

TACKLING YOUTH CRIME IN THE UK

[A paper by Kevin Gill, one of the three keynote speakers at the
Brisbane '93 ACPC Conference. Kevin is from Crime Concern, UK]

Over the past decade, penal reformers and juvenile justice campaigners in the UK have had remarkable success in persuading the criminal justice system to adopt a more rational community-based approach to the sentencing of young offenders. Almost everywhere a greater proportion of young offenders have been diverted from court proceedings by the use of cautioning, and the use of custodial sentences has dropped significantly. Importantly, there has been considerable cross-party political support for these measures to such a degree that crime did not really figure as a party political issue in the 1992 General Election.

However, despite these reforms, public concern about crime, and youth crime in particular, has never been higher. Reported crime levels have continued to rise remorselessly. There are frequent media horror stories about young offenders, including the killing of a toddler by older youths which caught the nation's heart strings. Many pundits believe that the criminal justice system has been emasculated by recent changes in policy and practice, and that both the main political parties have gone soft on crime. On housing estates, small numbers of highly delinquent youth are reportedly making life impossible for other residents, and the police and criminal justice agencies seem powerless to prevent it.

Against this background of increasingly liberal juvenile justice policies, rising crime and moral panic, it is essential for professionals not to be deflected from their carefully laid plans to tackle youth crime issues in a rational and deliberate way. Crime Concern, the UK's national independent crime prevention development organisation, has taken the lead in developing a practical local response to these issues which consults and brings together the concerns of all the different local interest groups, and diminishes the likelihood of a 'knee jerk' response.

In the UK, the vast majority of central and local government resources devoted to the crime problem are spent on police, court and offender services - i.e. responding to crime rather than preventing it. Less than 1% of police budgets go to prevention. Yet the Government's own research (Mayhew and Aye Maung, 1993) shows that less than 1 in 3 crimes committed get reported and recorded, and of these less than 1 in 4 gets cleared up. Eventually only 3% of offences actually committed result in a caution or conviction. We are left, therefore, with an anomalous situation in which 99% of the resources are focused on just 3% of the problem. This grossly inequitable imbalance of expenditure between crime prevention and response needs urgently to be addressed.

Political and economic context

The UK like much of the developed world has been going through a major economic recession during the past two years. Public sector funding has been increasingly cut back. At such times, individual agencies and departments tend to abandon peripheral activities and retreat to the inescapable core of their statutory duties. Unfortunately, youth crime prevention does not form part of the statutory function of any local or national agency. Thus, while there is considerable sympathy with this cause, there is little money available to fund new programmes.

Fortunately, pressure is now building to change this situation. The Home Office working group report *Safer Communities* (Morgan, 1991) argued that local authorities should be given a statutory responsibility for community safety. The Morgan report was a benchmark which has stirred up considerable debate and activity within local government. Local authority associations in the UK have taken up this case, arguing that they would be able to do much more if a legal obligation were laid upon them to undertake this work. However, central government in its wisdom has decided not to do this but to leave crime prevention as a permissive activity. Many local councillors and officers agree that they cannot devote serious resources to it until it becomes a recognised part of the core role of local government.

In addition to the basic policy framework represented by the Morgan report, a number of central government programmes have emphasised the role of crime prevention and community safety in recent years. The Safer Cities programme, which has been funded by the Home Office in selected towns and cities throughout the UK, has encouraged a partnership approach at the local area level. There has also been a community safety component in other government funding programmes such as the Urban Programme and City Challenge (both for deprived areas). Many towns and cities have developed crime prevention projects and programmes using these funds, which have now unfortunately been discontinued.

A major positive has been the de-politicisation of crime prevention. Crime Concern and others have worked hard to establish a cross party consensus about what needs to be done in community safety. This has been a central factor in growth of support for this work.

Despite the increasing range of activity on the ground, there is as yet no single or coherent community safety movement. Crime Concern has been active both nationally and locally in developing the beginning of such a movement by helping forge genuine partnerships between the different interest groups, by raising the profile of the work through its publications and conferences, and by developing new practice through its own programmes and projects. The existence of an independent national resource agency has been vital to the development of this work.

Although much of Crime Concern's work is about local partnerships, it is recognised that this is not a substitute for national policy change. This is particularly important in the area of youth crime prevention, where many local partners, particularly residents, believe that only government action on the economy and jobs can improve the fundamental difficulties which young people today face in the UK.

About Crime Concern

Crime Concern is an independent national organisation established with government finance in 1988 to stimulate, promote and support a partnership approach to community safety and crime prevention. It is a charity supported by all the main political parties and works closely with local authorities, the police, businesses and local communities in many different parts of the country. Crime Concern sets up practical projects, runs training courses, produces 'how-to' publications and provides local consultancy and evaluation services. It is strongly committed to youth crime prevention, and has run a wide range of youth projects and programmes in different parts of the UK over the past three years.

About Youth Crime

Youth crime is one of the major social problems of the post war period. It can have a devastating effect on urban neighbourhoods; it is a major cause of concern in local communities; and it affects the quality of life of millions of people.

The issue of youth crime often generates more heat than light. Many people hold strong views about how best to deal with juvenile offenders. The debate is fanned by the high profile media attention given to this issue in the UK at present.

Most adults are concerned about young people as offenders - especially in relation to property crime, the perceived threat of violence from gangs of youths on the street, and joy riding in stolen cars. Adults are traditionally not good at listening to or believing young people's concerns. But surveys and consultations with young people show that they themselves are much more concerned about becoming the victims of crime, especially personal violence. In recent surveys of young people Crime Concern has found that approximately 80% are worried or very worried about their personal safety - a figure only exceeded by their worries about doing well at school or getting a job.

Young people are the frequent victims of crime such as robbery, harassment, theft, bullying and - in the home - physical/sexual abuse. These offences are substantially under-reported and successive surveys and consultations have shown them to be major pre-occupations of a significant proportion of young people. Many young people say that their experience of adults and the police is frequently adversarial, and that adults often do not respond to their very real fears and concerns about victimisation. In addition, those young people who give rise to the most concern because of their visibility on the street are less likely to be at school, work, or attending existing leisure provision.

It is vital that adults listen to and believe young people about their experience of crime because:

- policing and other social control measures ultimately rely on the consent of the population. If we want young people to support our law enforcement structure we must listen and respond to their concerns as well as imposing our own (even when instinctively we do not want to believe what they tell us, eg police intimidation or harassment, sexual abuse by adults)
- young people know much more about the crime that is being committed in an area - research shows that they witness three times more crime being committed than do adults (Kinsey et al, 1992)
- young people have time, energy, skills and commitment that can be used to help prevent crime if they believe it is in their interests to do so.

In the UK, young people make a significant contribution to the overall crime problem, both as offenders and victims:

Young People as Offenders:

- 20% of known offenders are under 17
- 26% of known offenders are 17-21
- the peak age for burglary is 17
- 25% of car crime is committed by boys aged 10-16
- much vandalism and minor crime is committed by 8-12 year olds
- the peak age for offending is 18 for males and 15 for females (Home Office, 1993)

Young people as victims:

- young men are the most frequent victims of assault. A 10-15 year old is ten times more likely to be assaulted than a man over 60; and a 16-24 year old is 20 times more at risk (Home Office, 1992)
- 68% of children are victims of bullying at some time in their school careers. 10% of primary/middle school children are bullied every week (Spence, 1992)
- 5% of children are thought to be the victim of sexual or physical abuse
- a recent survey found that 60% of young women are very worried about sexual harassment and assault - and 60% of actual assaults are never reported (Crime Concern, 1992)

It is not a simple task to find out how much youth crime is being committed. The British Crime Survey (Mayhew and Aye Maung, 1993) suggests that less than one third of crimes committed ever get reported to the police, and only 3% of offenders are actually caught and convicted. It is therefore necessary to consult local agencies and communities to establish what is actually happening on the ground. Questions of how to treat or punish young offenders are trivial compared with questions about the causes of crime and how we might prevent - or, more realistically, reduce - juvenile offending. Yet according to the Morgan working group report (1991), few areas in the country have yet developed a strategy to reduce crime committed by young people.

Crime prevention can be looked at in two ways. Firstly, there is the defensive, opportunity reduction approach which focuses on physical security and improving the design and management of the built environment. This will always be an important feature of crime prevention, but few people are really satisfied with an exclusively defensive approach. The second approach seeks to address the social conditions and blocked opportunities associated with high levels of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. An effective youth crime prevention strategy should address the educational, social, recreational, housing, training and employment needs of young people, particularly those who are most at risk of drifting into crime.

Different Responses to Youth Crime

During the 1980s much attention was focused on diverting identified young offenders from prosecution and custody. Multi-agency cautioning panels and youth justice agencies have successfully increased the use of cautioning and reduced the use of custodial sentences for juvenile offenders in many parts of the UK. This has helped to minimise the involvement of young people in the criminal justice system, and has arguably reduced levels of re-offending, thereby contributing to a reduction in crime.

These are important and socially necessary responses, but it is very difficult to rehabilitate young offenders once they have reached mid to late adolescence, and there are grounds for believing that high quality, early prevention programmes may be effective at reducing delinquent outcomes. More attention is now being paid to diverting young people from crime in the first place.

To address youth crime prevention effectively, Crime Concern has found that it is necessary to address the range of problems facing young people and not just one aspect of them. It is not only young people themselves who have to change - often local agencies may also need to modify their approach or the way in which they provide their services.

Youth crime problems have multiple causes and are rarely the same in any two neighbourhoods. Therefore pre-packaged, single-issue responses rarely work for long. Local solutions are required for local problems. However, while the *content* of any response to youth crime needs to be decided locally, the *process* by which this is done can also critically influence its chances of success. People hold many different views about the causes of youth crime and feasible (or desirable) solutions. Lasting solutions require a

wide cross-section of the community to be involved in defining the approach to be taken, agreeing local priorities and combining their resources to tackle these priorities together in a planned way. A commitment to *consultation* and *partnership* forms the underpinning of this strategic approach to youth crime.

In practice, this process requires the existence or creation of a local partnership which involves all of the different interest groups - different local authority services, the voluntary sector and local businesses. Some local authorities in the UK have recently established corporate youth crime prevention groups in response to the 1989 Children Act, which requires them to take measures to prevent young people in their area from committing crime. In these areas, the necessary structure to develop a strategic approach to youth crime is already in place. Where this is not the case, setting up a new multi-agency group is often a necessary first step.

Much has been written and said about the difficulties inherent in multi-agency working - most of it true. For such a group to work, it needs to have a clear impetus, high-level support and a practical methodology for action.

It is when resources are tight that multi-agency approaches come into their own. It is no longer possible for individual agencies to nurture and develop their own pet schemes, instead they have to let go of their own cherished solutions and negotiate with other agencies to maximise what it is possible to achieve together. This process is not easy or straightforward, and must have a coherent plan and structure to avoid becoming just another talking shop. That is the purpose of the structured approach to youth crime prevention devised by Crime Concern. It has a number of key principles :

- bring together all the stakeholders in an area
- consult and involve young people from the start
- look systematically at the issues and problems in the area
- design local solutions for local problems
- base action on facts not fears - and on what we know works
- don't just respond to crises - put some effort into tackling causes.

A Youth Crime Audit

Undertaking a youth crime audit is the first step in developing a strategy to reduce levels of offending by and against young people. It draws together facts and opinions in a way that clarifies the issue and motivates different groups and organisations to take action on the problem. The information needed is of three kinds:

- statistics on youth crime
- views of agencies
- views of young people and local communities.

1. Generating a Local Picture of Youth Crime, Offenders and Victims

To shape an effective sponse to youth crime it is necessary to build up a picture of youth crime in the area, including type and extent of offending by geographical area, time of day, age group, school attendance or employment status. It is essential to obtain a basic picture of what is happening before planning a strategy.

Although very important, recorded crime statistics are not sufficient on their own to provide a complete picture of crime. Other agencies also hold data that can improve our knowledge of the youth crime problem, e.g. eg council for racial equality (racial harassment), women`s unit (domestic violence), youth service (stop and search), housing department (neighbour disputes), environmental health (noisy parties).

Data on crime, deprivation and other risk factors can then be overlaid on a map to identify key places and times at which to concentrate responses. The targeting (or otherwise) of existing responses can be appraised. Comparisons can also be made with other areas - both within the locality and elsewhere.

2. Consulting with agencies

In addition to obtaining statistical information about youth crime, it is important to find out what agencies think are the most pressing problems. Consulting agencies can raise their awareness of youth crime problems, give a useful indication of areas in which each agency would support action, and stimulate a response.

It is also useful to obtain a picture of youth provision in the area. Many people believe there is a link between the nature and extent of youth provision, and youth crime. The way that services are delivered is particularly important - they need to be relevant and accessible to young people; even-handed and non-stigmatising in their impact; and they should encourage young people to 'own' the service.

3. Consulting with residents and young people

The third arm of a youth crime audit involves consulting with local community organisations and with young people themselves.

Residents' organisations should be asked their views about the crimes and incivilities which cause most concern to adult residents; where they occur; and when. This can best be done through one or more community meetings.

Consulting young people is the most essential part of the whole exercise. Crime Concern places the consultation and involvement of young people at the heart of its youth crime prevention work. Undertaking a youth consultation has three main purposes:

- to obtain young people's views directly on the nature, extent and importance of offending by and against young people.
- to interest and involve young people in this issue so that they become part of the solution as well as part of the problem. Consulting young people is the key to their effective participation and involvement.
- to mobilise agencies to respond to young people's concerns.

Most youth consultations comprise a questionnaire, streetwork, focus group discussions and a written report.

The questionnaire

This is a useful way of consulting a large number of young people individually about what they think, away from the pressure of the peer group. While it may be possible to consult with all young people in a small area, it is more common to select a sample. This sample may be chosen at random to reflect the age and sex balance of young people living in the neighbourhood, or it may be selected to reach specific groups of young people thought to be at greater risk of involvement in youth crime e.g. youth on the street, users of a particular club or facility.

A confidential questionnaire is usually administered in groups by local workers in schools, youth clubs, training schemes and children's homes. It is important to involve local agencies in this process rather than undertaking it as an external piece of research, because it is these mainstream existing agencies which will have to respond to and take on young peoples' concerns. The questionnaire topics are determined locally through discussion with the field workers and young people, and are often amended after a pilot run of the questionnaire. The common range of topics includes:

- victimisation of young people in relation to all types of crime
- young people's attitudes towards crime, and which crimes they consider to be the most serious
- whether they are under any pressure from peers to offend
- whether they wish to admit any offending of their own
- their views about the local agencies and services, including the police, schools and youth service
- truancy and exclusion from school
- their use of leisure facilities, and perceived shortfalls
- what would make the area safer and stop young people committing offences
- what they would be prepared to do themselves to help this process.

The questionnaires are entirely confidential and are sealed up in envelopes by the young people themselves as soon as they have filled them in. No personal identifying information is included. Confidentiality is emphasised at all stages in the exercise, and very few have refused to take part. In fact, young people are usually delighted to have their opinions asked, and appear to answer the questions honestly and without artifice.

Streetwork

To ensure that the consultation reaches all young people - including those who are not interested in youth programmes, and who may be absent from school - the questionnaires are supplemented by street work interviews to seek out those young people most at risk. This is done on their own territory, and requires a degree of skill. Nevertheless, even in the most difficult and crime-prone urban areas, young people on the street have been willing to talk openly about their beliefs, concerns and aspirations.

Focus group discussions

Small discussion groups or workshops for young people in the area provide greater depth of information and opinion. These groups are particularly useful for finding out young people's priorities, and for generating enthusiasm to tackle them. Groups can be targeted at different age-groups and should preferably be run by an adult known to, and trusted by, the majority of young people taking part.

The report

The questionnaires are computer analysed and the findings fed back to young people in the same groups which originally completed the questionnaires. A fuller report is produced for local agencies. Its impact will be greater if young people can be involved in helping to write it and to present it to the agencies and organisations in the area.

From Consultation to Action

Following the audit, Crime Concern aims to encourage the development of a youth strategy to help mobilise the resources and energies of agencies, organisations and young people themselves. This can make a significant contribution to reducing the harm young people do themselves and others. It can also reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods, shopping areas and other public spaces.

Response by young people

A major purpose of the youth consultation is to generate interest and momentum to tackle the issues by young people themselves. It is therefore essential to feed back the findings from the survey as quickly as possible, and to encourage a response. Crime Concern has sometimes done this by convening a series of feedback meetings in schools and local youth agencies to discuss the findings of the questionnaire and identify issues which the young people themselves would be interested in taking forward.

Outcomes have included young people organising a youth conference on territorialism and drugs; campaigning for better youth facilities; and organising an anti-bullying campaign. In all cases it is helpful if an adult can be identified (often a teacher or youth worker) who can help the young people over a sustained period of time to develop their ideas. It must be remembered that such action groups are inherently small scale and transitory compared with the large number of people initially consulted, and it is therefore important to encourage them to stay in touch with their grass roots constituency of opinion.

This approach contrasts with the more traditional method of organising young people around crime prevention issues in the UK, the youth crime prevention panel. Many youth panels take as their starting point adult concerns about crime, and adopt a community service model. Small groups of socially committed young people may provide a service to others in their community, eg by fitting locks on old peoples' doors or by security stamping bicycles. Such groups are, of course, worthwhile but rarely involve the more deprived and delinquent young people in the community, and do little to identify or address young people's own concerns.

Crime Concern has worked hard to transform the selective, community service model of youth crime prevention panels into a more broadly based youth-centred approach. This has been tackled through a national newspaper called Youth Express which is distributed free three times a year to all secondary schools in the UK; through national conferences; and by producing and disseminating a resource pack for youth panels. A major new programme about to begin will develop youth action programmes on this model throughout the UK.

Response by agencies

Following the audit, agencies are encouraged to consider their existing programmes as well as investment in new projects. This is usually done through the multi-agency group. Priorities are negotiated and an action plan is drawn up. Crime Concern tries to ensure that local partners adopt a comprehensive approach and examine underlying causes as well as immediate concerns. A more detailed discussion of this approach can be found in Bright (1993).

A comprehensive response to youth crime might have five main objectives:

1. To tackle to risk factors in early childhood associated with offending.
2. To reduce the number of young people who become involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour.
3. To reduce the number of children and young people who become victims of crime.
4. To reduce levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in public places.
5. To involve young people in crime prevention.

Aim 1: To tackle the risk factors in early childhood associated with offending

While it is difficult to agree the causes of crime, it is not difficult to identify those factors which increase the risk of children and young people becoming offenders. These risk factors include poverty; family conflict and breakdown; reception into care; social isolation; poor schooling; poor play and recreational provision and inadequate housing. Removing or ameliorating one or more of these risk factors will reduce the likelihood of later delinquency (Farrington, 1987).

Early childhood services are of interest to crime prevention because there is some evidence that services for preschool children, support for high-stress families, parenting-skills training and parental involvement schemes in primary schools can reduce some of the risk factors associated with later offending (Schorr, 1988). The disappointing results of remedial programmes targeted at adolescent and young adult offenders has fuelled this interest.

It is important to emphasise that not all children suffering these disadvantages grow up to be delinquent, nor has it proved possible to identify which individuals will go on to offend. Attempts to label individual children as 'pre-delinquent' are, at best, misguided and, at worst, run the risk of reinforcing the very label they seek to avoid.

However, young people from families that exhibit these symptoms are at significantly greater risk of becoming offenders than the population at large. It therefore makes good sense to target specialist supportive services at areas where there are many such families and where juvenile delinquency rates are high.

Early childhood services are not designed principally to reduce crime but rather to improve health, educational and emotional development, to reduce child abuse and to improve family functioning. Research shows, however, that certain types of child rearing are more likely to propel children into delinquency than others (Farrington, 1987). It suggests that family discord and stress and low income are linked with higher rates of delinquency. Unsupported young mothers (particularly if they are unemployed) may become indifferent and reject their children. Socially isolated families are associated with high levels of abuse, neglect and later delinquency. Children raised by a socially isolated parent living alone are more likely to fail school at an early age, truant from school, fight in school, drop out of school and become delinquent (Schorr, 1988).

Family support programmes aim to provide practical help and advice to families suffering social and emotional problems. Specialist services of this nature have been provided in the UK by charities such as Family Service Units and some local authorities. However funding difficulties have confined them to a relatively marginal role.

It is widely recognised that helping people to understand and deal with routine family management issues (such as budgeting, child care, discipline and health) can improve family functioning and reduce the likelihood of family discord and breakdown. For example, family support programmes in the USA involve the provision of immediate, intensive help, have strong ties to neighbourhoods and involve parents as partners. Research shows that they can reduce child abuse and neglect and reduce the use of out of home care. They are also cost effective.

Preschool education aims to address the educational, social and health development of children and can have many long term benefits. The High Scope/Perry Preschool Programme in the USA is one of the very few to have looked at the link between preschool education and the inhibition of delinquency. It shows convincingly that preschool participation can increase the proportion of young people who as adults are literate, employed and enrolled in post secondary education, and can reduce the proportion who truant from school, were labelled as having severe learning difficulties or had been arrested (Schweinhart, 1987).

The key elements of a successful preventative pre-school programme are child-initiated learning, an emphasis on meeting developmental needs, small classes (1 teacher to 10 children) and parent involvement. Special training for teachers is essential (Schweinhart, 1987).

Aim 2: To reduce the number of young people involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour

Services and opportunities can be developed with and for young people which provide them with attractive and accessible alternatives to crime. These may be classified under the headings of:

- youth work and leisure provision
- schooling
- training for employment
- housing.

Youth work and leisure provision. There is widespread support for the idea that social and recreation programmes for young people will engage their interest in constructive activities and, as a result, they will be less likely to drift into offending. However, a sharper focus needs to be applied to youth work since few programmes in the UK currently include delinquency prevention as one of their main objectives. Consequently, the potential of youth work to reduce juvenile offending has not been fully realised in practice (Graham and Smith, 1993).

In addition, the areas with the highest concentrations of youth crime are those which are usually least well covered by youth work programmes. Where they do exist, they are sometimes poorly funded, weakly managed and exhausted by their efforts to support young people with very difficult problems.

It is necessary to provide a mix of social and recreational activities, projects in the community, group work, advice, information and counselling and help for young people to access education, training and employment opportunities. They can operate from clubs and other premises or from the street.

Many believe that youth agencies could play a bigger role in the prevention of delinquency without compromising the principles of youth work by performing a supportive, enabling role rather than a controlling one, focusing resources on areas with high concentrations of young people at risk rather than on specific or potential offenders, developing the use of outreach and detached youth workers, working with other agencies and developing a clearer and more precise definition of outcome by identifying specific aims, objectives and methods of work.

Schooling. 'School effectiveness' research suggests that the organisation and management of schools has a substantial effect on student performance and thereby on the likelihood of young people drifting into crime. Strategies which attempt to change the culture and organisation of schools have attracted considerable interest. Schools which are able to offer students of all abilities a sense of achievement and which are able to motivate and involve them in the life of the school are likely to reduce the incidence of truancy, vandalism and other negative outcomes.

Conversely, schools which - inadvertently or otherwise - concentrate on academic success at the expense of practical and social skills, categorise pupils as deviants, inadequates and failures and refer responsibility for the behaviour and welfare of their pupils to outside agencies and institutions can increase the likelihood of producing high rates of delinquency (Graham, 1990).

Training for employment. Unemployment is the highest risk factor associated with offending amongst young adults. Research by the Apex Trust shows that ex-offenders in employment are three times less likely to offend than those who are unemployed. Occupational guidance and training schemes can help to stimulate an interest in young people who might otherwise rule themselves out of employment. 'Employment rescue' programmes developed by outreach projects in some inner city areas demonstrate impressive success with young people likely to drift further into offending. Counselling programmes can help to overcome difficulties which may cause them to leave a job unnecessarily.

Housing. Homelessness or unsatisfactory accommodation frequently features in the circumstances behind a high proportion of youth court appearances. Family conflict and the search for employment often cause young people to leave home. There is, however, a serious shortage of affordable accommodation for young people in most areas. For those not in employment, state benefit levels have been reduced for the under 25's adding to the difficulties. Shelter estimates that there are over 155,000 young homeless people under the age of 26 in the UK. Not only are they at risk of drifting into subsistence crime; they are also at risk of being the victims of violence, substance abuse and sexual exploitation. Specialist advice and increased opportunities for affordable accommodation are required to avoid these outcomes.

Aim 3: To reduce the number of children and young people who become victims of crime

Understandable anxieties deter children and young people from reporting offences committed against them - particularly those which have involved personal interference. Victim surveys of sexual abuse regularly show that less than a quarter of such incidents come to the attention of those who could help. Often the cases which do come to light reveal a pattern of suffering extending over many years. Approachable and effective victim support services can play a significant part in preventing repeated suffering.

Some primary schools are encouraging their children to take the view that they are entitled to live in a safe environment free from interference. It is hoped that such approaches will make it easier to discuss these offences and create a stronger willingness to denounce those minded to attempt them.

Simple defensive strategies can be helpful in some situations and more imaginative methods of teaching them are being developed. Proper advice to victims (of all ages) can help them to break out of cycles of assault which may have continued over several years.

Aim 4: To reduce levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in public areas

Anti-social behaviour by young people in public areas such as town centres and public parks and outside football grounds is a major source of intimidation, particularly for the elderly, women and children. Crime and anti-social behaviour by young people in shopping centres can deter customers and reduce trade, profits and jobs.

Localised preventative activity will inevitably be required. This may involve:

Situational solutions: improving the design, management and policing of the area to reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour. This will also involve improving training and support for staff so that they are better able to manage and defuse conflict.

Considering the needs of those who cause trouble can lead to the provision of alternative facilities such as youth activity projects, special coffee bars, alcohol recovery schemes and crisis accommodation.

Often a package of measures will be necessary. Crime Concern has been involved in a number of innovative and creative approaches to resolving city centre crime and nuisance problems.

Aim 5: To involve children and young people in crime prevention

The many youth consultations undertaken by Crime Concern have highlighted the following issues as being the most important to young people:

- **avoiding victimisation** - they want practical help and advice to avoid problems such as bullying, drugs and violence in the home.

- **better opportunities** - they ask for improved access to leisure and training facilities to stop temptations to drift into crime.
- **a better start in life** - they want people in positions of influence to get to the heart of the factors that produce delinquency.

A frequent request is their wish to be involved in developing solutions to these problems. One of the most encouraging aspects of youth crime prevention is the growing enthusiasm with which young people wish to be involved in organising preventative initiatives.

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