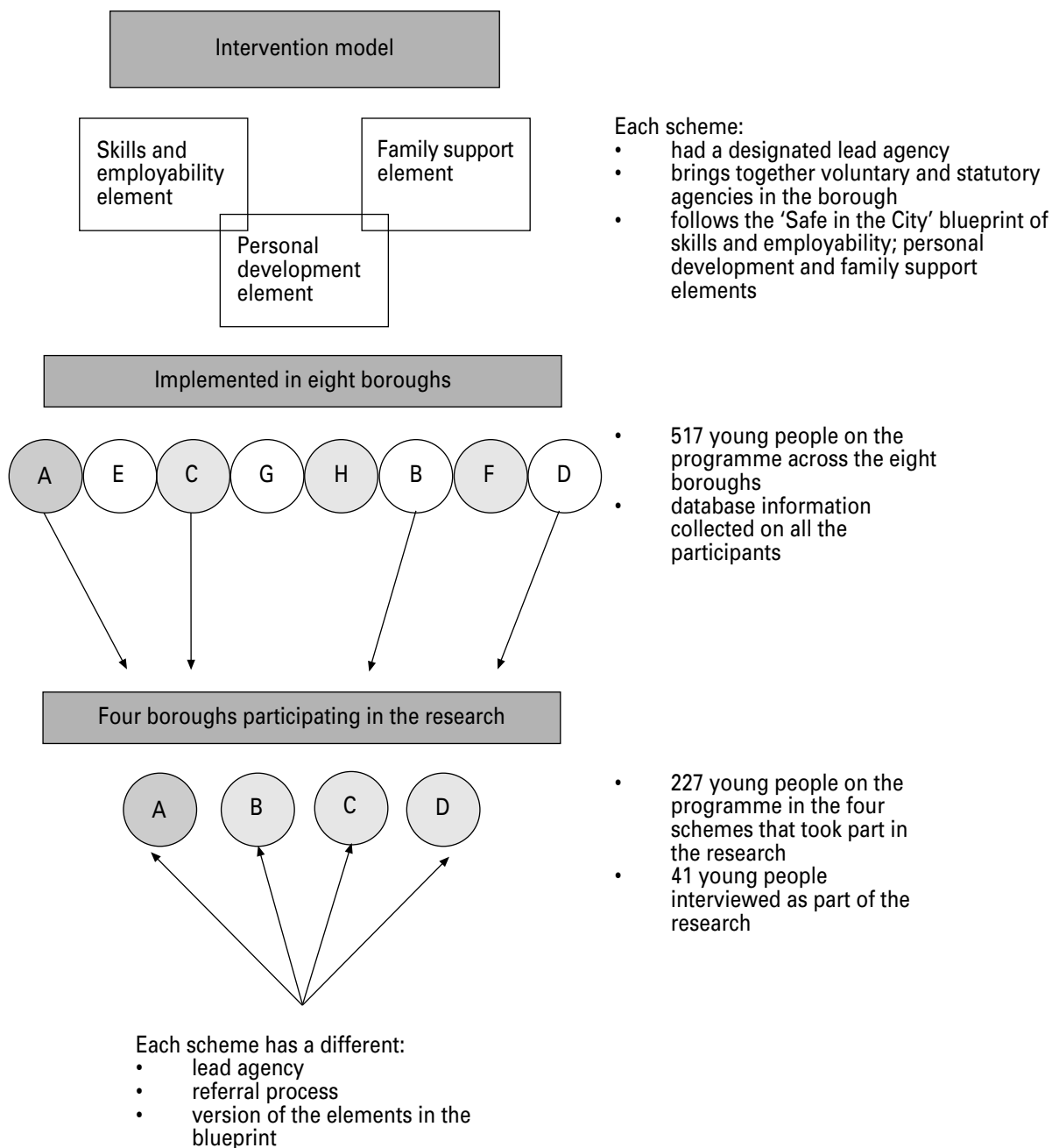
Safe in the City maintained a database containing information about the characteristics and circumstances of all the young people on the programme and their parents or carers. The database was regularly updated. The database was used to examine the profile of the participants on each scheme and to check that the interviewees were similar to the other participants on their scheme as well as Safe in the City's wider client group.

### ***The sample of schemes that participated in the research***

Eight boroughs set up schemes as part of the Safe in the City initiative. Four schemes were chosen out of the eight to take part in the research. As Chapter 1 explained, the schemes followed a blueprint set out by Safe in the City. However, the implementation of the blueprint varied from borough to borough depending on which agency took the lead, the links they set up with referring agencies and other factors beyond their control that affected the working out of the programme. The four participating boroughs represented schemes with different lead agencies and, in

some cases, different referral routes. Beyond these differences, there were few features that distinguished each scheme from the other. Figure 1 provides an overview of the Safe in the City model and the phase 1 research process.

**Figure 1 An overview of the Safe in the City model and the phase 1 research**



**Box 2 The key features of each scheme and its participants***Scheme A*

- This scheme was led by a voluntary agency.
- It contained a greater proportion of boys (80 per cent), under-16s (75 per cent) and young people from the black community (80 per cent).
- The majority of its clients were at risk because of problems at school (91 per cent) and home (77 per cent).
- Most of the referrals were from more than one agency.

*Scheme B*

- This scheme was also headed by a voluntary agency.
- It had the most balanced mix of gender, age and ethnicity of the clusters participating in the research.
- However, a greater proportion of its participants were rated highly on all five risk factors and a greater number had run away from home (83 per cent) and experienced disrupted home history (79 per cent) compared to the other clusters.
- The majority of referrals were education related (47 per cent), or from social services (26 per cent) and family and friends (12 per cent).

*Scheme C*

- Scheme C was led by a statutory agency.
- Its proportions of men and women (60:40) and older and younger people were similar to the other clusters.
- However, its client group were predominantly white (87 per cent) at the time of the research.
- The majority of participants were believed to be at risk because of problems at home (80 per cent) and at school (72 per cent).
- Referrals were predominantly via education (29 per cent), social services (22 per cent) and other (29 per cent).

### *Scheme D*

- Scheme D was also led by a statutory agency, but it differs from the other clusters in that it only accepted referrals from three target schools in the borough.
- Hence, 99 per cent of referrals were education related.
- It had a 40 to 60 per cent male–female mix but was predominantly white (75 per cent).
- Dominant risk factors were home (88 per cent), school (85 per cent) and family poverty (70 per cent).

### ***The young people's sample***

Box 2 shows that there were some variations in the make-up of each scheme's client group. For example, Schemes C and D had predominantly white clients whereas Scheme A drew predominantly from the black community. These differences were also reflected in the profile of the sample of young people who took part in the research. Further details about the interviewees on each scheme are contained in Table A2.2 in Appendix 2.

Overall, the qualitative sample reflects the range and diversity of all programme participants but there are some exceptions. In particular, no young people of 'Asian' or 'Chinese or other' ethnic origin participated in the research, although they made up 7 per cent of all programme participants.

Most of the interviewees had been involved with the scheme for several months. However, a small number had recently joined the scheme. The experiences of the new participants and the impact of the programme on their lives are likely to be different from the more long-standing participants.

Throughout the report, pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of participants. Where case studies have been used, small details have been changed to protect anonymity.

## **Summary of the schemes and the research process**

- Four out of the eight schemes in the Safe in the City boroughs took part in the research.
- The four schemes varied in their client make-up, including the proportions of younger people, people from different ethnic groups and the gender balance. These differences were reflected in the make-up of the sample.
- Interviewees were broadly representative of both the other young people on their scheme and the diversity of Safe in the City's wider client group.



## **PART 2**

### **Young people's experiences**



## 3 Joining the Safe in the City programme

Part 2 of the report presents the young people's accounts of the programme. This chapter comments on why and how they were referred to the scheme. Chapter 4 describes young people's experiences of the intervention and Chapter 5 outlines any changes they experienced as a result of their involvement.

### Mode of referral

Box 3 presents young people's accounts of why they were referred to the programme and who referred them.

#### **Box 3 Young people's perceptions of the scheme and the reasons for their referral**

##### *Scheme A*

- 1 *Difficulties at home*: some interviewees thought they were referred because of difficulties at home. They believed the programme would sort out these problems, although they were typically unclear as to how. In these cases, the parents or a social worker had approached the programme.
- 2 *Exclusion from school*: young people excluded from school believed this was why they were referred. They expected the programme to involve structured educational activities. Most of these young people said that their parents had contacted the scheme following exclusion, although in one case a social worker had made the referral.
- 3 *Vocational support*: some young people thought they had been referred for help with finding work or getting into college. They thought parents had referred them.
- 4 *Self-referral*: one young person had approached the scheme because her friend had said that the personal development element was fun. She had been keen to join in the organised activities.

##### *Scheme B*

- 1 *Difficulties at home*: interviewees on this scheme generally believed they had been referred by social services because of problems at home. They thought the programme would help to rebuild family life.

- 2 *Problems at school*: one young person thought that they had been referred for help with their reading and writing difficulties and another because they had stopped attending school. They both expected the scheme to provide structured educational activities and help with finding and being accepted on a college course. School support mentors were understood in both cases to have been responsible for the referral.

### *Scheme C*

- 1 *Difficulties at home*: a number of young people thought they were referred by their parents because of problems at home. They expected the programme to help resolve these difficulties.
- 2 *Other reasons and routes for referral* included the following.
  - *Criminal behaviour*: to help young people stop offending (referral from Youth Offending Team officer).
  - *Housing problems*: to help them find stable housing (referral from drug and alcohol project).
  - *Counselling*: to provide a young school-leaver with ongoing counselling for depression (referral from school support worker).
  - *Problems at school*: to help a young person improve their behaviour at school and avoid exclusion (referral from school mentor).

### *Scheme D*

- 1 *Problems at school*: all the young people on this scheme believed they were referred because of problems at school. Problems included poor behaviour, serious learning difficulties and frequent truanting. School support workers, teachers, headteachers and in one case a social worker had all made referrals. In general, the young people thought that the programme was there to help them with learning or behavioural difficulties and to provide a full- or part-time alternative to school.

## **Young people's attitudes to their referral**

Young people's attitudes to the programme were affected by a number of factors including: the source of the referral; their expectations about the initiative; their previous experience of interventions; and their outlook or 'world view'.

### ***Source of the referral***

How participants felt about their referral depended on their attitudes to the person or agency that referred them and the reasons why they were referred. For example, some young people felt they had been referred by their parents as a punishment for bad behaviour and as a means of 'making them behave' in the future. Social workers, educational staff and Youth Offending Team (YOT) officers were sometimes attributed with similar motives.

Young people were more positive about the referral if they had felt consulted and that their views had been taken into account. The interviewees also needed to feel that the referral had been well intentioned; for example, that their parents had made the referral because they wanted to 'make up' with the young person and they were willing to accept some responsibility for recent problems. In these cases, young people understood the programme to be about *helping* rather than *imposing* change.

In the few cases where a young person had self-referred, attitudes towards the programme tended to be particularly positive and optimistic. It could be argued that, by referring themselves, the young person had already 'bought into' the idea of attending.

### ***Beliefs about the aims of the programme***

Some interviewees, particularly in Schemes A and D, were more positive about the referral when they believed they would be attending a structured educational programme. This was particularly the case if they saw the intervention as a full- or part-time replacement for school and if it was recognised as having a good reputation in the local area. Some young people hoped that the programme would be a more agreeable alternative to school, while others welcomed the chance to attend school less frequently. In contrast, other young people were much more negative, particularly those who had been excluded from school, and who were reluctant to attend any form of structured provision. In these cases, attending the programme conjured up negative thoughts about school, teachers, lessons and compulsory attendance:

I thought it would be like school, where teachers shout at you.

(Female, 14)

Young people's views also varied if they thought they had been referred for help with family problems. Some were concerned that it might further inflame home life or worried about having to talk to a stranger about problems at home. Others were more positive and hoped that it would improve the situation.

Interviewees who thought they had been referred because of housing problems, depression or vocational issues were usually positive about their referral and viewed it as a potential source of help.

### ***Prior experience of interventions***

A number of young people arrived on the programme after contact with other services. Some of these young people showed signs of a 'service fatigue' that made them reluctant to engage with another intervention that would offer 'more of the same'. For example, one young person had refused to be involved with the family element of the scheme, despite problems at home, because of poor experiences of health and social service workers in the past:

I had this interview with some people when I was in hospital one time for taking too many paracetamols. It was like with the social workers and everybody and I had to explain my story so many times. They were asking why I done it, and I was like, 'I don't know why I done it, it just happened' ... I felt like I was being interrogated. And I thought this was going to be like that all over again.

(Female, 16)

Conversely, others hoped that the programme would carry on positive interventions they had received in the past. One young person, for example, hoped she would receive the youth counselling that was no longer available through another agency.

### ***World view***

Young people's attitudes were also affected by whether they were willing or ready to make changes around the reason behind their referral. This varied enormously. Some felt that exclusion from school or rows at home were normal events for 'people like them', or even, in relation to school exclusion, a type of status symbol:

I know this sounds really weird, but arguing is just how me and my mum get on. Our talking's arguing ... People who have been abused should come here ... But I'm OK, I know what I'm doing.

(Male, 14)

Others, however, had been keen to receive help with difficulties at home or at school before their referral. They were happy to join the programme because it offered a solution to their problems:

I think I came along because, when I do choose to move out, I didn't want to be on bad terms with my mum. I think I wanted to sort everything out that was going on between us so that I'd make myself feel better and she would be happier.

(Female, 15)

I want somebody to help me and I want to help myself. That's why I'm coming here and getting help to go back to school ... This is my last chance, do you really think I'll have another? I don't.

(Female, 14)

### **Summary of the main issues relating to referral**

- Modes of referral varied across the four schemes. Typical reasons for referral were because of 'exclusion from school' and/or 'difficulties at home'.
- Some young people were reluctant to engage with the programme because their experience of other services had left them with 'service fatigue' and an unwillingness to go through 'more of the same'.
- Young people were most positive about the programme when: they felt *consulted* in the referral process; the scheme was presented as non-compulsory and there to provide help and support around *issues for which they wished to receive help*.

## 4 Young people's experiences of the programme

This chapter explores young people's experiences of the programme.

### What did young people understand about the programme?

Figure 2 summarises the different features of each scheme according to the young people's accounts. Main contact refers either to the young person's first contact with the scheme or the element with which he or she was most involved. Although the schemes comprised different agencies working together to deliver the three core elements of the programme, in general the participants were not aware of the structure behind the programme. Neither were they aware that they were part of a Safe in the City initiative. In many ways, this is a positive finding because the programme aimed to deliver a seamless package of care.

### What did young people like and dislike about the programme?

The interviews explored what participants thought worked well and what did not work so well on the programme. Boxes 4 to 6 present the findings for each element of the programme.

#### Box 4 Positives and negatives of the family elements

##### *Positives*

- *Keyworkers*: a keyworker (for the purposes of the programme) is someone who has regular, one-to-one contact with a young person. They provide a listening ear and support around any issues or problems in the young person's life. Interviewees appreciated the opportunity to build a close relationship with their family keyworkers, who they often regarded as a friend, counsellor and 'expert' rolled into one:

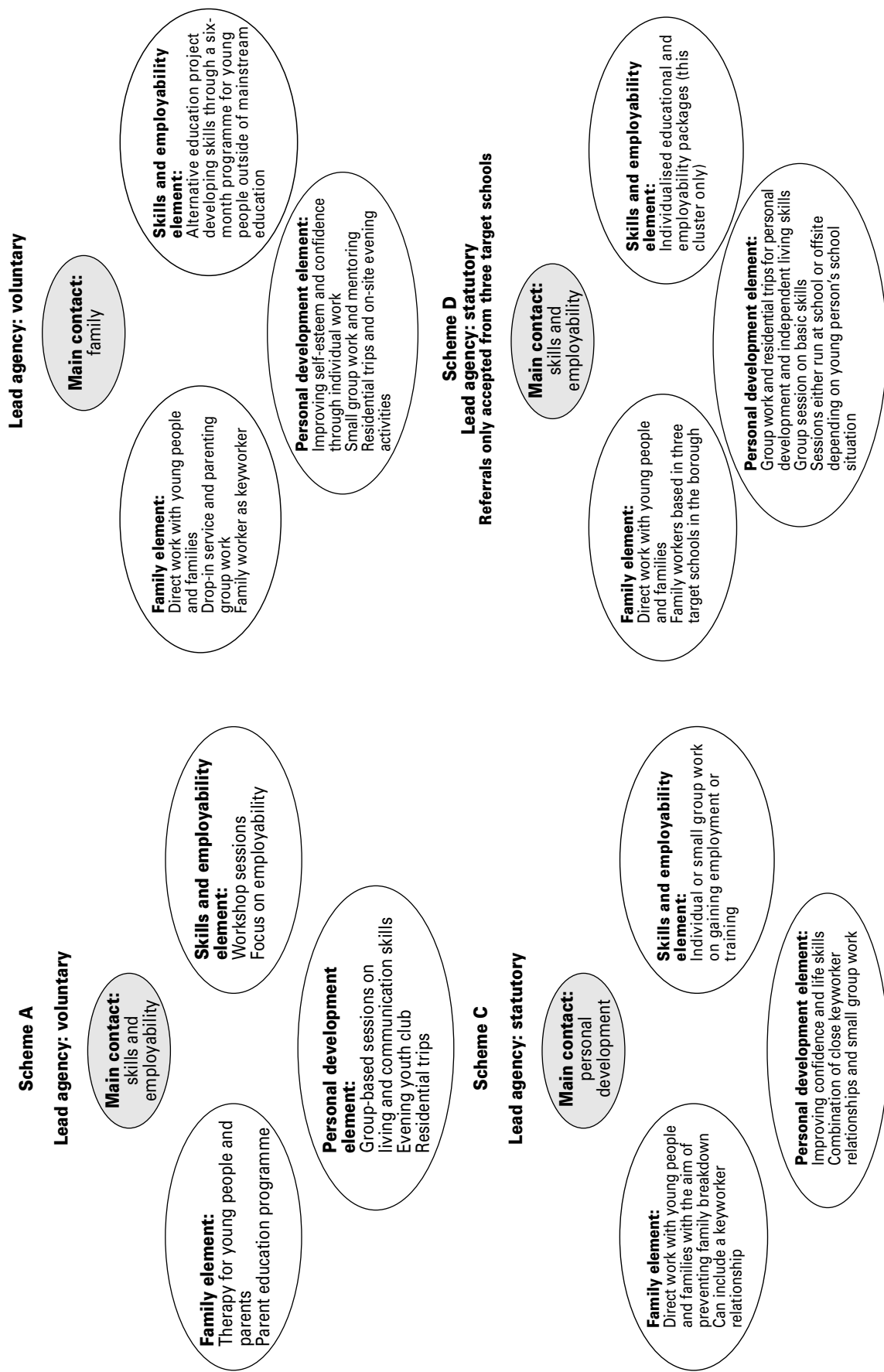
I couldn't have asked for anyone better to talk to really [*than the family keyworker*] because she was just always listening to me.

(Female, 15)

It was relieving to get things off my chest [*to family keyworker*]. Because, when you think about it, it's hard to tell your mum things about your stepdad because she would always be saying things back like, 'He's not that bad' when he is.

(Female, 13)

Figure 2 The make-up of each scheme according to the young people's accounts



The one exception to this was on Scheme D, where close relationships with family keyworkers were not established (see 'negatives', below).

- *Family work* : young people also appreciated the family work itself. A number of young people in Schemes A, B and C felt that the family work, which often involved parents as well, had been both highly beneficial and conducted sensitively.

### *Negatives*

- *Support in a school setting* : participants were particularly negative about the support in Scheme D, which involved regular sessions at the school. Young people had not been expecting to talk about family issues in a school setting and had found the questioning intrusive, belittling and unwelcome:

Basically, it [*home life*] is none of her business. It puts me down, talking about my family, it makes me feel really small.

(Female, 13)

- *Talking about issues* was a similar concern for others, for example, one young person found talking about personal issues within the family element generally very difficult:

I went there [*family element*] for a while, but then I didn't feel like doing it no more ... I really don't like talking to people about nothing. I have my problems and I try to talk to nobody.

(Male, 14)

- *Taking sides* : a participant on Scheme C felt that the family worker had taken her parents' side and she had ceased contact with this element as a result:

I'd get the hump and go and hide in my room until she [*family worker*] was gone. She was always like siding with my mum.

(Female, 15)

### **Box 5 Positive and negatives of the personal development elements**

#### *Positives*

- *Enjoyable experience* : young people across the four schemes generally enjoyed the personal development element. It provided them with a chance to spend time away from home (particularly welcomed where the situation

was difficult), make friends and take part in activities such as video evenings, cookery, discussions and games. Residential trips or away days, offered by each scheme, were also widely enjoyed:

I love it [*personal development element*]. We chill out, watch the telly, it's relaxing there ... and it's fun being with other people. We can talk and communicate and socialise and whatever.

(Female, 14)

### *Negatives*

- *Peer group difficulties*: some young people said they did not like the other young people on the element or did not feel an affinity with them. In some cases, they had stopped attending because of this:

The groups were OK, but the people there weren't like me, they were all into drugs and stuff. I just used to sit there being quiet and bored.

(Female, 15)

- *Irrelevance*: a further criticism – specific to Scheme C alone – was that some of the subjects covered in the group discussions were uninteresting or irrelevant. For example, one participant said that they had taken part in a series of group discussions around drugs, most of which covered things they knew.

### **Box 6 Positives and negatives of the skills and employability elements**

#### *Positives*

- *Preferable to school*: the skills and employability element was the least popular aspect of the programme, particularly on Schemes A and B. However, several young people on Schemes A, B and D (where many of the young people were not attending school) said they preferred the programme to school because the teachers were friendlier, they received more attention and the atmosphere was more informal:

It is much better than school because the teachers are more polite and we get to do more fun stuff. And there's only eight of us in the class, so no one gets distracted.

(Female, 14)

- *A structure to the day*: a few young people also said that they liked having something structured to do with their time. They thought that, if they were not attending this element, they would be bored or getting into trouble on the streets:

Most of the time it's either this or going home or walking up and down the streets, so I might as well come here and do a bit of computer work and stuff, it's more fun.

(Male, 14)

- *Tailored approaches*: Scheme C's skills and employability element, which was not based on structured group work but offered a more tailored service, was highly rated. Several young people felt they had received significant help towards finding employment or a college place.

### *Negatives*

- *Compulsory attendance*: young people on Scheme A, and to some extent C and D, were unhappy about feeling obliged to attend this element. In particular, it seemed to some young people that there was little difference between this element and school – as with school, they would be told off if they did not turn up. Young people became negative as a result and, in some cases, reverted to their school behaviour by being disruptive or truanting:

Once they called my house and that was taking the piss. Because they said it was up to me whether I came along but they still called my house and told my parents that I wasn't coming along.

(Male, 14)

- *Insignificant qualifications*: some young people were also critical that the qualifications they were working towards on the programme were not as useful as those they could have obtained at school. The programme was also seen as less interesting or sociable than school. In some cases, this view had developed over time:

At first you think, 'This is brilliant, two lessons and then I just go home'. But now it is boring ... I mean I done the wrong thing in school, but now I just want to be put back on the timetable and given my lessons back.

(Male, 15)

- *Inappropriate standard of work*: and some young people did not feel that the work they were doing was pitched at the right level. It was too easy or too hard:

It's a bit too easy, some of the work we do here, I would prefer it to be a tiny little bit harder.

(Female, 14)

- *Peer problems* : more generally, there was some discomfort about other young people on the programme. Young people were negative when they felt that they did not fit in with the others, for example, if they felt that their peers were less able than them, or more disruptive, or just different:

Everybody else here has got learning difficulties or big problems at home, their problems are just different to mine.

(Female, 16)

## What affected young people's attitudes to the programme?

### ***Main point of contact with a scheme***

Young people's attitudes were heavily influenced by their first and main contact with the scheme. If young people disliked the main element of the scheme they were more likely to be disengaged. This appeared to be a particular problem on Scheme A, where young people were often ambivalent or negative about the skills and employability element – their main point of contact. In contrast, the main contact for Scheme B was the family support element and this was well liked. Moreover, young people could remain in contact with this element even if they disengaged with other aspects of the scheme, such as the skills and employability element.

### ***The extent to which services were tailored to the individual***

The extent to which services were tailored to the individual affected young people's attitudes to the programme. Young people were more positive about Schemes B and C because they felt that the service was tailored to their needs. This was in contrast to young people's experiences on Schemes A and D where they tended to receive a standard, 'one-size-fits-all' package from the skills and employability and personal development elements.

### **Box 7 An experience on Scheme B**

Tristan is 14. He was excluded from school when he was 12 for kicking and punching a teacher and he now attends a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). After being excluded from school, he fell in with some older boys who used to 'jack motorbikes, jack cars, blow them up'. He also used to argue a lot with his mother, who said she could not cope with him any more. One of his teachers at the Unit put him in touch with the programme.

Tristan attends the family element, for one-on-one sessions with his keyworker. He gets on well with her, and enjoys being able to talk about his feelings and get things off his chest. The keyworker also visits his mother once a week, at home. His keyworker arranged for him to work in a sports shop at weekends, which he loves. She also arranged for him to attend the personal development, where he has a mentor. Having recognised a need to change, he was keen to get involved in activities that would keep him off the streets and help him to further his interests. At the element, they do activities like 'video games' and go out for trips – for example, to the theatre, cinema and McDonald's.

Tristan does not like the other people who attend the element – he thinks that they are immature and disruptive. But he really enjoys the activities and gets on well with his mentor, who is planning to arrange for him to attend art lessons, another thing that he is 'into'. He is continuing to meet his family keyworker on a one-on-one basis so that she can keep track of how he is doing and whether he feels that his needs are being met – although he meets with her less frequently than he did at the start.

### ***Close keyworker relationships***

Young people with keyworkers were very positive about the relationship. It was usually a central feature of their engagement with the intervention. This type of relationship was particularly apparent on Scheme B (where the keyworker was from the family element) and Scheme C (where the keyworker was from the family or personal development element). In both cases, they tended to offer a holistic service to young people – meeting them regularly, listening to them, and providing advice about a range of issues including family, friends, education and employment. Scheme B family keyworkers were also involved in helping young people find work experience and often acted as 'mentors', for example, going out shopping, or for meals. Young people talked about feeling valued; feeling that the scheme took a very personal interest in their welfare; and having an outlet to talk about problems or crises:

I can't talk to my parents. I find it hard even being in the same room as them ... So it's nice that sometimes when I do need support I can get it here. 'Cause I need that support ... even if it's just to have a moan.

(Female, 19)

If I've got problems with my friends, I can come and talk to her [*family keyworker*], boyfriends, anything like that.

(Female, 15)

Moreover, the keyworker was an 'expert' who was there to listen objectively to their problems. This was in contrast to friends or family members who were either too caught up in their own problems or too involved to be able to give sound advice.

I find it easier talking to people I don't know. I don't want to worry my friends because they've got troubles of their own to deal with. And they [*keyworker*] can give you their honest opinion basically. The more you know someone the more they just want to lie to make you happy.

(Female, 15)

One young female, however, voiced a criticism that her appointments – which she had greatly valued and looked forward to – had often been cancelled.

It was unfair because I had a lot on my mind. I needed to talk to somebody ... I mean at one point I was like suicidal and who's to say that I couldn't have been in a ditch somewhere if I hadn't had that support.

(Female, 19)

### **Box 8 An experience on Scheme C**

Daniella is 18. She has had a consistently 'bad' relationship with her parents since she was young and has spent some time in care. In her last year at school, she suffered from clinical depression and was referred to the programme by a teacher who knew about her home problems. She attends the scheme for one-on-one sessions with a keyworker in personal development. She finds it helpful to talk about her problems. She has also been on an activity away day with the personal development element, which she loved. She has not attended any of the group sessions.

Daniella is also seeing a worker from the skills and employability element who is helping her to look for work. In the past, this worker arranged for her to attend a Prince's Trust Course, which she enjoyed a lot. She also sometimes drops in to see this worker for a chat about other things, especially if her personal development keyworker is not around, as they work in the same building.

Daniella refused contact with the family element. She felt that it would be a waste of time because the situation with her parents was beyond repair and 'they wouldn't listen' to her or anyone else.

### ***Low expectations of the service***

When they joined the programme, young people often thought that attendance would be obligatory 'like school' and they would be forced to talk about issues or take part in activities that they did not want to. These misapprehensions were overcome if young people's initial experience of the programme was of a personalised and tailored service. They were then more likely to feel involved with and consulted about their participation. By contrast, young people were more likely to disengage if their preconceptions were realised and they experienced a one-size-fits-all approach. It was also the case that tailored services seemed less intimidating. One young person, for example, said that they were feeling so low on referral to the scheme that they would not have had the confidence to mix with other young people on a structured programme:

If you're depressed and somebody says to you, 'Let's go to the pub', you don't want to go to the pub because you're too upset, you stay in crying. You're not interested. That's how I felt about *[personal development element]*. I was too depressed to even think about going.

(Male, 17)

### **Box 9 An experience on Scheme A**

Denise is 15. She was excluded from school at 14 and attended the Pupil Referral Unit for a while. She is now back at school. In the past few months, she has been arguing a lot with her mother, who does not like her boyfriend and says that she is 'rude'. Her mother arranged for her to attend the scheme.

Denise attends the skills and employability element two evenings a week after school, where they do 'lessons and stuff', and talk about what they would like to do in the future. She is also attending the personal development element on Friday nights. She sees it as a 'youth club' – they watch videos, have debates and eat pizza.

Denise declined to attend the family element. A couple of months before attending the programme, she had tried to slit her wrists, which had resulted, as she saw it, in a lot of unwelcome questions from health professionals and her social worker. She was worried that the family element would again involve unwelcome questions.

Denise quite enjoys the personal development element and says it can be fun. She is more ambivalent about the skills and employability element. It makes her 'tired' going there after school and she does not think the other young people attending are like her – they are younger and more disruptive. Sometimes she doesn't go along when she is meant to.

### ***Entrenched world views***

Participants' attitudes to the programme were strongly influenced by their beliefs about 'normal' behaviour for their age and peer group, and whether they acknowledged a need to change. Young people were less likely to engage with the scheme if they thought it was addressing behaviours and attitudes that they considered normal or 'just what you did'. Some young people talked about what their peers expected of them and the kind of behaviour required to show people 'what you were made of' and to gain respect:

It's like a competition [*at school*]. When a new person comes in they all want to see how strong he is. So, when I first went there, it was kind of like they wanted to know whether I was tough.

(Male, 14)

Once more, the interviews indicated that flexible, personalised services were often the best way to overcome entrenched world views. Individualised and tailored services encouraged young people to look more closely at themselves and question their behaviour and attitudes.

### ***Low self-worth and a negative outlook on life***

The success of the programme depended to some extent on whether the intervention could change young people's self-esteem and self-perceptions. Young people varied in the extent to which they valued themselves, attached consequences to their actions and thought positively about the future. Several interviewees described how, before they joined the programme, they had stopped caring about their future or their behaviour. According to their accounts, this usually occurred following a significant personal trauma, such as a bereavement, or the deterioration or breakdown of their parents' relationship:

When I first started at school I was good, I always did my homework. But then, in Year 8, I just thought, 'What's the point?' ... It was like I had nothing to live for. School was boring, my dad didn't care about me and my mum was getting on my nerves. So I didn't care no more, I just did not care about anything. I went to school to muck about.

(Male, 17)

My dad died a few years back now. That's why I think I'm here [*scheme*] because I went a bit messed up at school ... Part of me was gone. I was like cut in half. I was all over the place. Started smoking, drinking. Started nicking things from my own house to get smoke. Having tantrums. The lot.

(Male, 15)

The impact of the programme depended greatly on the extent to which it could turn these feelings around.

### **Box 10 An experience on Scheme D**

Darren is 15. He was permanently excluded from school for 'beating up' a teacher a few months ago. He often spends the night away from home with a mate on the streets, or in the park because his mother has had a series of violent boyfriends and he wants to get away from what is happening at home.

Darren thinks that he was referred to the programme by the headteacher of his old school. He attends the personal development element five days a week. Most of his time is spent doing 'maths and English' lessons, but one day a week he goes to a training centre, where he is learning electronics. This was arranged by the element. He has also been away on a couple of week-long residential trips.

Darren likes attending the element. The workers are friendly and fun and give him 'respect', in contrast to the teachers at school and he finds it easier to learn in a friendly environment. But he sometimes misses school, because all his friends are there.

Darren has not had any contact with the family element (based in school) and does not appear to know that this is part of the scheme.

## Summary of young people's experiences of the programme

### *Family support element*

- Young people often felt that the family work had been highly beneficial. They were particularly positive about the relationship with their family keyworker, who they saw as a friend and counsellor.
- Young people on Scheme D generally felt uncomfortable talking about family issues in the school setting. In addition, a small number had not felt ready to engage with family issues at the time of interview.

### *Personal development element*

- Young people on the four schemes enjoyed this element. It gave them an opportunity to spend time away from home, make friends and take part in activities that would not normally be available to them.
- Young people were negative about their peers on the programme if they did not feel an affinity with them.

### *Skills and employability element*

- Some young people liked having their time occupied by structured activities and felt that the element was preferable to school because it was friendlier and they received more attention.
- Other young people were more negative about what they saw as the compulsory ethos of this element. They also felt that the qualifications were less useful compared to those achievable in school.

### *'Conditions' for a positive attitude*

Young people were more likely to be positive about the programme when:

- they liked the element that was the main point of contact
- services were tailored to suit their needs

## **New approaches to youth homelessness prevention**

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- the young person established a close relationship with their keyworker
- their concerns about and low expectations of the programme were overcome at the beginning
- the intervention acknowledged and addressed entrenched world views, low self-worth and negative outlooks.

## 5 The impact of the different elements

This chapter describes the impact of each element of the programme on the young people's family life, personal development, skills and employability and housing stability. As is the case with any type of intervention, it is difficult to distinguish which aspects, if any, of the programme were the catalyst for change. For example, while young people may have attributed improvements in their home life to the work of the family element, equally, change may be a result of a particularly effective relationship with the support worker, other members of the group, other parts of the scheme, or 'unknown' factors.

### Family support element

Young people talked about two important changes at home. In some cases, the situation tangibly improved and, in other cases, they felt more able to cope with difficulties at home, even where things had not changed. Several participants said their home situation had improved as a result of the programme. In some cases, the young people had been able to vent their feelings by talking to the keyworker and this had helped them to be calmer and less inflammatory. Interviewees also felt that the family work had given them insight into why rows occurred or why their parents felt or reacted as they did. This understanding had helped them to change their behaviour and led to better family relationships:

There are fewer arguments at home now, because I'm more understanding about coming back at the right time when I go out.

(Female, 15)

A number of young people felt that things had improved because their parents or carers had changed as a result of their involvement with the programme. For example, parents were more willing to compromise, less strict, or paid the young person more attention than they had done in the past:

Me and my mum have been a lot closer since we started coming down here, I can talk to her now. Once a week we go out shopping together, or go to the pictures or whatever. Just spend a bit more time together, whereas I never used to see much of her.

(Female, 15)

On the whole, the family support element was credited with bringing about these changes. However, young people also felt changes occurred because of improvements in other aspects of their lives. For example, some interviewees reported that, because they were no longer involved in crime, or they were more positive about school or employment, their parents or carers were more positive

towards them. Suddenly, their parents or carers were proud of them and treated them differently as a result:

She *[mum]* is like a schoolgirl now. She's nice and jolly. She used to be all shouting and upset, but now she's happy. She's really impressed with me.  
(Female, 14)

My mum's much more cheerful. She can trust me now. And everyone else in the family is proud of me too. My nan's proud of me, my sisters are proud of me, everyone.  
(Male, 14)

Other young people said that, although life at home was still difficult, the programme had helped them to cope with the situation. Again, the presence of a keyworker was critical. Having someone to talk to provided an outlet for their concerns and feelings. It made young people less likely to bottle things up until they were out of control and they could no longer cope with their situation at home:

When I have problems with my dad at home I know I can just come here and tell her *[keyworker]* about them rather than keeping them all inside me, which just builds up this anger.  
(Female, 15)

Some interviewees also said that, as a result of their keyworker relationship, their outlook towards life had changed. Knowing that there was someone who took an interest in them and valued them made them feel more optimistic about the future. A participant whose home life had been particularly fraught but who had recently found employment, said this:

I think coming here must have changed me, because the way things were going before that, I don't know what I would have done. Things were just getting so bad, I might have turned to drugs or something ... but she *[keyworker]* showed me that there's hope. She tried to help me and she gave me hope and something to live for, something to work towards.  
(Male, 17)

### **Personal development element**

The young people identified four main areas of improvement resulting from their involvement with the personal development element of the programme. These were: anger management; interaction with others; confidence; and the extent to which they valued themselves and their future and attached consequences to their actions.

Several young people with a history of aggression said that they had calmed down significantly since their involvement with the programme because they had learnt new ways of dealing with situations:

Before I came here, if someone comes up to me and starts, I would just instantly react. But now coming here I have learned to calm down and just walk away. Not let things bother me.  
(Male, 14)

Some also said that they were less aggressive because they felt happier and more optimistic about life because of the programme:

The anger stopped because I didn't have anything to be cross about any more ... They have made me feel as though I've got a new life, as though I've been born again.  
(Male, 14)

Other changes in the way they interacted with people included: greater sensitivity towards others; a better understanding of the effect their words and actions could have on them; better communication skills; and modified behaviour. As a result of these changes, some young people had cut down on their drug or alcohol use and self-harming behaviour, had stopped their involvement with criminal activities and withdrawn from disruptive peer relationships:

She [*keyworker*] said to me, 'There are going to be loads of people who come in and out of your life, and some will be better than others', and that made me realise that it just wasn't worth going back there [*place where she had been hanging out with a gang*], 'cause it caused so many problems.  
(Female, 15)

Again, young people did not tend to attribute these changes to the personal development element *per se*, but related them more specifically to improvements in life at home (often a result of family work), support from their keyworker and being in a more supportive and respectful environment:

It's the environment, it's how friendly everyone is and how understanding they are ... It's easier to change in a warm environment, whereas if everyone is cold and hard and horrible then it's really difficult to change.  
(Female, 15)

Coming here makes me smile. Being around people who give you full attention and that shit. They're always helping you, 'You all right?' You hear that every five seconds, it's like proper shit here.

(Male, 15)

### Skills and employability element

Young people credited the skills and employability element with bringing about tangible improvements in their lives as well as changes in their attitudes towards education, employment and the future more generally. Positive outcomes included the following.

- Obtaining qualifications.
- Maintaining (excluded pupils) or improving key skills.
- Getting a place at a new school (excluded pupils).
- Having a better chance of getting a job as a result of work experience organised by the scheme:

She [*keyworker*] got me a job working with kids ... it was a really fun job. It gave me a lot of confidence ... They said that I was the best volunteer they had had.

(Female, 15)

- Finding work or a college place as a result of help with an application or CV.

Although the skills and employability element took most of the credit for these outcomes, family keyworkers in Scheme B were also credited with a significant role.

More generally, young people often talked about feeling that life had a point now and that it was worth investing in their future. In some cases, this was because life was better at home or they were more able to cope with home life. In other cases, their outlook had improved and they were more positive and confident. This resulted in changes in attitudes towards school, further education and employment:

I always used to get in trouble with people at school, but now I have realised that I'm not getting into trouble for anybody. They have helped me not to feel disruptive. Now I'm just going to get on with my work, do what I've got to do, get excellent marks.

(Female, 14)

I think that, if I hadn't come here, I wouldn't have sorted anything out, and I'd still be in the same situation as I was six months ago ... It's helped me do everything I wanted to do [sort out family problems, start looking for work] but I just never had the push to go and do it. I needed someone to give me a push.

(Female, 15)

Such changes in attitude were not necessarily attributed to the skills and employability element. Improvements in skills and employability in particular often reflected the combined impact of the different elements, especially the family work, close keyworker relationships, supportive environments and personalised, tailored interventions. In these instances, the skills and employability element was as much a facilitator as an instigator of change.

### **Impact on housing stability**

Approximately half of the interviewees had unstable housing histories or had previously run away from home. The interviews explored the impact of the programme on their housing situation. Some young people who were living away from home when they were referred to the programme felt that the intervention – usually the family element – had enabled them to return. Those who were still at home said that they were less likely to run away than before, either because home life had improved or they felt more able to cope with it:

I don't run away any more ... I changed really. I think to myself, 'If I run away, my mum is going to be worried about me again'.

(Female, 16)

I've changed my lifestyle since I came here ... I don't think about taking pills no more or about running away from home 'cause when you're doing all those things you're not just hurting yourself but people like your family and that.

(Female, 14)

However, these findings relate only to participants in Schemes A, B and C who usually credited the family support work or their keyworker with the changes. The same was not true of Scheme D. The family element in this scheme was more limited and confined to schools, where young people said they felt uncomfortable or resentful about discussing their home life.

In some cases, the programme helped participants through a housing crisis. For example, a family keyworker in Scheme B had recommended hostels to young people when they reached crisis point at home. And two young people in Scheme C

– both of whom had left home before contact with the programme – had received support and advice around applying for independent housing.

Finally, one young person on Scheme B left home while she was on the programme. She nevertheless felt that the programme had a positive impact on her housing situation because it had helped her to negotiate her move out of home to stay with family friends and was there to provide advice about future housing options.

### **Summary of the impact of the different elements of the programme**

Table 1 summarises the impact of the different programme elements for each scheme as well as any additional impact on young people's housing stability.

**Table 1 Main impacts achieved by each element in each scheme**

	Three elements of Safe in the City's scheme model			Additional area of impact
	Family support	Skills and employability	Personal development	Housing stability
<i>Scheme A</i>	A few cases with positive impacts where home life improved and the person felt better able to cope with home problems. Several cases where impacts felt to be small or non-existent.	Key skills improved. Change in attitudes towards school/college or employment. Several cases where impacts felt to be small or non-existent.	A few cases with positive impacts as for other schemes. Several cases where impacts felt to be small or non-existent.	A few felt less likely to run away than previously.
<i>Scheme B</i>	Home life improved.  Better able to cope with home problems.	Key skills improved.  Employment/college places achieved.  Job readiness/confidence improved (work experience, CVs).	Improved: confidence, outlook, behaviour, anger management, willingness to invest in future. Reduction in self-harm/criminality. Problem peers dropped.	Temporarily homeless person found hostel accommodation. A few felt less likely to run away and/or were helped to move back to family home.
<i>Scheme C</i>	Better able to cope with home problems.  Home life improved.	Employment or college places achieved.  Job readiness/confidence improved (work experience, CVs).	Improved: confidence, outlook, behaviour, anger management, willingness to invest in future. Reduction in self-harm. Problem peers dropped.	Homeless person housed in council accommodation. A few felt less likely to run away and/or were helped to move back to family home.
<i>Scheme D</i>	A few cases with improvements in ability to cope with home problems. Several cases where impacts felt to be small or non-existent impact.	Key skills improved. Improved job readiness and confidence (work experience, CVs). Several cases where impacts felt to be small or non-existent.	Improved: confidence, outlook, behaviour, anger management, willingness to invest in future. Reduction in criminality. Problem peers dropped.	



## **PART 3**

### **Analysis, service delivery implications and future work**



# 6 The impact on youth homelessness risk factors

Part 2 of the report demonstrated the positive impact of the different elements of the programmes could have on young people’s school or work situations; family life; and personal and social development. But did the changes these young people discussed have any impact on their risk of becoming homeless? This is the subject of the current chapter. The first section examines whether the programme as a whole reduced young people’s risk of homelessness and the second section examines the impact of each scheme.

## Assessing the programme’s impact on young people’s risk of homelessness

Young people’s level of risk was assessed against the factors identified in the original research that underpinned the Safe in the City model (Bruegel and Smith, 1999). The factors were grouped into two categories – family and housing difficulties, and other forms of social exclusion (see Table 2).

**Table 2 The categories of risk used to assess the programme’s impact**

<b>Safe in the City risk factors</b>	<b>Category of risk</b>
Experience of running away from home Experience of problems at home A disrupted home history	Risk of housing instability and disruption to family life
Experience of severe or chronic family poverty Experience/risk of school exclusion	Risk of other forms of social exclusion

### **Risk factors**

#### **Family and housing difficulties**

Young people who were deemed to be at risk because of their family and housing difficulties were likely to have experienced one or more of the following.

- Spent time away from home in the past, instigated by themselves, their parents or social services. In some cases, they had run away for one night or for longer, usually to stay with friends or other relatives. In other cases, they were away for extended periods with foster carers, family friends or relatives.
- A parent who was absent because of divorce, bereavement, imprisonment, social services or contact restrictions. In a few cases, the interviewee had come to the UK with relatives or one parent and had left the rest of the family in their country of origin.

- Argued frequently with parents or step-parents. These arguments were often about issues of independence and growing up but in one case was around sexuality.
- Suffered from what they saw as lack of attention at home, sometimes because of parents' mental health or drug use.
- Experienced abuse or violence at home.

### ***Social exclusion***

The second measure of risk assessed young people's level of social exclusion. This involved one or more of the following:

- problems at school, including occasional to frequent truanting, suspension and temporary or permanent exclusion
- criminal behaviour, including robbery, car and bike theft, shoplifting and vandalism
- peer group issues, such as spending time with young people who misbehaved at school or played truant and were involved in crime
- behavioural difficulties and mental health issues
- regular, frequent and/or heavy drug and alcohol use
- experiencing a personal trauma, such as bereavement, rape and physical or sexual abuse.

The sample fell into two groups according to the risks they faced. Group 1 comprised participants who were at risk because of the combination of their family and housing difficulties and their social marginalisation. They were drawn from all four schemes: seven in Scheme A, eight in Scheme B, seven in Scheme C, seven in Scheme D. Group 2 comprised young people who had a relatively stable home and family life but who were socially excluded.<sup>1</sup> Four of the young people were in Scheme A, six in Scheme D, none in Scheme B and one in Scheme C. It is not clear why they were distributed in this way, but possible explanations are as follows.

- Because all referrals in Scheme D were via the school, their problems were school rather than home related
- The lead element in Scheme A had a reputation as a project for excluded pupils, so people with educational issues were more likely to be referred than young people with family problems.

Box 11 presents case studies of young people in each group and their family, housing and social exclusion experiences.

### **Box 11 Case studies of young people experiencing different levels of risk in Group 1 and Group 2**

#### *Group 1: family and housing difficulties combined with different forms of social exclusion*

Catherine, 16, had not been to school since she was 14 because of bullying and because she preferred to spend her time with a gang of boys. The gang spent their time on the streets and were involved in petty crime, including vandalism and shoplifting. Catherine's home life was not happy. Her parents worked long hours and did not give her the attention she sought. A few months earlier, she had run away from home to stay with the family of one of the gang members because she felt that they gave her more attention than her parents.

Pete, 14, went to school for two lessons a day. He was not allowed to attend full-time because he was constantly disruptive and had once thrown a chair at a teacher. Pete and his mother were beaten by his dad until the latter left two years ago. Pete argues a lot with his mother over 'silly things', like him staying out with his friends. He often goes out 'on the earn', robbing parcel vans and cars for money. He has not run away from home, although he frequently stays out until the early hours to avoid going home.

Claire, 14, was excluded from school for disruptive behaviour and attends the Pupil Referral Unit. She often argues with her mother, who does not approve of her boyfriend or of her spending time with him. She has run away from home on several occasions to stay with her father or with her boyfriend. Claire recently took an overdose.

### *Group 2: social exclusion*

Marcus, 15, has been permanently excluded from school, for 'cussing and threatening' the teachers. He has also been in trouble with the police for criminal damage and common assault. He thinks that he gets on reasonably well with everyone at home, although his mother sometimes gets cross with him because of his behaviour. He has never spent time away from home without his mother knowing where he is.

Steve, 14, is at risk of permanent exclusion from school. Several of his friends have been excluded and he has received a final warning. Steve has also experienced problems on his local estate. His confidence and self-esteem have suffered since he was attacked by a gang of boys near his home and he now refuses to go out at night. He has never spent time away from home without his mother knowing where he is and feels he gets on well with his mother.

### ***The impact of the programme on young people's level of risk***

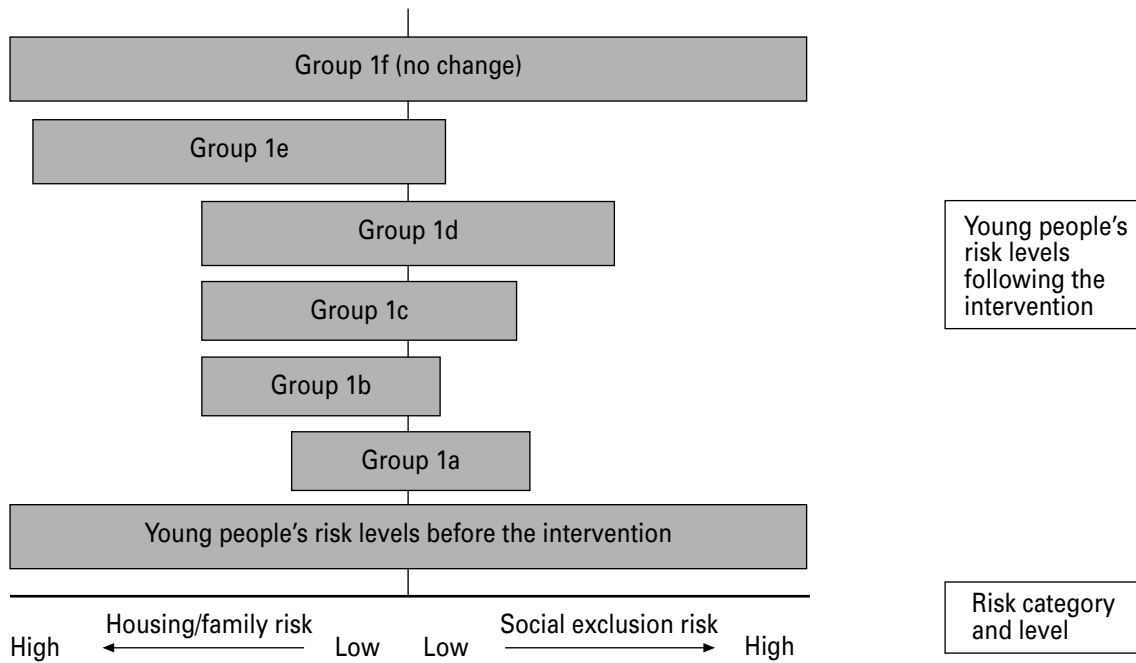
#### ***Progress made by young people at risk because of housing and family difficulties and their degree of social marginalisation (Group 1)***

Figure 3 illustrates the impact of the intervention on Group 1's homelessness risk factors according to the accounts of young people in this group, of its impact on different areas of their lives. The box at the bottom of the figure represents participants' risk levels when they joined the programme. It extends the width of the graph because it contains young people who had relatively low levels of risk on both dimensions (represented by the centre of the box) and young people with high levels of risk according to both measures (represented by the extremes of the box). Young people's vulnerability to homelessness was assessed again at the time of the interviews and they were recategorised according to their new risk levels. The remaining boxes document participants' level of risk as a result of the intervention. The wider the box the greater their combined risk.

Overall, the figure demonstrates that most young people in Group 1 reduced their level of risk while they were on the programme. For example, the truncated shape of the Group 1a box shows that these young people made significant progress in their housing situation, family life and level of social exclusion. Participants in Groups 1b, 1c, 1d, and 1e also made progress when assessed according to the two categories of risk but changes were not so great as for Group 1a and the impact was more variable. For example, Group 1e tackled some issues associated with social exclusion but there was little change in their housing circumstances or family life. An example of progress in this group is a young person who obtained some

qualifications and work experience while on the programme but continued their sporadic involvement with crime. A small number of young people, indicated by Group 1f, experienced no change.

**Figure 3 The combined impact of the programme on young people’s home and family life and level of social exclusion (Group 1)**



***Progress made by young people at risk because of their levels of social exclusion (Group 2)***

Figure 4 illustrates the impact of the programme on Group 2’s level of social exclusion according to the accounts of young people in this group, of its impact on different areas of their lives. Comparing the baseline box with the other boxes, it is clear that some young people (Group 2a) made significant progress in reducing their risk levels, as can be seen by the truncated Group 2a box. Participants in Group 2b improved in some areas but not others. Again, there was a group of people – Group 2c – who made no real progress.

***Implications for preventing youth homelessness***

Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate that the programme had a significant impact on the factors that put young people at risk of homelessness. The findings support the premise underlying the Safe in the City approach that, by tackling the problems associated with family life and social exclusion, the risk of youth homelessness can also be reduced. The figures also show that the programme’s impact varied, with some young people making significant progress and others more moderate. No

young people’s situations deteriorated during their involvement with the programme, although, in some cases, neither were there any improvements. Based on this evidence, it appears that Safe in the City was making significant progress towards achieving its goals, particularly given the premise that, as an early intervention programme, its impact would increase over time.

## The impact of each scheme on the homelessness risk factors

The previous section documented the impact of the programme on the factors that affected young people’s chances of becoming homeless. This section looks at the impact of each scheme and illustrates the impact by telling the story of some of the participants. Overall, the data suggest that young people on Scheme B and C made the greatest progress in reducing their risk of homelessness, while the impact of Scheme A and D was more limited.

### The impact of Scheme A

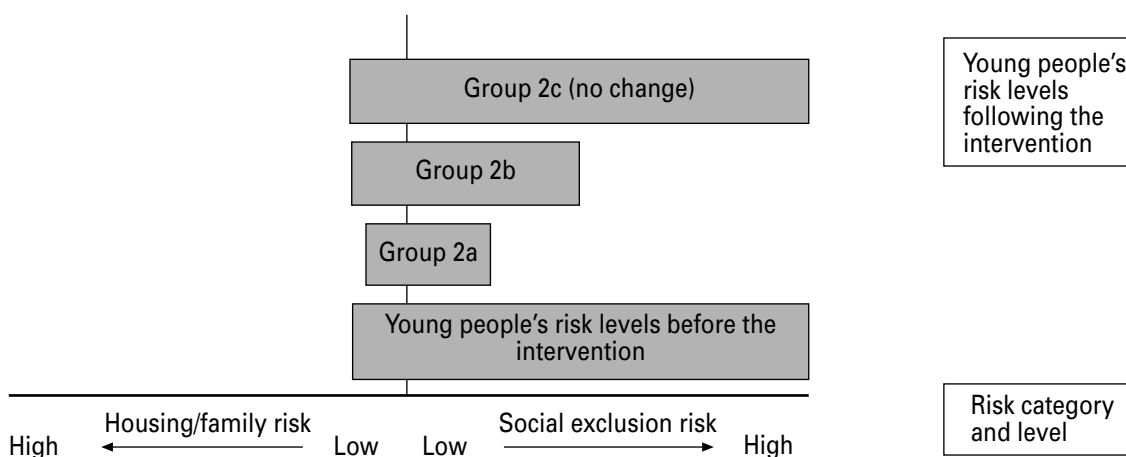
#### Extent of impact

Some young people in Scheme A experienced far-reaching impacts, but most observed improvements in just one area of risk or reported no change.

#### Mechanisms for change

Young people who made the greatest progress in resolving aspects of their home life, housing situation or social exclusion received one-to-one counselling in the family element and were also involved in the skills and employability and personal development elements. These participants – all female – believed the family

**Figure 4 The impact of the programme on young people’s experience of social exclusion (Group 2)**



element had helped them to change their behaviour, outlook and self-perception. These changes had a beneficial impact on their approach to change in other areas of their life and their willingness to engage with the other elements of the programme.

One male was also involved in the family element but he dropped out early because he had been uncomfortable talking to a stranger about family problems. He did not experience such far-reaching impacts as the others on the element.

### **Limitations**

Young people who engaged only with the skills and employability and personal development elements reported fewer or more mixed impacts. Reduction in levels of social exclusion ranged from some to none. The limited impacts associated with these two elements suggest that the family element acted as the catalyst for change in other areas.

### **Box 12 Case studies of Scheme A's impact**

#### *Improvements in home life/housing stability and social exclusion (Group 1a, Figure 3)*

When Natasha joined the programme, her home life and housing history and experience of social exclusion put her at risk of homelessness. She frequently argued with her mother and had run away from home on several occasions. She had been excluded from secondary school for fighting and was attending a Pupil Referral Unit. She also had a criminal record for fighting.

Both Natasha and her mother became involved with the family element. Natasha feels that the individual sessions with a counsellor at this element helped her to control her anger, value herself and understand her mother better. The situation at home has improved significantly as a result. Arguments are less frequent and Natasha's mother is very happy and proud of the changes Natasha has made. Natasha says that these changes have made her want to return to and succeed at school. She is due to start a new school soon and is determined to behave well and keep away from the 'bad crowd'.

#### *No improvement in levels of social exclusion (Group 2c, Figure 4)*

When Marcus joined the programme, he had been permanently excluded from school for violence towards a teacher and had been in trouble with the police for common damage and criminal assault. He said that the relationship with his parents was fine, although he sometimes got into trouble with his mother for his

behaviour. Marcus engaged with the skills and employability and personal development elements of the scheme. He saw the programme as an alternative school and thought that attendance was compulsory. He liked the personal development element for a while, but then thought it got 'boring' and he started messing about. He did not like the skills and employability element – it was too much like school – and he was disruptive and often failed to turn up. Marcus recently got a place at the PRU, and says that this will mean there is 'no need' to attend the scheme any more. He does not think he got much out of his participation.

### ***The impact of Scheme B***

#### ***Extent of impacts***

Impacts were more far-reaching in this scheme than Scheme A. All of the young people experienced varying levels of improvements in their home life, housing stability and social exclusion.

#### ***Mechanisms for change***

These interviewees generally engaged first with the family element of the programme and had formed close relationships with the keyworkers. A recurring theme was that improvements in young people's home life, confidence and outlook had arisen out of their contact with family element keyworkers. These improvements had been the catalyst for change in other areas of their lives (e.g. see the cases of *Donna* and *Larry*, in Box 13).

#### ***Limitations***

A young person's progress depended to some extent on the severity of their problems rather than the support they received. In particular, where problems at home were extremely entrenched or serious, impacts tended to be around improving a young person's ability to cope with problems at home rather than improving the situation itself. In *Larry's* case, family problems seemed more entrenched than *Donna's*, in spite of the seriousness of *Donna's* situation. In some cases, progress was obscured by the entrenched nature of the young person's difficulties. For example, one young person had moved back home (having been 'thrown out' by her mother) as a result of the programme but she continued to distrust her mother and argued with her frequently.

### **Box 13 Case studies of Scheme B's impact**

*Some improvements in home life/housing stability and social exclusion (see Group 1c, Figure 3)*

Larry's (16) relationship with his mother had been difficult for a number of years. She regularly beat him and he often ran away to his aunt's house. Larry had been suspended from school on numerous occasions, but he managed to complete his GCSEs, with mostly Es and Fs.

When Larry first attended the programme, he was suffering from depression and poor self-esteem. He did not want to mix with other young people as a result of this and engaged only with the family element. He established a close relationship with his family keyworker and found it helpful to talk to her about his home life. They also talked about the future and the keyworker helped him to prepare a CV and to think about his strengths. Larry successfully beat a number of other candidates to a job as an apprentice mechanic. He believes he would never have got the job if his family worker hadn't instilled him with 'hope and confidence'. Life at home is still difficult. But he is able to bear it more because he knows that he will be able to move out and rent his own place soon.

*Improvements in home life/housing stability and social exclusion (Group 1a, Figure 3)*

Donna, 16, dropped out of school when she was 15. She lives with her father with whom she regularly used to argue. She says she was partly to blame because she used to get angry at the slightest provocation. She has never run away and says that she loves her father.

Donna engaged first with the family element of the programme. Having a keyworker to talk to about problems at home meant that she was less likely to bottle up her anger and 'lash out' at her father. She also began to understand why her father got frustrated with her and how she could avoid rows at home. As her home situation began to improve, Donna felt ready to address her lack of qualifications and so she engaged with the skills and employability element at the suggestion of her family keyworker. Donna has now passed a CLAIT typing exam. She hopes it will help her to get a place at college.

### ***The impact of Scheme C***

#### ***Extent of impact***

Impacts were again more far-reaching in this scheme than in Scheme A. Six of the nine young people in the sample experienced impacts around both home life/housing stability and other forms of social exclusion.

#### ***Mechanisms for change***

Young people made the most progress when they had a close relationship with a keyworker. These relationships were found in the family element, the personal development element or both. Young people credited these elements with producing the changes that facilitated improvements in other areas, although the skills and employability element was sometimes felt to have helped facilitate these changes as well.

#### ***Limitations***

As with Scheme B, the degree of change that occurred in the participant's home life or housing situation depended on the severity of the problem and the extent to which young people or parents seemed prepared to talk about the situation at home. For example, *Jesse's* situation seemed less serious than *Trisha's* (see Box 14). Both *Jesse* and her mother had been keen to rebuild their relationship, whereas *Trisha* had felt that her situation was beyond repair.

Degrees of seriousness also explained differences in the extent to which young people's level of social exclusion improved. Where improvements were more limited (1d, 1e), young people faced particularly entrenched problems that had not been resolved despite changes in other areas of their lives. One young person, for example, was experiencing depression following the death of two close friends. His depression was jeopardising his ability to live independently in council housing. Another – *Trisha* – had got into college with the help of the programme but had left because of budgeting difficulties and a relationship breakdown. Another had experienced wide-ranging impacts but felt that she was continuing to over-use alcohol and drugs.

The two young people who reported no change had been on the programme for less than three weeks and it was too early to expect any observable impact.

### **Box 14 Case studies of Scheme C's impact**

#### *Improvements in home life/housing stability and social exclusion (Group 1a, Figure 3)*

Jesse, 16, dropped out of school when she was 15. She spent a lot of her time with a 'gang' of boys and got involved in petty crime. She rowed a lot with her mother and, when she was 16, ran away to live with one of the gang members and his family.

Jesse's mother arranged for them to attend the family element of the scheme together. The family worker helped them to sort out some of their differences and Jesse moved back in with her mother. They get on better than they used to. Jesse's mother puts time aside every week for them to do something together (shopping, cinema). As a result of these changes, Jesse felt more able to think about her future and her family worker put her in touch with the skills and employability worker. This worker helped Jesse put together a CV and is currently helping her to look for a college course (where she can take her GCSEs) and apply for a weekend job. Jesse says that attending the scheme gave her the 'push' that she needed to get her life back on track.

#### *Some improvements in home life/housing stability and social exclusion (Group 1d, Figure 3)*

Trisha was left with her father and older brothers when she was two years old because her mother, an alcoholic, moved out. Trisha used to argue with her father all the time and says she was always the 'black sheep' of the family. When she was 15, she moved in with her boyfriend because home life became too difficult. They soon broke up and she moved in with a friend. At this point, a school mentor put her in touch with the intervention (she left school shortly afterwards, at 15).

Trisha began to see a keyworker from the personal development element on a regular basis, one on one. The keyworker helped her to apply for council housing. She was successful and now lives in her own flat. More generally, Trisha says that the keyworker acted as her 'rock'. For example, she would phone the keyworker when she was feeling suicidal in the knowledge that there was someone there to support her and listen to her. With the help of the skills and employability worker, Trisha got a place at a local college. At the time of the interview, however, she had stopped attending. She had been experiencing problems in a relationship, was finding it difficult to budget independently and often lacked the bus fare to get to college.

### ***The impact of Scheme D***

#### ***Extent of impacts***

Impacts were less far-reaching in this scheme than in B and C, and young people were more likely to experience impacts around social exclusion than around home life/housing stability.

#### ***Mechanisms for change***

Where young people's home life and housing situation improved, albeit narrowly, this was usually because of changes in other areas of their life (*Jake*, in Box 15 below), rather than as a result of any specific intervention.

#### ***Limitations***

It appears that change in this model was limited because participants with family problems were not receiving specific intervention in this area. Nor were they receiving the type of *individualised* support, which – as evidenced by Schemes B and C – could help young people to cope with difficulties at home.

It is also the case that the only young people who engaged with the family element did not think they had problems at home, although workers believed that the majority of these young people were dealing with family problems.

As in Scheme A, there were differences in the extent to which young people experienced a reduction in their level of social exclusion. Again, key factors, were the extent to which the structured intervention suited their individual needs and their attitudes towards attending the programme and making changes. A further factor in this scheme was the seriousness of the young people's circumstances or the extent to which patterns of behaviour were entrenched. Some young people experienced improvements in some areas, such as behaviour or schoolwork, but they continued to exhibit behaviour that put them at 'risk' in others. For example, they continued to be involved in crime (*Jake*, in Box 15 below) or faced ongoing problems with aggression.

### **Box 15 Case studies of Scheme D's impact**

#### ***Some improvements in home life/housing stability and social exclusion (Group 1d, Figure 3)***

Jake's (14) father regularly beat him and his mother during his childhood. They ran away five or six times to stay in temporary accommodation and, a year ago, ran away from his father for good. Six months ago, Jake was excluded from

school for violence towards a teacher, although he now attends for two days a week. Jake often goes out 'on the earn' with friends, robbing cars and parcel vans. Jake says he gets on OK with his mother, but they argue a lot, especially about him staying out late at night. Jake was referred to the personal development element of the intervention by a school mentor and attends three sessions a week. He does school work there, takes part in workshops – for example, around anger management – and has been on residential trips.

Jake says that the programme has taught him to 'calm down' and his behaviour at school is now much better as a result. His schoolwork has also improved since attending the programme, as he finds it easier to learn in small groups. However, he is still staying out late and arguing with his mother, and still, occasionally, goes out robbing. He sees it as his only way of getting money.

*Some improvements in home life/housing stability and social exclusion  
(Group 1c, Figure 3)*

Lee is 14. He was excluded from school when he was 13 for aggressive and disruptive behaviour. His mother left his father when he was small. She has since had a series of boyfriends, some of whom have been violent towards her. Lee has run away from time to time to get away from difficult situations at home. He usually spends the night in a park with a mate or sleeps in a car. Lee's headteacher referred him to the personal development element of the scheme, which he attends five days a week for lessons. He has been on several residential trips with the element.

Lee says that the programme has helped to build his confidence. He feels that the project workers respect and value him. As a result, he tries harder at lessons and thinks he is now doing better at school. The scheme also arranged for him to train as a plumber one day a week. Lee says that, because he is happier, he is better able to cope with difficulties at home. He has stopped running away. But he still feels he has a difficult relationship with his mother and he continues to dislike being at home.

## **Summary of key impacts on youth homelessness risk factors**

- Young people's progress was assessed against two 'risk' dimensions: housing instability and disruption to family life and other forms of social exclusion.
- The majority of participants made some progress in reducing their risk of homelessness as measured along the two risk dimensions. In some cases, progress has been significant and, in others, more modest. No young person felt that their situation had deteriorated as a result of their participation on the programme.
- Progress was greatest when the young person engaged with the family element, established a close relationship with a keyworker, or both.
- The extent and severity of the risk factors faced by a young person and their attitudes towards the programme affected their progress. Follow-up interviews would provide some insight into whether some problems were beyond the scope of the programme or whether they would be responsive to more long-term intervention.

# 7 Good practice messages for service delivery

This chapter outlines key messages for practice in relation to Safe in the City's service delivery. It is important that these messages are taken forward by agencies working with young people and families across the voluntary and statutory sectors.

## Tailoring: creating an individualised programme

Intervention is likely to be more effective when support is tailored to the participant's individual needs – an approach particularly evident in Schemes B and C. They are more likely to enjoy, and engage with, the intervention (Chapter 3) and more likely to experience far-reaching benefits (Chapter 5). Conversely, when young people feel that the intervention is not individually tailored (for example, that they are attending a 'one-size-fits-all' programme rather than a programme designed to meet their own needs), it is less likely to be engaging or reap significant benefits. The research suggests that the characteristics of a flexible and tailored approach include the following.

- *Identifying and responding to needs*: at the point of referral, staff need to identify important issues in the young people's lives, what support they would like to receive and in what format. In particular, they need to create a sense that the programme is there *for them*.
- *Matching need to interventions*: programmes need to ensure that young people engage with the most appropriate elements at the most appropriate time. This involves giving careful thought to entrants' key needs (giving high priority to young people's own feelings and views) and tailoring initial interventions accordingly.
- *Tailoring support*: programmes are likely to be more effective when they tailor elements to meet the young person's needs and allow them to be involved in some aspects of the element rather than all of it.
- *Connecting to a keyworker*: keyworkers play a vital role in identifying young people's needs and conveying the message that there is someone there who is focused on their problems, needs, aspirations and desires.

## The focus and order of intervention

- *Feelings first*: the interviews revealed that interventions are likely to be most effective when they tackle emotional issues at the outset. These include family

problems, emotional turmoil, low confidence, low self-worth and/or negative attitudes. Young people are unlikely to engage with a programme focusing on their future (skills and employability) if they see no point in investing in it. Similarly, young people are usually reluctant to mix with other young people on the programme until issues of confidence or emotional well-being are dealt with.

- *Focusing on family and keyworker support*: either family work, the support of a keyworker, or both appear to be the most effective way of helping young people tackle emotional, attitudinal and family problems. Family work was linked to improvements in the home environment, the young person's ability to cope with problems at home and improvements in outlook and self-worth. Change in these areas was associated with a greater willingness and ability, on the part of the young person, to make changes in other areas of their life and engage further with the idea of investing in their future.
- *Changing attitudes through keyworker intervention*: close keyworker relationships also seem an important first experience for young people with entrenched views about social and cultural norms. Whereas spending time with other young people can cement these attitudes, spending time with a liked and trusted adult adviser can lead young people to question them.
- *Knock-on benefits*: in some cases, tackling emotional difficulties and family problems facilitates changes in other areas without further intervention. For example, young people who grow in confidence and self-esteem often begin to engage with their education or their future as a matter of course.
- *A role for subsequent interventions*: subsequent interventions can also play a significant role. While the groundwork for change is laid down by the initial intervention, subsequent interventions facilitate change in other areas. For example, young people can go on to benefit from group-based activities on the personal development or skills and employability elements following changes arising out of the family element. In particular, young people may improve their attitudes and self-worth by mixing with other young people, taking part in enjoyable activities, and receiving help with education and employment issues. However, it is important to be aware of individuals' needs, as not all aspects of the programmes suit all participants.
- *Group-based activities for those who are ready*: young people who are not grappling with emotional, attitudinal or family difficulties may be ready to mix with others and 'get back' into a daily routine as soon as they join the programme. The group-based activities on the personal development element are a particularly

appropriate introduction because they are typically more enjoyable and less lessons-based (in young people's eyes) than the skills and employability element.

## Importance of a close keyworker relationship

- *Critical keyworker support*: the Social Exclusion Unit's report *Young Runaways* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002) notes that many young people run away because they have 'no one to talk to about their problems', because they 'did not know what else to do' and because they are 'not getting support with problems that might cause them to run'. This research reinforces the importance of having someone to talk to. Young people with keyworkers feel supported and valued and confident that they have somewhere to go in the event of a crisis. This can produce a change in outlook that allows interventions in other areas, such as skills and employability, to succeed. Keyworkers can also be critical in ensuring that the young person receives a flexible, tailored service that evolves in response to the young person's changing circumstances. This was the case for Schemes B and C.
- *One-to-one intervention*: keyworkers seem most effective when they meet the young person regularly, from the start of the programme, on a one-to-one basis and provide tailored, personalised support and advice. Evidence from Scheme D suggests that some keyworker benefits can be delivered by project workers in group-based activities if they are careful to pay young people individual attention, build rapport with them and talk to them individually about issues in their lives. However, this model does not seem as effective as the one-on-one model in meeting the needs of young people with significant emotional problems.
- *'Reasonable availability'*: it is important that keyworker relationships form a central element on each scheme, but they should not be the main or only focus. To maintain a balance, it is important that keyworkers operate as part of a team, that young people are made aware that keyworkers cannot be available round the clock and that other members of staff are available when keyworkers cannot be on hand. Moreover, it is important to avoid young people becoming too dependent on their keyworker because there will be occasions when he or she is not available. Programmes may benefit by establishing a message of 'reasonable availability' in order to set boundaries for keyworker contact.

## Links between the different elements of a scheme

Young people in Scheme C were positive about the staff's close and effective working relationships. Good practice lessons from Scheme C's seamless presentation of the different elements of the programme (see Chapter 3) include:

- taking new participants on a 'tour' of the different elements to meet the staff and learn about what they do
- holding joint inductions and residentials attended jointly by participants and staff from the different elements
- close working and co-operation between staff in the different elements.

### **A role for individual, long-term support?**

Despite achieving significant change in some areas of their lives, a small number of young people continued to be involved in situations and activities that put them at risk of homelessness. In particular, some young people continued to be involved in crime and drug and alcohol abuse, and to experience depression and behavioural difficulties. Longitudinal work would be needed to explore whether these problems would respond to longer-term engagement.

### **Summary of messages for good practice**

The findings suggest that intervention is likely to be most effective when it involves:

- a flexible, individualised programme that is sensitive and attentive to young people's personal needs
- an accessible, friendly, non-compulsory ethos
- a close, regular, one-on-one keyworker relationship at the start and throughout the programme
- overcoming emotional and attitudinal problems through keyworker support when young people join the programme and, if the young person feels ready for it, family work
- transferring the young person to a different element if the first referral was not appropriate
- allowing participants to be involved in some aspects of an element rather than all of it
- informing young people about all the elements of the programme at the outset and continuing to make the information available as appropriate.

# Note

## Chapter 6

- 1 The composition of Group 2 highlighted a discrepancy between information on the database that described these young people as facing problems at home and their own perceptions of secure home lives. The possible explanations are differences in perceptions of the same events between young people and the project workers, potential reticence in the interviews to discuss family issues (although these young people were forthcoming in all other respects), or problems around use and inputting for the database. It is beyond the scope of this research to be more precise about the reason.

# References

Bruegel, I. and Smith, J. (1999) *Taking Risks*. London: Safe in the City

Safe in the City (2002) *Safe in the City: A Practical Approach to Preventing Youth Homelessness*. London: Safe in the City

Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Young Runaways*. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

# Appendix 1:

## Topic guide for qualitative interviews

### Objectives

To explore:

- 1 life histories in detail
- 2 risk factors young people face
- 3 experiences of their local Safe in the City cluster scheme
- 4 impact of the cluster scheme so far on:
  - skills, employability, family relationships, personal development, self-confidence, self-esteem
  - risk factors identified in the biographical sections of the interview
- 5 any needs that have remained unmet by their cluster scheme.

### Introduction

- Introduce *National Centre* and study.
- Confidentiality.
- Timing.
- Record respondent's consent for interview to go ahead.

### Part I: general context

#### 1 *Present circumstances (all)*

- Age.
- Current activities (school, part-time work, spare time).
- Current housing status – who they live with, how long lived there.
- Nature of current housing status.

### **2 Life history (all)**

*The issues outlined below will not be relevant to all young people in the sample. There will be a need to adapt the areas outlined below to the age of the young person. The intention of this section is to explore the types of risk factors that the young person has faced or currently faces. Examples might be cramped living accommodation, poverty, living with a relative/foster parent, continuous arguments with family, arguments with family involving violence, exclusion from school, first leaving home before the age of 16, drug/alcohol abuse on the part of themselves or their parents, mental health problems on the part of themselves or their parents. Encourage detailed coverage of circumstances and key events/periods.*

Childhood and family background:

- where born
- family composition
- family circumstances (emotional, economic, stability and mobility)
- extended family (geographic and emotional proximity)
- any experiences of care
- parental expectations of them – whether different to their own – any cultural issues.

School life/education:

- where went to school/currently attending school (mobility, stability)
- experiences of and memories of school
- whether made friends, whether a happy time
- experiences of exclusion or absence, temporary or permanent
- relationship with teachers
- if/when left school or further education
- any qualifications.

Working history:

- whether worked, when started
- types of jobs
- how long stayed in jobs
- feelings about jobs.

Leaving home (where relevant):

- when, what precipitated
- experiences and feelings
- how well prepared.

Friendships:

- important friendships and relationships as growing up
- whether local network of friends, what based around, how (easily) made
- whether still in contact, still important
- what their friends are like, whether they are like them
- likes/dislikes about friends.

Further relationships:

- boyfriends/girlfriends/partners
- living together
- relationship breakdowns and separations.

Offending history:

- ever been in trouble with the police

## New approaches to youth homelessness prevention

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- what happened and why
- outcomes and feelings.

Home moving/stability:

- experiences of moving
- where from/to
- what precipitated
- who with.

Housing crisis/instability:

- experiences of housing crisis/housing instability
- nature
- feelings
- effect
- coping strategies – informal and formal sources of help
- whether/how overcame.

### **3 Contact with support services/agencies (all)**

*Use this section to explore the range of advice and support received by the young person, particularly in relation to any difficult life periods mentioned in the life history section. Try to explore all the types of advice and support (both informal and formal) that the young person has recently received. Explore non Safe in the City sources in this section. Explore experiences of and views about the Safe in the City cluster scheme in Part II of the guide.*

Details of past/current forms of advice and support in key areas of life (voluntary agencies, key personal relationships, special support at school, etc.):

- 1 Who and where received advice and support.

- 2 Circumstances around receiving advice/support.
- 3 Nature of advice/support.
- 4 Informal sources of help:
  - who helped them
  - what role they played in their life
  - whether still in contact
  - how made a difference.
- 5 Formal sources of help:
  - which services used
  - why accessed these services
  - how they made a difference.

## **Part II: Safe in the City cluster scheme**

*The purpose of the remainder of the topic guide is to explore young people's experiences of, and views about, their local Safe in the City cluster scheme. We are not sure yet whether young people will think of the services they are accessing as part of a cluster scheme or as individual projects. It is important to find out how young people understand the services they are receiving and to be flexible in use of language to match their understanding. There might be a need to prompt respondents with the names of the three projects within their local cluster scheme or even the name of their local cluster scheme (listed at the back of the topic guide).*

*Young people might not have heard of Safe in the City. They are highly unlikely to be aware that Safe in the City is a homelessness prevention programme. Researchers should not therefore talk about the programme in terms of homeless prevention, unless the young person specifically mentions this.*

### **1 Initial contact with local cluster scheme (all)**

When first heard about their local cluster scheme (Brent Linx, Hackney Visions, Newham Cluster Scheme, 1st Base):

- from what source
- what they were told, by whom
- adequacy of information provided at that stage.

First contact with cluster scheme:

- where they went
- who initiated it
- who they saw
- understanding of why they were referred to the scheme
- what they were told about the scheme and the help/support they would be receiving.

Feelings and expectations about cluster scheme when they first heard about it.

- Extent to which they understood that participation was voluntary/compulsory and feelings.
- If understood as voluntary:
  - key reasons for participation
  - process by which decision to participate was made
  - key influences on decision to take part.
- Feelings about what the cluster scheme could offer them.
- What help – if any – they felt that they wanted the most and why (i.e. skills and employability, personal development, family mediation, other).
- Perceptions of advantages and disadvantages about being involved.
- Main (if any) concerns and why.
- If aware that in a cluster scheme (rather than series of separate projects); what this meant to them; whether/why they thought this was better than involvement in separate projects.
- Impact of initial referral/approach to cluster scheme on self-perceptions/esteem, family relationships.

## **2 Current understanding of cluster scheme**

Understanding of nature of the cluster scheme, i.e.:

- what type of support it is there to offer, i.e. looking at three different areas of their lives
- who it is for
- whether interconnected projects or one or more separate projects
- how the cluster scheme works
- who is behind the cluster scheme.

## **3 Key/project worker**

Whether have a key/project worker currently.

If not:

- awareness of key/project worker provision and feelings about
- whether had one previously
- reason for not having one now (i.e. transfer between projects, not on programme any more) and feelings.

If so:

- First contact with key/project worker:
  - when, where, nature, length
  - which project the worker is from
  - expectations of what keyworker would have to offer
  - issues discussed.
- Understanding of:
  - role of key/project worker
  - where key/project worker fits in with network
  - what nature of contact with key/project worker will be over the next few months

- relationship of key/project worker to individual projects/cluster scheme as a whole.
- Subsequent contact with keyworker:
  - how other meetings were organised
  - who initiated
  - frequency of contact
  - format of contact
  - sufficiency of contact.
- Feelings about keyworker:
  - views about keyworker – advantages, disadvantages
  - impact of feelings about keyworker on stance towards cluster scheme as a whole
  - general impression – good and bad points
  - attitude and approach of keyworker
  - effect of meeting with keyworker on attitudes towards participation in the cluster scheme and expectations of what the cluster scheme has to offer
  - any concerns about the role of the keyworker at this stage
  - relative importance of keyworker alongside other relationships in their life.

#### **4 Experiences of cluster scheme to date**

Experiences of cluster scheme so far:

- details of activities undertaken – key landmarks so far
- which projects working with and why
- how activities arranged and by whom
- contact with keyworker while involved
- feelings about the areas of life that are being addressed by the cluster scheme – whether they would feel happier if the cluster scheme was addressing other areas and why.

Skills/employability:

- details of activities/training undertaken

- frequency/location/content of training
- satisfaction with skills/employability training so far
- future hopes/expectations of skills/employability training
- awareness/understanding of how long involvement with skills/employability programme will last
- feelings about length of involvement.

Personal development:

- details of activities/training undertaken
- frequency/location/content of training
- satisfaction with training so far
- future hopes/expectations of personal development work
- awareness/understanding of how long involvement with personal development programme will last
- feelings about length of involvement.

Family mediation:

- details of mediation work undertaken
- frequency/location/content of work
- feelings about work, in particular:
  - if programme has worked with their parent/s or carer/s, feelings about this
  - if programme has not so far worked with parent/s or carer/s, extent to which they are aware that it might, and feelings about this
  - future hopes/expectations of mediation work
  - awareness/understanding of how long involvement with project will last and what will follow project's work.

Referral between cluster scheme projects (*note that respondents might or might not understand that they have been referred to a different project within the cluster scheme rather than referred to a separate project altogether. Careful exploration will be necessary*).

- Whether referred between cluster scheme projects.
- If referred:
  - experiences of transition between projects
  - understanding of transitions
  - any problems experienced and why
  - role of keyworker in transition.
- If aware that in a cluster scheme rather than a series of separate projects, what this now means to them, whether/why it is better than involvement in a single or separate projects.

Referral to other project/agencies:

- whether referred by cluster scheme to any projects/agencies outside the cluster scheme
- feelings about referral
- experiences at project/agency referred to.

Future expectations of cluster scheme:

- experiences on the cluster scheme in the next few weeks/months, i.e.:
  - type of support offered
  - involvement of parents
  - planned programmes/activities
- feelings about what they are expecting to happen
- any anxieties about future involvement and why.

### **5 Views about and impact of involvement with cluster scheme (all)**

Overall views about the cluster scheme:

- elements most/least valued and why
- feelings about the scope of the service:
  - extent to which it addresses the issues/problems that are most important to them
  - any areas that it does not, but should, address
- feelings about the intensity of the service:
  - extent to which the programme is too/insufficiently intense and why
- extent to which they feel that they are receiving a service tailored to their particular needs and why
- comparison of experiences on cluster scheme to support offered from other sources
- how being involved in the cluster scheme makes them feel about themselves and their family.

Explore impact of scheme on following areas since participation in the network in terms of outcomes so far/anticipated outcomes:

- risk factors identified in biographical section of interview
- job orientation/job readiness
- vocational skills/qualifications
- interpersonal skills (communication, confidence)
- personal motivation and self-confidence
- self-esteem
- family relationships
- the family unit as a whole
- housing stability/mobility.

Any needs unmet by the cluster scheme – whether/how cluster scheme should have helped.

### **6 Evaluation of cluster scheme (all)**

Views about cluster scheme as a form of support for young people (explore positive and negative aspects):

- extent to which their experiences have matched their expectations
- how it has differed from their expectations (areas where it is has fallen down, areas where it has exceeded expectations)
- anything about the scheme that they would like to see changed or improved.

### **7 Future plans (all)**

Thinking of their particular needs and aims:

- What they think will happen to them in the future in terms of housing, education, family relationships, other relationships, employment – and fit with what they would *like* to happen.
- What are their key goals at this time:
  - have these changed over time?
- Extent to which they imagine that involvement with Safe in the City cluster scheme has and will help them towards their goals.
- Where they would like to see themselves in a year's time in terms of:
  - general life situation
  - involvement with the cluster scheme.

### **Important**

Explain that we might want to talk to a number of people at a later stage of the programme/their activities. Ask them if they would be willing to help again. They will get a £15 music voucher for each time we talk to them.

Fill in consent form with name and contact address.

# Appendix 2: Profile of the sample and Safe in the City's client group

**Table A2.1 Characteristics of each scheme**

	Scheme A (%) (n = 51)	Scheme B (%) (n = 23)	Scheme C (%) (n = 43)	Scheme D (%) (n = 110)
<i>Lead agency</i>	Voluntary	Voluntary	Statutory	Statutory
<i>Referral source</i>				Education
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	82	56	61	39
Female	18	44	39	61
<i>Age</i>				
Under 16	75	52	43	50
16 plus	25	48	57	50
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
White	10	26	87	75
Black	80	38	4	10
Mixed	10	28	9	11
Asian	–	3	–	1
Chinese/other	–	5	–	3
<i>Risk factors*</i>				
Home problems	77	90	80	88
Risk at school	91	92	72	85
Disrupted home history	44	79	41	61
Runaway	47	83	45	52
Family poverty	37	81	37	70
<i>Referral routes**</i>				
School/education	63	47	29	99
Social services	12	26	22	–
Voluntary agency	95	2	–	–
Self	79	2	6	0.5
Family/friends	84	12	10	–
Police/YOT	–	5	3	–
Health	96	–	–	–
Other	93	7	29	0.5

\* Young people could be assessed for two or more risk factors.

\*\* Scheme A accepted multiple referrals whereas the other clusters did not.  
Scheme D mostly accepted referrals from three target schools.

**Table A2.2 Profile of the young people in the sample on each scheme**

	Scheme A (n = 11)	Scheme B (n = 8)	Scheme C (n = 9)	Scheme D (n = 13)
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	7	3	4	7
Female	4	5	5	6
<i>Age</i>				
Under 16	8	3	4	11
16 plus	3	5	5	2
<i>Ethnic group</i>				
White	0	1	9	11
Black	9	6	–	–
Mixed	2	1	–	2
<i>Risk factors</i>				
Home problems	11	8*	8	11
Risk at school	10	8	7	9
Disrupted home history	4	8	6	4
Runaway	9	8	5	1
Family poverty	4	8	–	5
<i>Referral routes</i>				
School/education	–	4	–	13
Social services	2	4	2	–
Voluntary agency	–	–	1	–
Self	3	–	2	–
Family/friends	2	–	1	–
Police/YOT	–	–	3	–
Health	1	–	–	–
Other	3	–	–	–

*\* Note: all the young people on this scheme were rated as experiencing all the risk factors according to staff assessments.*

# Appendix 3:

## Terminology/key phrases

- *Multi-agency working*: more than one agency working with a young person and their parent/carer (but not necessarily jointly). It may be concurrent, as a result of joint planning, or it may be sequential.
- *An element*: individual agencies that provided the Safe in the City's specified type of work (e.g. family support, skills and employability, and personal development).
- *Housing instability*: having moved frequently/run away from home.

# Appendix 4:

## Potential for longitudinal research

Although the findings presented in this report stand alone, this phase of the research was initially conceived as the first in a longitudinal research process. The thinking was that it would have been important to capture the experiences of young people on the cluster scheme as they changed over time and also as the cluster scheme evolved in the light of experience. Given the recent closure of the Safe in the City cluster schemes, longitudinal research will no longer be occurring. However, we feel it useful to include our thoughts on the added value that a longitudinal approach can bring to a study of this nature.

- Young people's lives often appeared fluid and changeable. Relationships with parents could sometimes fluctuate between strong expressions of love and serious rows or even violence. Longitudinal research would have allowed exploration of whether this fluidity also applied to impacts and outcomes achieved on the programme, and factors affecting the sustainability or otherwise of outcomes. An issue of particular interest here would have been long-term impacts around housing stability, given Safe in the City's goal of preventing youth homelessness.
- Some young people struggled to talk about their lives or experiences of the cluster scheme in an introspective way, because of the recent nature of the events being discussed. At a later stage of involvement in the cluster, these young people might have been more reflective about their experiences. Further interviews would therefore have been valuable.
- Clusters appeared to face a greater task with some types of young people than with others; in some cases, achieving impacts was a slower and more drawn out process. Going back to the young people who had not experienced wide-ranging impacts so far – or who continued to face risk in certain areas – would have helped to explain whether certain types of problems were beyond the scope of the programme to change; or whether they simply required a much more long-term, intensive intervention from the cluster.
- Going back to young people at a later stage would have helped to confirm and amplify the findings of this research around models of service delivery. For example, some of those young people who were receiving only structured, group-based work might well have moved on to more personalised interventions as local clusters adapted their structures and relatively new projects (such as the family support element in Cluster A) gained a more established footing. Exploring whether different types of interventions had different impacts on the same young

people would have been enlightening, as would have been exploring how and if certain elements were more or less effective at different points during a young person's engagement with the cluster.

- It would also have been valuable, at a later stage, to include young people who were less intensively involved with the cluster than they had been at the time of their first interview, or who had ceased to be in contact. These interviews could have explored the longevity of impacts, how the cluster intervention was viewed with the benefit of hindsight and how these young people were faring without cluster intervention.

