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agus Comhionannais
Department of Justice
and Equality

Pilot A and Pilot B: Programme Evaluation 2019

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the effectiveness of two pilot youth justice programmes supported by the Department of Justice and Equality: Programme A and Programme B.

Programme A and Programme B aim to address the atypical offending behavior of young people who have not responded to or failed to engage with the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme and are continuing to offend at an increasingly serious level through the provision of intensive and individualised support. As such, both programmes support the use of detention as a last resort and are in line with the objectives of the wider youth diversion programme and policy.

PROGRAMME A

Programme A: Overview

Programme A was launched as a pilot programme in 2017 targeting young people who are no longer suitable for or refusing to engage with the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme and who are involved in the criminal justice system at a serious level due to the nature and/or frequency of their offending. Programme A is intended as a four year intervention in the lives of young people. Programme A operates a youth work model based on voluntary participation.

12 of the 16 current Programme A participants (75%) are repeat offenders (4+ charges), are involved disproportionately in certain types of crime not typical of youth offending (including possession with intent to sell, assault causing harm, burglary, dangerous driving and possession of a dangerous weapon) or both.

Although Programme A does not deliberately target young people involved in organised criminal networks, an initial assessment carried out for this evaluation suggests that 12 of the 16 young people currently receiving support through programme A may be so involved (75%).

Programme A: Conclusions

On the basis of all the information available to the evaluator, it is possible to conclude that 18 months into a four year programme cycle, Programme A is part of a causal package that has in the case of 8 individuals or 50% of the participant group, either halted or reversed the downward trajectory of their lives which they described as being without hope when referred to the programme and certain to end in either prison or death in the absence of the programme.

As indicated in the table below, Programme A has achieved (green) or progressed (orange) all objectives that are of relevance in the first 18 months of operation and has delivered (green) or progressed (orange) all relevant outcomes. Work has yet to commence on stages 5 and 6 of the programme and progress in these areas has not therefore been evaluated (grey).

During interviews conducted for this evaluation, although reluctant to discuss their offending, participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the fact that they were offending at a serious level and that their referral to Programme A was a direct result of this. Participants also expressed a clear desire for change in their lives although for most the changes desired are yet to be realised, particularly in the areas of substance abuse and peer group/lifestyle.

Programme A: Performance

Stage	Objective	Outcome	Month
1 Determine suitability	1. Engage 20 participants	1. Relationship between young person and keyworker is growing.	1-2
2 Building Trust		2. Young person is responding to engagement and developing a conscious understanding of programme purpose.	2-6
3 Engagement/ Personal growth	2. To enable participants to act on positive options identified by key workers.	3. Young person is willing to acknowledge issues and engage in new activities.	6-24
4 Contemplation	3. To enable participants to access the additional services they required to reduce risk, particularly in the areas of substance abuse, employment and education.	4. Young person has acknowledged their desire to change and is starting to put plans in place.	18-30
5 Lifestyle change	4. To reduce risk particularly in the areas of substance abuse, education and employment;	5. Young person is making more positive lifestyle choices.	30-42
6 Sustaining change	5. To reduce the level of offending among the target group; to reduce youth offending in the district; 6. To reduce the numbers of young offenders committed to a period of detention	6. Young person takes full personal responsibility for their actions and decisions on an on-going basis.	36-48

Programme A: Recommendations

Programme A is performing in line with expectations and represents value for money in terms of the intensity and duration of the service offered to participants. It is therefore recommended that funding for the programme is extended for a minimum of four years in order to allow completion of the current four year programme cycle and a full assessment of end results at the midway point in the second cycle. It is also recommended that annual funding is increased to a minimum of €136, 256 in line with the 2019 grant application.

It is not recommended that the programme approach is extended to other areas until the four year pilot has been completed and evaluated.

It is recommended that if the decision is taken to extend the programme to other areas following a positive four-year evaluation, this should be done on a case-by-case basis in partnership with existing youth services. Care should also be taken to ensure that as far as possible, the service providers selected are seen as independent of the Gardaí. It is therefore suggested that extension through the current network of GYDP service providers should only be considered in areas where the numbers of potential participants are small and there are no viable alternatives to GYDP provision. Any future extension/replication of Programme A will also require a detailed analysis of the local context in each case both in terms of need and the availability of supporting services.

Given the impact that involvement in organised criminal networks may have on the agency of participants it is suggested that assessment of the extent to which Programme A participants are so involved should be kept under close scrutiny internally, particularly since this may impact negatively on the achievement of programme objectives and require adjustments to the programme model and approach.

Since the needs of programme participants cannot be met by a single service, it is suggested that a systematic needs analysis is undertaken including mapping of the services available locally to meet these needs. Any significant gaps should be identified since these will impact on the ability of the programme to achieve its objectives. The programme model and approach should be adjusted accordingly if and as necessary.

Given the prevalence of substance abuse as an area of acute risk for most participants it is also suggested that the in-house provision of youth drug and alcohol treatment is considered subject to the availability of additional funding.

In order to ensure thorough monitoring and evaluation of Programme A on an ongoing basis, first and foremost it is necessary to establish indicators and benchmarks for all programme objectives and outcomes and to systematically gather the data needed to track progress in relation to these.

To strengthen the relationship of the programme with stakeholders including referral agents, it is suggested that care is taken to ensure that at a minimum stakeholders are fully aware of the programme approach, how overall progress will be monitored, to whom it will be reported and what to expect in terms of the delivery of results including the four-year timeframe.

PROGRAMME B

Programme B: Overview

Programme B was launched in 2015 to provide individually tailored support to young people who are failing to engage with/benefit from the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme and who are at risk of escalating their offending/anti-social behaviour. Programme B is closely modelled on a pre-existing social care programme located outside the youth justice sector which targets young people whose behaviour is challenging or who pose a risk to themselves or others. Since its launch, the programme has worked 45 cases involving 43 individuals (two individuals were repeat referrals). The length of time participants engage in the programme has ranged from three to 33 months with an average engagement period of nine months.

- 47% of cases were court involved either at the point of referral or during engagement;
- 53% of cases were involved in the criminal justice system at a less serious level;
- 42% of participants are repeat offenders with four or more criminal charges;
- 40% of participants have accrued charges for crime types a-typical of youth offending;
- 56% of participants have a diagnosed mental illness.

Since 2015, the programme has closed a total of 32 cases. 12 cases (38%) were positive closures (closed due to successful completion of the programme; achievement of personal objectives; completion of a probation order; residential care placement). 20 cases (62%) were negative closures (closed due to lack of motivation to change; low attendance/non-engagement; disengagement; sentencing to a period of detention; fleeing the jurisdiction).

Programme B: Conclusions

As indicated in the table below, Programme B has made progress (orange) in relation to the achievement of three of four core objectives and the delivery of four of five outcomes. Programme B has achieved (green) Supplementary objective 1 and all programme KPIs have been met (green).

It is not possible to draw a conclusion (grey) regarding programme impact in relation to the delivery of long term programme outcomes in the absence of longitudinal data. Nor it is possible to draw a conclusion in relation to Core objective 2 and one associated short term outcome (grey).

While it is not possible to thoroughly evaluate progress in relation to the achievement of long term objectives, it is clear that:

- Overall criminogenic risk has been reduced or stabilised in 52% of closed cases for which an initial and final YLS assessment was completed (10 of 19);
- Programme B is viewed by stakeholders as a crucial part of the youth justice infrastructure in the urban area in which it is based;
- Programme B is viewed by stakeholders as playing a vital role in facilitating a timely and coordinated interagency response to a-typical youth crime in the urban area in which it is based.

Programme B: Performance

Core objectives	Short term outcomes	Long term outcomes	KPIs
1 Strengthen family relationships and support them to remain together.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved family dynamics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of young people remaining in their current living arrangements at the end of their programme.
2 Assist young people to develop problem solving skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved pro social behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved empathy amongst young people in the community; Reduced impulsivity. 	
3 Assist young people to develop social and life skills including positive peer interaction and positive community engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people develop awareness of impact of their behaviour. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people develop positive healthy peer relationships; Young people develop awareness of negative impact of substance misuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved relations between young people and Gardaí; A more coordinated, individual and interagency planning and community response for young people. Young people abstain from substance misuse. Reduced offending and safer communities. 	
4 Support young people to maximise their educational and vocational opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people staying in education and going onto further education/employment. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of young people sustained in education/vocational training or returned to education/vocational training.
Supplementary objective			KPIs
1 Deliver intervention dosage at the optimal level.	N.A.	N.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 24 hours direct contact per week by each Full Time Project Worker; Minimum one home visit per month for each carer/parent. Provision of four month review process for each young person.

The major positive changes in the lives of participants that were credited to engagement in Programme B by young people taking part in interviews and consultations for this evaluation were as follows (in descending order of frequency):

- Not hanging around with the same people;
- Going back to school/education;
- Not getting into trouble with the Gards;
- Not using drugs/alcohol;
- Better mental health;
- More confidence;
- Finding things to do that I like.

Programme B: Recommendations

Funding of Programme B is recommended for a period of one year in order to allow completion of a monitoring and evaluation framework that is particular to Programme B accompanied by systematic data collection and consistent programme reporting. As part of this initiative, the reasons underpinning the high volume of negative case closures should be explored in greater detail. As far as possible, former participants themselves should be consulted as part of this process.

Assuming these steps are taken within this timeframe, continued funding of Programme B is recommended for a further three years to allow completion of an in-depth evaluation by 2023 including a full cost-benefit analysis that incorporates both financial data and social return on investment. Depending on the results of this exercise, it is recommended that possible extension of the Programme B model to other geographic areas can be given further consideration thereafter.

The possibility that a cohort of harder to reach atypical youth offenders is currently excluded from participation in Programme B due to prioritisation of young people for referral that demonstrate 'motivation to change' at the outset should be explored in consultation with referral agents in order to establish the level of unmet need in the catchment area and identify possible solutions.

In order to assess the extent to which participants may be involved in organised criminal networks, attention should also be paid to the indicators for criminal network involvement highlighted in this report. These should be discussed with referral agents and applied periodically to the participant group.

Concerns raised by participants in relation to the timing and criteria for case closure should be addressed as far as practicable including the possibility of a longer step-down service particularly for participants in areas where alternative services may not be available as well as the possibility of continued engagement following sentencing to a period of detention.

Overarching conclusions and recommendations

Pilot programmes can generate valuable learning for policy makers faced with the challenge of attempting to address wicked problems by testing innovative approaches and signposting which aspects of which interventions can work to ameliorate the problem under which particular circumstances as well as which aspects are less likely to have an impact.

In order to ensure that the learning generated by such programmes is captured, it is necessary for funders and grantees to agree a clear schedule and template for reporting progress from the outset and for grantees to be provided with guidance as to what information is required, how it should be presented and at what intervals.

In the case of Programme A and Programme B it would appear that this clarity and guidance has been lacking. Following conclusion of this evaluation it is therefore essential to reach agreement on these issues and ensure that both programmes are adequately skilled and resourced not only to meet their reporting obligations but to capture the learning they generate in a manner that may help to guide the future direction of youth justice policy in Ireland.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

This evaluation was commissioned by the Department of Justice and Equality. The purpose of the evaluation is to measure the effectiveness of two pilot youth justice programmes supported by the Department of Justice and Equality in two urban areas. To protect the anonymity of the small number of participants in each case, the evaluation will not contain any information that could identify the young people concerned, including identification of the communities in which the programmes they are part of are based.

In line with the request for tenders issued by Department of Justice and Equality, the aim of the evaluation is to:

- Describe the target group for both programmes;
- Describe the intervention model and working methods of both programmes;
- Articulate the objectives of both programmes and locate these within the wider youth diversion programme and policy;
- Evaluate the degree to which these objectives warrant the allocation of public funding on a current and ongoing basis;
- Define the outputs of both programmes;
- Assess the effectiveness of the model used by both programmes in terms bringing about positive change in the lives of the participants;
- Assess the cost-effectiveness of both programs;
- Make recommendations regarding:
 - The possible continuation of each programme beyond the current implementation phase including any necessary modifications;
 - The possible extension of each programme to other geographical areas.

1.2 Evaluation Methodology

As reflected in the timeframe and budget for this evaluation, it is a 'light touch' evaluation conducted on the basis of existing quantitative data presented in a small number of key programme documents and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with participants, staff and stakeholders. The evaluation was conducted during the period 21 December 2018 to 31 August 2019.

A developmental/participatory approach to the evaluation was adopted. In line with this approach, the view of programme participants was central to the evaluation from the outset.

To facilitate this approach, the evaluator worked closely with youth workers/project workers, team leaders and managers to recruit young people participating in both programmes to take part in group consultations and interviews, to identify stakeholders for interview, to identify relevant programme documentation, to collate quantitative data and to schedule interviews with programme staff.

In addition an Evaluation Steering Group comprised of programme staff and stakeholders - including the Irish Youth Justice Service and An Garda Síochána - was established. The purpose of the Steering Group was to:

- Review and approve the proposed methodology;
- Identify relevant interviewees.

The Evaluation Steering Group met on 21 January 2019 and a workplan comprised of the following elements was approved:

Table 1: Evaluation workplan

1	Desk-based research (overall policy context and existing research):	
	Review of relevant grey literature and secondary sources including research articles and reports	
2	Desk-based research Programme A:	
	Review of programme documentation	
3	Youth participant interviews Programme A:	Youth participant consultations and interviews Programme B:
	8 participants	6 participants (4 consultation, 2 interviews)
4	Interviews with experts in youth justice policy and practice	
	Chief Superintendent Colette Quinn, An Garda Síochána Sergeant Damian O'Donovan, An Garda Síochána Tony O'Donovan, Department of Justice and Equality Sean Redmond, University of Limerick Catherine Naughton, University of Limerick	
5	Stakeholder interviews Programme A:	Stakeholder interviews Programme B:
	3 JLOs 1 solicitor 1 GYDP youth worker 1 local youth worker (not GYDP)	2 parents of programme participants 1 social worker 1 GYDP youth worker 2 probation officers 2 JLOs
6	Staff interviews Programme A	Staff interviews Programme B
	5 (including youth workers, team leader, manager and CEO)	6 (including project workers and service managers)
7	Data analysis and write up	

The evaluation methodology draws on both theory of change and contribution analysis.

A theory of change approach to programme evaluation includes identification of:

- A results (causal) chain showing the basic logic of the intervention;
- The underlying assumptions behind the links in the results chain;
- The risks attendant upon each link occurring;
- Identification of unintended effects;

- Identification of plausible, alternative, rival explanations.¹

Contribution analysis builds on the generative perspective of the theory of change approach to address the problem of attribution. Contribution analysis conceives of change as resulting from a 'causal package' which includes not only the intervention itself but also other necessary supporting factors. This approach allows more nuanced conclusions as to whether or not the intervention is a 'contributory cause' in relation to the results observed.²

As such, particular attention has been paid to identifying as far as possible the causal chain that underpins each programme when describing programme aims and objectives. Particular care has also been taken to identify as far as possible other services involved in the lives of programme participants.

1.3 Evaluation Outline

Section 2 Policy context and existing research locates the programmes to be evaluated within the wider context of youth justice policy and practice in Ireland. It also draws on existing academic literature regarding atypical youth offending and 'wicked problems'.

Each programme is evaluated separately in sections 4-7 and 9-12 of this report. Conclusions particular to each programme are drawn and recommendations made in each case.

Section 13 sets out overarching recommendations that are applicable to both programmes.

¹ Blamey A and Mackenzie M (2007) Theories of change and realistic evaluation. *Evaluation* 13(4): 439–55.
Cartwright N and Hardie J (2012) *Evidence-based Policy: Doing it Better: A Practical Guide to Predicting if a Policy Will Work for You*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² Mayne J (2012) Contribution analysis: Coming of age?. *Evaluation* 18(3) 270-280.

2. Policy Context and Existing Research

Diversion as the core of youth justice policy in Ireland

The Children Act 2001 provides the legal framework for the development of the Irish youth justice system.³ In line with international human rights law and, in particular, Ireland's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Act states that young people under the age of 18 may be detained for criminal offenses only as a last resort and only when all other community-based diversion responses and sanctions have been exhausted.

While a range of responses to youth crime and offending are available within the Irish youth justice system - including for example detention schools, high support, special care, community sanctions and restorative justice - diversion is now recognised as being 'at the core' of system.⁴

The rationale underlying diversion is twofold and based on recognition of the fact that:

1. Youth crime is transitory and involvement in crime for most young people declines as they mature;⁵
2. While young people are accountable for their actions, exposure to the criminal justice system and/or a criminal conviction can harm a young person's future life prospects.

The Garda Youth Diversion Programme is the primary mechanism for diverting young people from further offending. Some 20,006 incidents were referred to the Diversion Programme in 2017 involving 10,607 young people.⁶ In 2017, three offence types accounted for 62% of youth crime: theft and related offenses (30.5%); public order and social code offenses (21.9%) and damage to property and environment (9.9%).⁷ A total of 1,402 young people were deemed unsuitable for diversion in 2017, accounting for 13% of total referrals.⁸

The number of young people referred to the Diversion Programme has fallen from in excess of 21,000 in 2008 to 10,607 in 2017 and the success of diversion as an approach is indicated by the fact two thirds of those receiving a caution following their first offence during the

³ For a recent comprehensive overview of the development and priorities of the Irish youth justice system see: Reddy J (2018) *Improving the Measurement of Effectiveness in the Irish Youth Justice System: The Youth Justice System in Ireland*. Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP) Project, University of Limerick.

⁴ Convery U and Seymour (2016) *Children, Crime and Justice*. In D. Healy, C. Hamilton, Y. Daly, and M. Butler, The Routledge Handbook of Irish Criminology. Oxon: Routledge.

Reddy J (2018) p.29

⁵ Irish Youth Justice Service and Young Persons Probation (2011) *Working in Partnership with Communities to Reduce Youth Offending: A baseline report of community based projects supported by Young Persons Probation and the Irish Youth Justice Service*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

⁶ IYJS (2017) Tackling Youth Crime: Youth Justice Action Plan Progress Report 2017

⁷ Garda Síochána Analysis Service (2018) *Analysis of Youth Crime 2013-2017*, p. 3

⁸ Garda Youth Diversion Crime Prevention Bureau (2018) *Annual Report of the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme 2017*, p. 5

period 2013-2017 did not reoffend by end 2017.⁹ During the ten-year period from 2008 to 2018, new referrals of young people aged under 18 from court to Young People's Probation declined by 25% from 993 to 740 and supervision orders declined by 11% from 725 to 648.¹⁰ At the same time, the number of young people detained by the Courts annually on criminal conviction has dropped consistently since 2008 and consequently the space required in the new facilities at Oberstown was reduced to approximately half of what was estimated in 2008.¹¹

The problem of a-typical youth crime

These figures rightly give rise to a rather optimistic assessment of diversion as an approach to managing normal patterns of youth crime. But despite the reality of the 'age/crime curve' and the positive impact of the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme in Ireland and similar programmes internationally, it remains the case that a small number of young people persist in their offending behaviour, the seriousness of which tend to escalate over time.¹² As a result, young adults aged 18-24 are disproportionately represented in the prison population where they account for approximately 20% of the total prison population as compared to 9% of general population.

Unlike the majority of young people that come into conflict with the law, relatively little is known about young people in this category or what should be done to address their a-typical offending behaviour. This reality places the problem of a-typical youth crime beyond clear definition and thereby greatly exacerbates both the challenges involved in identifying interventions that may have a positive impact and the associated risks for policy makers accountable for effective resource allocation.

As such, a-typical youth crime displays many of the characteristics of a 'wicked problem' – a formalised theory of which was first developed by Horst Rittel in 1973 and has since been widely adopted in the area of policy analysis.¹³ According to Rittel, wicked problems are problems that:¹⁴

1. Are difficult to define, there is no definite formulation;
2. Have no stopping rule;
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true or false, but good or bad;
4. There is no immediate or ultimate test for solutions;
5. All attempts at solutions have effects that may not be reversible or forgettable;
6. They have no clear solution, and perhaps not even a set of possible solutions;

⁹ Garda Síochána Analysis Service (2018) *Analysis of Youth Crime 2013-2017*, p. 22

¹⁰ Probation Service (2011) Annual report 2010; Probation Service (2019) Annual Report 2018

¹¹ IYJS (2014) *Tackling Youth Crime: Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018*, p. 2

¹² DCYA (2016) *Lifting the Lid on Greentown - Why we should be concerned about the influence criminal networks have on children's offending behaviour in Ireland*. Dublin: Government Publications. Available at: www.dcy.ie

¹³ Newman J et al eds (2017) Understanding past problems: Tame and wicked problems reconsidered. *Policy and Society* 36(3)

¹⁴ Rittel H and Webber M (1973) Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences* 4(2) 155-169.

7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique;
8. Every wicked problem may be a symptom of another problem;
9. There are multiple explanations for the wicked problem;
10. The planner (policy-maker) has no right to be wrong.

When conceived of as a wicked problem, the need for an experimental, decentralised and flexible approach to tackling a-typical youth crime that aims to ameliorate the problem rather than solve it becomes apparent. This requires policy makers to step away from the dominant youth crime discourse which is characterised by '[s]traightforward logic about how *risks* can be counterbalanced by *protections* and argues that youth offending can be reduced by effective and early intervention.'¹⁵ Instead, it is necessary to embrace the need for interventions that respond to the importance of 'place and context' at a local and individual level.¹⁶

This need has been clearly recognised by the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme. In its most recent annual report, the Committee notes that 5% of young people referred in 2017 have six or more referrals and that 67% of those deemed unsuitable for inclusion in the Diversion Programme had been referred six or more times. The report concludes that 'this is the cohort of children who may proceed to become repeat adult offenders if resources are not targeted effectively.' The report recommends that the 'circumstances of these repeat offenders and what is happening should be explored' in order to inform 'how such offences are dealt with in the first instance and how future resources are directed within the Diversion Programme and the Garda Youth Diversion Projects.'¹⁷

The decision to fund Programme A and Programme B on a pilot basis forms part of the Department of Justice and Equality response to the problem of a-typical youth crime. These pilot interventions aim to address the a-typical offending behavior of young people who have not responded to or failed to engage with the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme and are continuing to offend at an increasingly serious level through the provision of intensive and individualised support. Each programme is described and evaluated separately below.

¹⁵ DCYA (2016) pp.6-7

¹⁶ DCYA (2016) p. 7

¹⁷ Garda Youth Diversion Crime Prevention Bureau (2017) *Annual Report of the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme*, p. 18

Programme A

3. Programme A: Description

3.1 Overview

Programme A operates in an area of high socioeconomic disadvantage and organised criminal activity. It is envisaged as a 4 year intervention in the lives of young people who are involved at a serious level in the criminal justice system. It was launched in August 2017.

Programme A targets young people that meet one of the following criteria:

- They are court involved;
or
- They are deemed no longer suitable for diversion (due to the frequency and/or seriousness of their offending) ;
or
- They are not engaging in GYDPs and are involved in on-going high risk behaviour.

The programme is not suitable for either sex-offenders or arsonists who require more specialist intervention.

Participants must be aged over 15 and under 18 at the point of referral and either living or attending school in the urban district where the programme is based or they must be otherwise strongly connected to the district.

The aim of the programme is to support participants to fulfil their potential free from involvement in the criminal justice system by intervening directly around criminogenic risk factors, particularly substance abuse, employment and education.

Voluntary participation is fundamental to the Programme A approach and there are no preconditions to participation. Unlike the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme, Programme A does not require young people to take responsibility for their offending behaviour, to agree to be cautioned or to agree to supervision in order to participate. Moreover, in order to protect the principle of voluntary participation, Programme A does not accept referrals from the probation services in circumstances where participation is a condition of probation. Equally, staff do not contribute to pre-sanction probation reporting or provide referring agents with information that could be used to inform decisions on how individual cases should be progressed within the criminal justice system.

'We have never refused a case because it's too hard... We are here to work with the hardest of the hard cases when no one else will.' Programme staff member.

Once engaged, participants are not compelled to take part in particular activities. Rather, the intervention is designed around the interests and needs of each participant.

The programme employs a youth work model, fundamental elements of which include: street work, relentless outreach, key working, group work, interagency partnerships, advocacy, restorative practice, family engagement and the provision of a service that is trauma informed.

The programme is staffed by a team leader (21 hours per week including 7 management hours) and two youth workers (29 hours and 20 hours).

Young people can be referred to the programme by a referral committee comprised of two Justice Liaison Officers and a JLO Sergeant along with the programme team leader. Subject to the approval of the referral committee, referrals can also be made through other pathways including community based organisations, local GYDPs, Oberstown, family members and self-referrals.

Targeting of young people began in September 2017 and by March 2018 there were 21 young people engaged. Between March 2018 and March 2019, two young people successfully transitioned out of the programme, one disengaged formally and two refused to engage long term and are considered unsuccessful targets.

As of 30 April 2019, there were 16 young people on the programme, 14 of whom were JLO referrals. 11 of these 16 young people have been with the programme since September 2017 and five since March 2018. Of the 16 young people on the programme, 15 are engaging at some level (see Fig. 1 below)

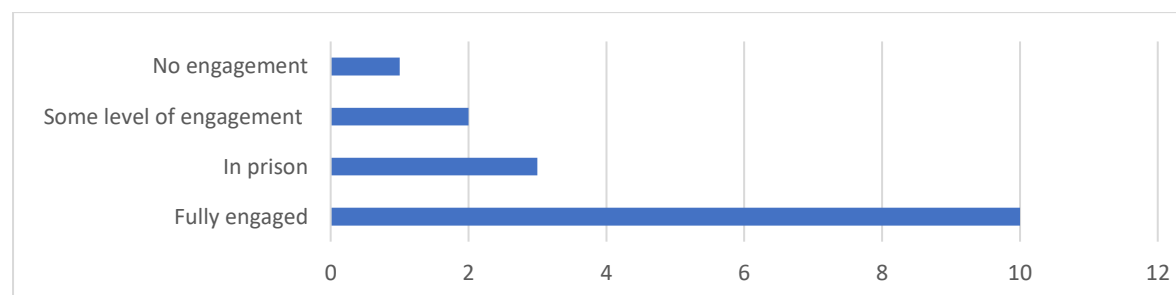


Fig. 1 Programme A: Level of engagement

All 16 participants are male, Caucasian and of Irish nationality. As of 1 April 2019, there were two members of the travelling community participating in the programme. The average age of participants at the time of referral was 16, the average age at the time of writing is 18. As of 1 April 2019, a total of four participants were sentenced to a period of detention in Oberstown either prior to or during their engagement on the programme (25%) and one participant was sentenced to a period of detention in an adult prison. A further eight participants were court involved either prior to or during their engagement on the

programme (50%) and the remaining three were deemed unsuitable for diversion due to the frequency and/or seriousness of their offending (19%).

The programme is operating at capacity and as of April 2019 there were two young people on the waiting list.

3.2 Target Group

Number and nature of offenses

While small in number, according to programme staff, the Programme A target group is responsible for over 50% of all offences referred to the National Juvenile office for the Garda district, however this assertion has not been verified by the evaluator.

The most common offences committed by males under the age of 18 are public order offenses (13%), theft from a shop (13%), criminal damage (9%) simple possession (8%) and assault minor (5%) which together accounted for 48% of offences committed by young males in 2017.¹⁸ At the same time, the majority of young male offenders (61%) are one time offenders.¹⁹ By comparison, 12 of the 16 current Programme A participants (75%) are:

- repeat offenders (4+ charges);
- are involved disproportionately in certain types of crime not typical of youth offending (including possession with intent to sell, assault causing harm, burglary, dangerous driving and possession of a dangerous weapon);
- or both.

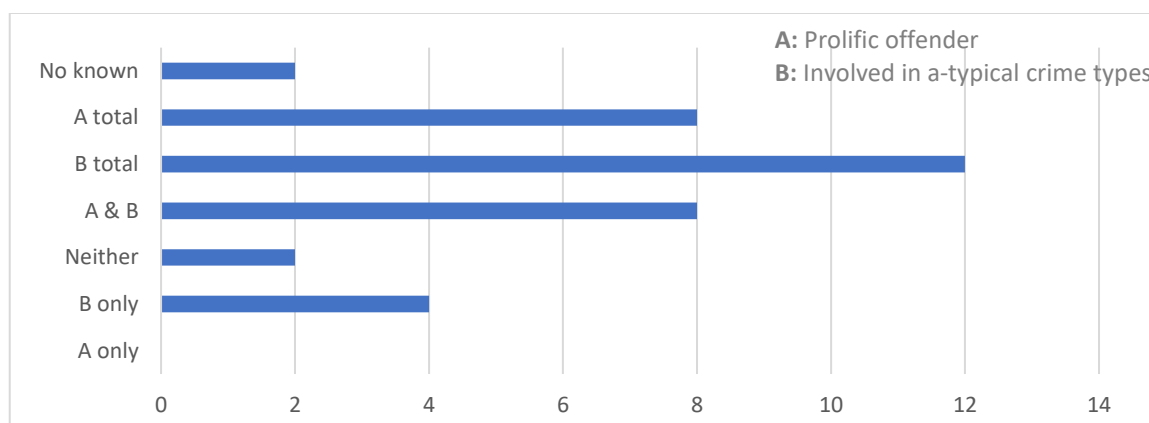


Fig. 2 Programme A: Number and nature of offenses

As highlighted in Fig. 2 above, 50% of current participants (8 individuals) had accrued four or more criminal charges at the time of referral to Programme A and 75% (12 individuals) were involved in crimes not typical of youth offending.²⁰ Two participants have not disclosed the number or nature of their offenses.

¹⁸ Garda Síochána Analysis Service (2018), p. 11

¹⁹ Garda Síochána Analysis Service (2018), p. 12

²⁰ Programme A (2018) IYJS reporting document October 2018

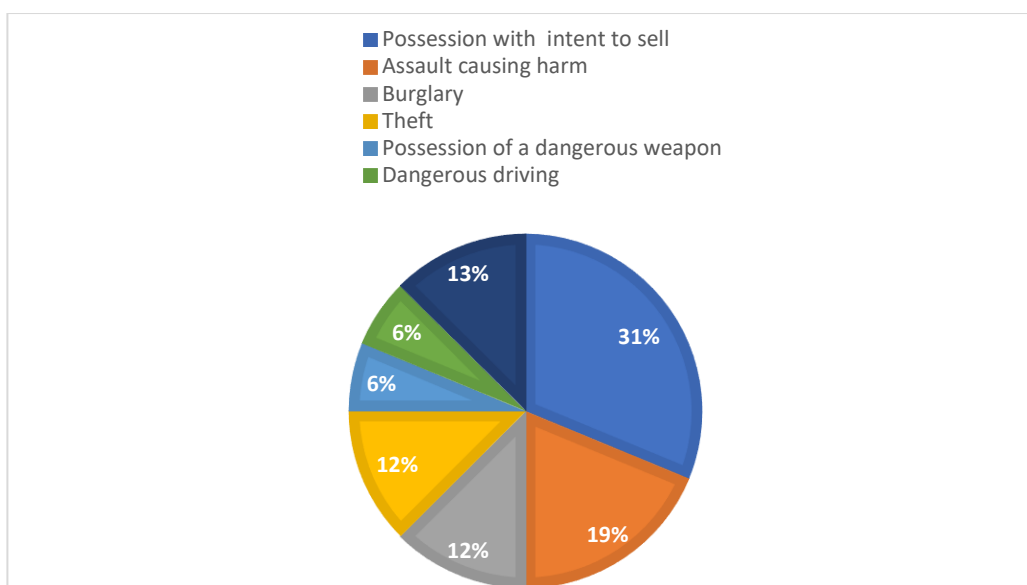


Fig. 3 Programme A: Crime types

As demonstrated in Fig. 3, possession with intent to sell was noted by programme staff as the most serious offense for which charges were faced by the largest number of participant (5 individuals or 31% of the participant group), whereas, for example, it accounted for just 1.4% of offences committed by young people in the general population in 2017.²¹ Similarly, assault causing harm was noted by programme staff as the most serious offense for which charges were faced by 19% of current participants (3 individuals), whereas it accounted for just 2.2% of offences committed by young people in 2017. Two individuals were facing charges for burglary and two for theft. One individual was facing charges for possession of a dangerous weapon and one individual was facing charges for dangerous driving.²²

Risk and need

In addition to involvement in the criminal justice system at a serious level, as demonstrated in Fig. 4 below, the welfare needs of the 16 young men who are currently part of Programme A are exceptionally complex.

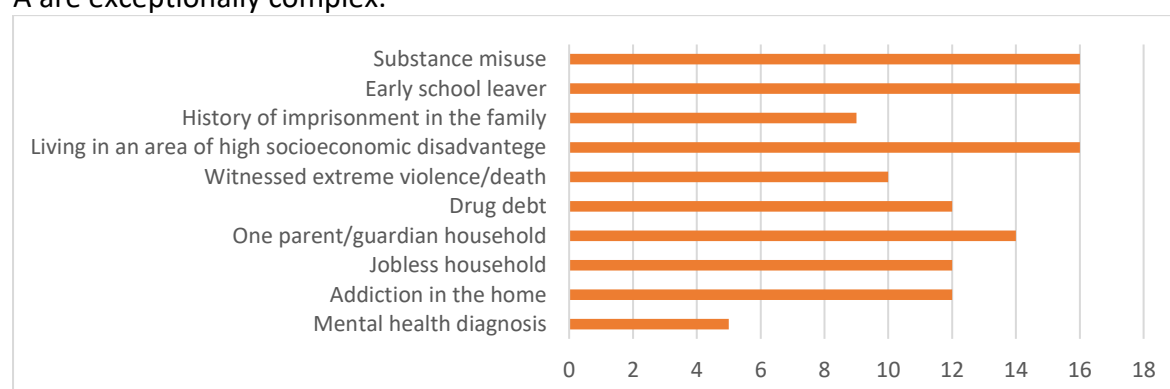


Fig. 4 Programme A: Target group profile

²¹ Garda Youth Diversion Crime Prevention Bureau (2017), p. 17

²² Garda Youth Diversion Crime Prevention Bureau (2017), p. 17

During the course of eight semi-structured interviews carried out for this evaluation, participants consistently highlighted being with 'the wrong crowd', having 'nothing to do' and 'drugs' as playing a negative role in their lives when they first joined Programme A and bringing them into conflict with the law.

You think you'll just smoke a bit weed or something...but then you are back with the same crowd messing again.
Programme A participant interview.

These factors also stand out as distinct areas of acute risk for the majority of participants in the first risk assessment carried out by the programme.

Participants are assessed by programme staff within three months of engagement on Programme A using a 'Traffic Light' risk assessment tool developed by the service provider. This tool assesses the level of risk faced by participants across a total of 10 categories:

- Living arrangements;
- Offending behaviour;
- Family/relationships;
- Substance abuse;
- Education/employment;
- Community/neighbourhood;
- Peer group/lifestyle;
- Health (including mental health);
- Attitudes/motivation;
- Other (including but not limited to experiences of trauma, bereavement, abuse and bullying).

Participants are given a red, yellow or green assessment result in relation to each category. The colour red indicates an area of high risk, yellow an area of moderate risk and green an area of low risk (see Annex 1 Programme A Indicators of Risk Assessment Form).

One current participant has not consented to a formal risk assessment at any stage. As far as possible, risk is therefore assessed in relation to this individual informally by keyworkers on an ongoing basis. The remaining 15 participants have undergone formal risk assessment using the Traffic Light tool on one or more occasion. The results of the first assessment for these 15 individuals are presented in Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 below.

Fig 5. demonstrates the overall result of the first assessment for each participant. It shows for that nine participants (D, E, F, H, I, J, K, M & O) - or 60% of those assessed - were assessed as high risk in five or more of the 10 available categories on first assessment. Eight participants were assessed as low risk in only one category and a further four were not assessed as low risk in any category. No participant was assessed as low risk in more than three categories.

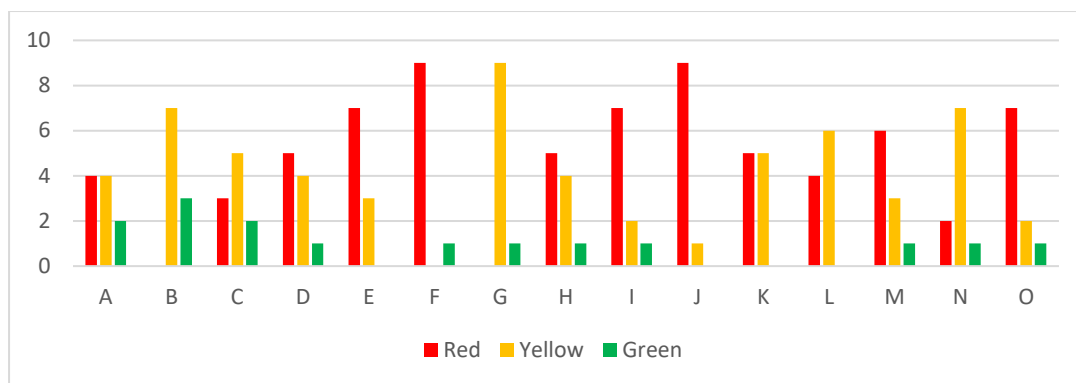


Fig. 5 Programme A: Initial risk assessment by participant

Fig. 6 below demonstrates the overall result of the first assessment for each category. It demonstrates that no participant was assessed as low risk in a total of six categories including offending behaviour, family and relationships, substance abuse, education/employment, community/neighbourhood and peer group/lifestyle. In addition to a history of offending behaviour, Fig. 6 also indicates substance abuse and peer group/lifestyle as distinct areas of acute risk for the majority of participants (10 of 15 and nine of 15 respectively assessed as high risk).

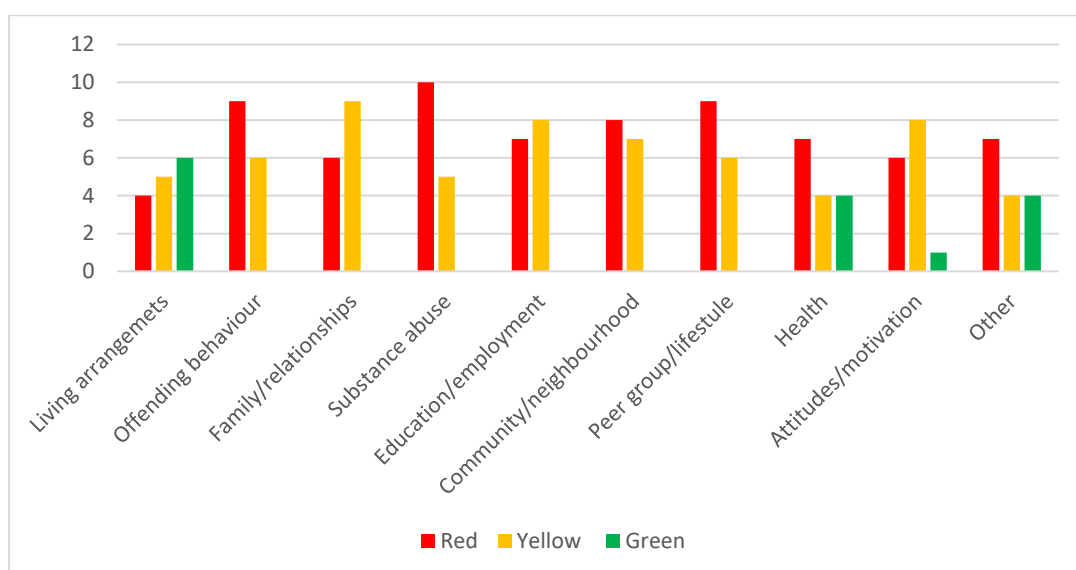


Fig. 6 Programme A: Initial risk assessment by category

Involvement in organised criminal networks

As demonstrated in Figs. 4, 5 and 6 above, there exists an abundance of high risk factors within the participant group and programme participants are vulnerable on many levels.

Existing evidence demonstrates that such vulnerability may be actively targeted by organised criminal networks when recruiting young contractors. This is particularly the case where vulnerability relates to 'clusters of risks associated with family and parenting'. Such risks include: a lack of parental *control* and/or *concern* over the behaviour of the young person;

absent fathers or fathers who have a negative influence; parental alcoholism, drug use and mental illness; and criminal associations and activity within the family.²³

Fig. 4 above demonstrates the prevalence of many of these factors within the participant group. A total of 14 of the current 16 participants are from single parent families with absent fathers, 12 participants have been exposed to drug and alcohol abuse in the home and nine participants are from families with a history of imprisonment. At the same time, the Traffic Light assessment demonstrates that family and relationships is a challenging area for all participants, with all 15 participants assessed marked as either moderate (9) or high risk (6) on their first assessment (60% and 40% respectively). Assessment in this area specifically incorporates risks around parental control and concern.

However, as stated previously, there are a total of six categories in which all participants were assessed as high or moderate risk on first assessment and - unlike for example, substance abuse and peer group/lifestyle - the category of family and relationships does not stand out clearly in the Traffic Light assessment as a distinct area of acute vulnerability for the majority of participants. Moreover, issues relating to this category were not highlighted by participants during interviews conducted for this evaluation as playing a significant role in their lives. Therefore, the prevalence of risk associated with family and parenting is not sufficient on its own to firmly suggest that participants may be vulnerable to active recruitment by criminal networks.

Although Programme A does not explicitly target young people involved in organised criminal networks, during interviews for this evaluation, Programme A staff consistently highlighted the prevalence of such involvement as both a challenge and risk for participants and youth workers. In order to better understand the degree to which participants are involved in organised criminal networks, as part of the evaluation process staff applied the indicators for involvement identified in the Greentown Report to their knowledge of the target group, specifically the 16 current programme participants. The result of this exercise is presented in Fig. 7 below.

The Greentown Report identifies five indicators for involvement in organised criminal networks. For the purposes of this report, these indicators have been grouped into three categories as follows:

- A. Patronage Based Relationships 'which share the rewards of crime among associates, but also generated onerous debt obligations';
or
Intense Relationships between individual members of the network (i.e. programme participants) and the network patrons;

²³ DCYA (2017) pp. 45-47, p. 71

- B. Involvement in burglary which often requires ‘functional supports, sourced from relationships with others’;
or
Involvement in drugs for sale and supply ‘which involves complex logistics chains with varying roles, responsibilities, competencies, assets, and vulnerabilities’;
- C. Geographical proximity to the area in which the network is based.²⁴

Indicator ‘C’ – geographic proximity – is valid for all participants by virtue of the fact that an organised criminal network is known to operate in the area in which they live or to which they are strongly connected. In relation to indicator ‘B’, the involvement of 14 programme participants (87.5%) in burglary or drugs for sale or supply was either confirmed by staff on the basis of concrete and publicly available evidence (e.g. arrests) or suspected by staff on the basis of information known to them, the Gardai or other members of the community. In relation to indicator ‘A’, there is either concrete and publicly available evidence or a strong suspicion that 12 of the 14 participants involved in burglary or drugs for sale or supply were also involved in either patronaged based relationships or an intense relationship with high ranking members of the network.

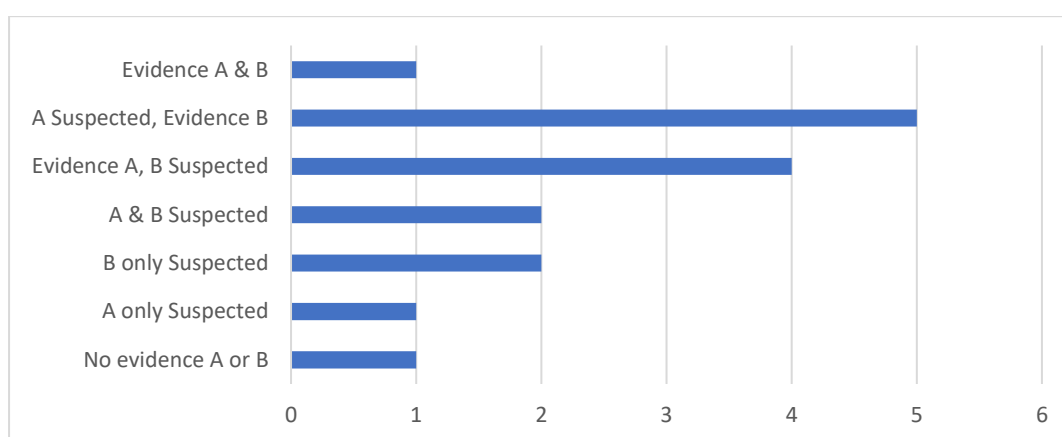


Fig. 7 Programme A: Involvement in organised criminal networks

A: Patronage based or intense relationship with network patrons

B: Involvement in burglary or drugs for sale and supply

Evidence: Concrete and publicly available evidence

Suspected: Based on information known to staff, Gardai or community

While analysis of the rigour carried out for the Greentown Report is beyond the scope of the present evaluation, this initial assessment suggests it is likely that 12 of the 16 young people that are currently part of Programme A are involved in organised criminal networks (75%). Such a conclusion - although tentative - has a number of implications both in terms of programme design and expected programme results.

The transtheoretical model of change which underpins the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme is predicated on the assumption that the young people targeted have

²⁴ DCYA (2017) p.1, p. 15

agency – that they have the capacity to direct their own actions – and that acting pro-socially will have no serious negative consequences for them. However, existing research demonstrates that once engaged in a criminal network, while factors such as reverence towards network patrons, the acquisition of social capital by association and access to money and drugs act as important ‘pull factors’ enabling the retention of young contractors, ‘darker push dynamics’ are equally at play, for example debt and other obligations as well as fear of ubiquitous surveillance and retribution.²⁵ Together these factors ‘can discourage pro-social behaviour, block network exit routes, bound rational choice and, by helping to negatively reframe local cultural attitudes to criminal behaviour, muddle a child’s reasoning in making ‘right and wrong’ judgements.’²⁶

Given the existence of both compelling pull and push factors, it is recognised in the existing research that for most young contractors involved in organised criminal networks ‘knifing off’ is the only available exit route.²⁷ At a minimum, this involves cognitive severance from the network and the relinquishing of ties, which in itself often requires relocating to another geographic area in order to succeed. For those who are unwilling or unable to relocate, the challenges of knifing off are greatly exacerbated and positive changes are much more difficult to sustain.

Within this context, it becomes apparent that even when progress is made, regression is highly likely, particularly where young people remain *in situ*. Regression should therefore be anticipated and accepted as part of the change process rather than an end to it. As such, the necessity of a long-term intervention becomes clear as does the need to temper expectations in terms of results. Equally clear is the need to enlist the support of multiple agencies in achieving and sustaining behavioural change since the full range of support required cannot be provided by one service.

3.3 Programme Model

Objectives

In July 2019, Programme A staff completed the development of a written programme model (see Annex 2 Programme A Model). The programme model is described as a working document subject to ongoing review.

The programme model states that the objective of Programme A is to: ‘Support young people to live up to their full potential, free from involvement in the criminal justice system.’ This is understood as the long-term objective of the programme.

²⁵ O’Brien K, Daffern M, Chu CM and Thomas SD (2013) Youth gang affiliation, violence, and criminal activities: a review of motivational, risk, and protective factors. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 18(4): 417–425; Pitts J (2008) *Reluctant gangsters: the changing face of youth crime* (Devon, UK: Willan Publishing).

²⁶ DCYA (2017) p. 12

²⁷ Maruna S and Roy K (2007) Amputation or reconstruction? Notes on the concept of ‘knifing off’ and desistance from crime. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 23(1): 104–124.

The current Programme A grant application further states that the programme will: reduce risk particularly in the areas of substance abuse, education and employment as well as reduce the level of offending among the target group and consequently the level of youth offending in the Garda district and the numbers of young offenders committed to a period of detention. These are understood as the medium term objectives of the programme to be delivered within its life time.

The short term objectives of the programme - although not stated explicitly as such in the programme documentation - are understood as:

1. To engage 20 young people in the programme;
2. To enable participants to act on positive options identified by key workers;
3. To enable participants to access additional services required to reduce risk particularly in the areas of substance abuse, employment and education.

Together these short, medium and long term objectives support the realisation of youth diversion policy which is committed to the use of detention as a last resort and which recognises the need to address atypical youth offending with targeted interventions as discussed in section 2 above.

Programme A Objectives

Short term (within 30 months):

1. To engage 20 young people in the programme;
2. To enable participants to act on positive options identified by key workers;
3. To enable participants to access additional services required to reduce risk particularly in the areas of substance abuse, employment and education.

Medium term (within 48 months):

4. To reduce risk particularly in the areas of substance abuse, education and employment;;
5. To reduce the level of offending among the target group; to reduce youth offending in the district;
6. To reduce the numbers of young offenders committed to a period of detention.

Long term (post completion):

7. To free young participants from involvement in the criminal justice system and enable them to live up to their full potential.

Intervention framework

The programme model sets out an intervention framework that specifies six 'stages of work' through which participants will transition over an average period of four years with the programme. These are:

- Determining suitability;
- Building trust;
- Engagement/personal growth;

- Contemplation;
- Lifestyle change;
- Sustaining change.

The intervention model provides an overview of the participant outcomes envisaged for each stage of work, the actions to be undertaken, the average number of contacts per week per stage ('Dosage') and the timeframe for each stage (see Annex 2 Programme A Model). The framework was influenced by the Roca model in operation in Boston Massachusetts.²⁸ In line with Stephenson et al (2011), the intervention model also specifies the level of engagement required of young participants at each stage.²⁹ Although envisaged as a four year intervention in the lives of participants, the programme makes a commitment to work with participants for as long as is necessary, including after they reach the age of 18.

Outcomes

Table 2 below demonstrates how the participant outcomes to be delivered by the programme correlate to the programme objectives within the intervention framework.

Table 2 Programme A: Objectives and outcomes

Stage	Objective	Outcome	Dosage	Engagement	Month
1 Determine suitability	1. Engage 20 participants	1. Relationship between young person and keyworker is growing. 2. Young person is responding to engagement and developing a conscious understanding of programme purpose.	1-2	N.A	1-2
2 Building Trust			1-2	Behavioural	2-6
3 Engagement/ Personal growth	2. To enable participants to act on positive options identified by key workers.	3. Young person is willing to acknowledge issues and engage in new activities.	2-4	Emotional	6-24
4 Contemplation	3. To enable participants to access the additional services they required to reduce risk, particularly in the areas of substance abuse, employment and education.	4. Young person has acknowledged their desire to change and is starting to put plans in place.	2-4	Cognitive	18-30
5 Lifestyle change	Motivation and attitude growth, resulting in positive lifestyle choices.	Providing new opportunities and experiences,	1-3	Cognitive	30-42

²⁸ See: www.rocainc.org

²⁹ Martin Stephenson, Henri Giller and Sally Brown (2011) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice*, London Routledge.

	Moving towards sustainable change.	encouraging independence.			
6 Sustaining change	Young person takes full personal responsibility on an on-going basis. Young person will seek support as needed.	Check-ins and social activities and less one to one support. Planned ending.	2-3	Cognitive	36-48

Causal chain

The intervention framework is implicitly underpinned by a causal chain that conceives of high criminogenic risk/need coupled with lack of access to individualised support and specialist services for young people in this position as the root cause of a-typical youth offending. Once engaged in a-typical youth offending, risk and need increase leading to further offending, thereby binding young offenders into a self-perpetuating cycle that often leads them into conflict with the law as adults.

The basic logic of Programme A is that it is possible to break this cycle by introducing a targeted, long-term intervention that can reduce risk, need and consequently offending by:

1. Building trusting relationships with young people who are no longer suitable for diversion, who are continuing to offend and who will not simply grow out of crime;
2. Providing these participants with a support base from which to make the changes necessary in their lives including accessing any additional services they need (in particular those around substance abuse, employment and education).

Programme A is based on the assumption that participants have agency and that with the right support they can engage in pro-social behaviours without facing serious negative consequences. Programme A is also based on the assumption that the additional services required by vulnerable young people taking part in the programme are available and can be accessed with the support of 'one good adult' (i.e. Programme A youth worker) when participants are ready to engage with these services.³⁰

³⁰ B Dooley et al (2012) *My World Survey: National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland*. Headstrong and UCD School of Psychology.

4 Programme A: Effectiveness

4.1 Sources of Information

Programme A reports to the Department of Justice and Equality annually. The first annual report covering the period August 2017 – October 2018 was submitted in November 2018. The next report is due in the fourth quarter of 2019.

The 2018 report provides brief summary information relating to the programme catchment area, targeting and engagement, the numbers of participants, working methods and a short participant case study. Additional information such as the date and origin of referral, yearly number of contacts, average monthly contacts, date of first and most recent risk assessment and most serious offense is also provided in relation to each participant. The annual report also provides the results of the first and most recent Traffic Light risk assessment for each participant. This information is presented as raw data without comment on the profile of the participant group or whether or not the results of the risk assessment indicate progress in terms of achieving programme objectives.

As well as the annual report, two Programme A progress reports have also been submitted to the Department of Justice and Equality covering the periods August-December 2017 and January-April 2019. These reports present information similar to that contained in the annual report with the exception of the risk assessment results which are not included.

As stated above, the Programme A model and intervention framework currently under development is largely based on the Roca model which has been implemented successfully in another jurisdiction. However, in the case of Programme A, a fully developed monitoring and evaluation framework that specifies indicators and benchmarks for all objectives and outcomes has yet to be put in place. As a result, in some cases the data necessary to measure progress in relation to stated objectives and outcomes has not been gathered systematically and/or collated.

In the absence of a fully developed monitoring and evaluation framework the analysis below relies on the following sources of information to assess as, far as possible, programme performance in relation to short term objectives and outcomes.

- The results of the Traffic Light risk assessment;
- Semi-structured interviews with eight programme participants, five staff and six stakeholders;
- 2018 annual report;
- 2017 and 2019 progress reports;
- Monthly summary reports.

The analysis below evaluates programme performance during the first four stages of the interventional model, namely:

- Stage 1 Determine Suitability (months 1-2)
- Stage 2 Building Trust (months 2-6)
- Stage 3 Engagement/Personal Growth (months 6-24)
- Stage 4 Contemplation (months 18-30)

Performance during the final two stages (Lifestyle Change, months 30-42 and Sustaining Change, months 36-48) is not part of this evaluation since the programme cycle has not yet reached the half way point (24 months).

The analysis of programme performance presented below focuses primarily on the 16 participants that were part of programme as of April 2019. The five young people that either successfully transitioned out of the programme or disengaged/failed to engage in the programme long-term are not included for the reasons set out below.

The risk profile of one participant who successfully transitioned out of the programme differs substantially from that of all others. He was assessed as low risk in all 10 categories on first assessment and quickly referred on to other appropriate services as a result. The other participant who successfully transitioned out of the programme was assessed as moderate risk overall and benefitted from an unusually successful employment based intervention within a short space of time and disengaged from the programme to take up full-time work (in which he currently remains). As such, these participants are not representative of the participant group as a whole and there is little to be learned about the effectiveness of the programme in bringing about positive changes in the lives of young people engaged in a-typical offending from their involvement.

Despite appearing to respond positively to initial targeting, the two participants that failed to engage in the programme long-term did not consent to risk assessment at any point. These young people are considered unsuccessful targets by the programme.

One young person disengaged formally shortly after referral since he had made significant progress in his life at that point and did not feel he required the services of the programme.

4.2 Stage 1 and 2: Determining Suitability and Building Trust (months 1-6)

Objective 1: Engage 20 participants in the programme

Stages 1 and 2 together share a single common objective – to engage 20 participants in the programme. This objective is intended to deliver two associated outcomes for participants within the first six months: relationship between young person and keyworker is growing; and young person is responding to engagement and developing a conscious understanding of programme purpose. The intervention model envisages an

average of 1-2 contacts per week between key youth workers and participants throughout stages 1 and 2 and 'behavioural' engagement on the part of participants.³¹

Programme A was launched in August 2017. Targeting and engagement of young people began in late September 2017 on the basis of an initial list of 25 young people proposed through the referral committee.

Targeting included detached youthwork in the area where young people lived or which they frequented, multiple home visits, calls and texts. The minimum engagement effort is defined in the 2018 Annual Report as 10 outreach or house call based interactions over a period of up to six months. If the young person targeted consistently shows no willingness to engage within this period targeting can cease although engagement remains a possibility should the young person become open to this at a later date.

Of the 25 young people targeted initially, a total of 21 participants were engaged on some level by March 2018. There were four unsuccessful targets who did not engage at all and targeting was ceased.

Since March 2018, two of the 21 young people who initially engaged have transitioned out of the programme, two failed to engage long-term and are no longer considered part of the programme and one participant formally disengaged. Of the 16 young people that remained part of the programme as of April 2016, 15 were engaging on some level. One participant had not engaged for some time and his place on the programme was under review at the time that research for this evaluation was undertaken.

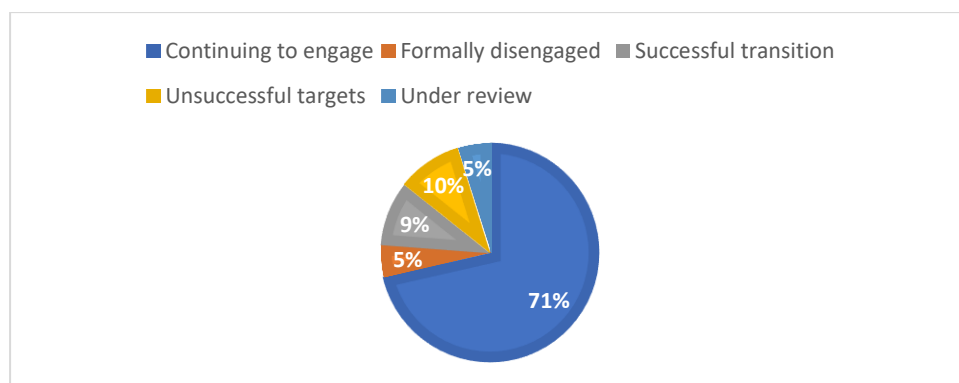


Fig. 8 Programme A: Retention March 2018 - April 2019

During interviews conducted for this evaluation staff described their outreach efforts in the initial period as 'relentless' and 'like stalking'. They said the purpose of this approach was to demonstrate to young people that 'we are different: we are not going to give up on you and we are not going to go away just because you tell us to.'

³¹ See below Outcome 2 and Martin Stephenson, Henri Giller and Sally Brown (2011) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice*, London Routledge.

You need a thick skin to keep going back, but persistence works. Programme A staff interview.

The achievement that this level of engagement represents was commented upon by stakeholders during interviews carried out for this evaluation. One stakeholder said that he 'couldn't believe' that the young people targeted would choose to get involved in 'any programme long term.' Others said that the willingness of the young people to engage long term in a youth justice programme was 'very surprising and encouraging' and spoke to the skill and commitment of Programme A youth workers.

Participants described feeling 'annoyed' by the persistence of Programme A youth workers during the initial engagement period but said they believe it was necessary. Several participants said they were grateful to Programme A youth workers for 'staying at it' and others identified this as the only reason they chose to get involved initially and remained engaged long term.

I only came in to get [key worker] off my case...but once you get to know them you feel different about it. Programme A participant interview.

Outcome 1: Young person's relationship with key worker is growing

High-risk young people who have had little or no positive engagement with adults are prone to frequent disengagement and rejection of constructive relationships. For this reason, consistent contact with key youth workers plays a vital role in establishing trusting relationships. According to data contained in the 2018 annual report, on average participants had 6 contacts with key youth workers each month during the reporting period. This is in line with the intervention model which indicates an average of 1-2 contacts per week during stage 1 Determining Suitability and stage 2 Building Trust.

While data regarding average contact rates for 2019 has not yet been finalised for the annual report, according to the Programme A team leader, initial results up to June 2019 indicate that direct contact has intensified in the intervening period with an average of three contacts per week for each participant. As of June 2019, contact hours are also recorded. It is anticipated that this will demonstrate an average of 1.5 hours per contact and on this basis direct contact of 4.5 hours on average with each participant each week. This is also in line with the intervention model which indicates an average of 2-4 contacts per week during phase 3 Engagement/Personal Growth and phase 4 Contemplation which commence at 6 and 18 months respectively. To date, the vast majority of contact with participants has been one-to-one contact with occasional small group activities.

During interviews conducted for this evaluation, participants described their key youth workers as 'saints' and as 'saviours'. Participants were asked to explain what they meant by these descriptions. In response they recognised the investment of time and energy that

key youth workers make in supporting them as well as their unwavering commitment to their work. They identified 'trust' as a key element of the relationship with key youth workers along with 'they don't judge you', 'they don't give up on you', 'you can talk to them', 'they listen to you' and 'they don't get angry'.

They help you with practical stuff, like planning and all. But they are also there for you when no one else is. Programme A participant interview.

They actually care about us. The amount they do...and they don't have to, it's their choice. Programme A participant interview.

Participants were also asked if there were any adults in their lives that they could trust and rely on for support when in trouble before joining Programme A. One participant said family members although only 'sort of' because they would 'lose it'. All other participants interviewed said that before joining Programme A there were no adults in their lives that they could turn to for support.

Outcome 2: Young person responds to engagement and develops a conscious understanding of programme purpose

The results of existing large scale studies into engagement between young people and youth justice/youth work practitioners has revealed a clear distinction between 'participation' on the one hand and 'engagement' on the other. Research conducted by Martin Stephenson et al - which underpins the Programme A model - refines this distinction to identify three different levels of engagement: behavioural; emotional and cognitive.³²

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Behavioural engagement which is associated with participation, is usually the initial level of engagement. At this level the young person attends a programme because his friends do, because he feels under pressure to do so, because it provides something to 'do' etc. Generally engagement at this level will not result in an intervention effecting any real change for the young person.

Emotional engagement occurs where the young person increasingly enjoys participating in the programme, relates well to staff and other participants and feels a sense of belonging in the programme. He attends because he wants to, is open about his participation and is positive towards the programme. He may look for additional opportunities to spend more time with the programme and build positive relationships with staff.

Cognitive engagement occurs where the young person understands that he is involved with the programme to facilitate change - that he is part of a process - and that the programme is about acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding. This stage involves the young person making a conscious decision to buy into a developmental process and actively welcoming the support offered by the programme. It is also about the young person understanding and accepting that there are issues and lifestyle choices they need to address and decisions they need to make.

³² Martin Stephenson, Henri Giller and Sally Brown (2011) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice*, London Routledge

In order to ascertain whether or not participants have responded to engagement and developed a conscious understanding of the purpose of the programme in line with Outcome 2, as part of this evaluation staff assessed the group to determine the level at which each participant was engaging (behavioural, emotional, cognitive) and the stage of the intervention at which each participant was located (Stages 1-6).

The assessment was carried out in March 2019. In keeping with the programme model it demonstrates that within 6 months of referral, the majority of participants assessed (12 of 16) were engaging at a behavioural level while four were engaging at an emotional level (see Fig. 9 below). It also demonstrates that within 6 months, the majority of participants (11 of the 16) assessed were located in stage 2 Building Trust, two had advanced more quickly than anticipated and were located in stage 3 Engagement/Personal Growth and three were still in stage 1, Determining Suitability (see Fig. 10 below).

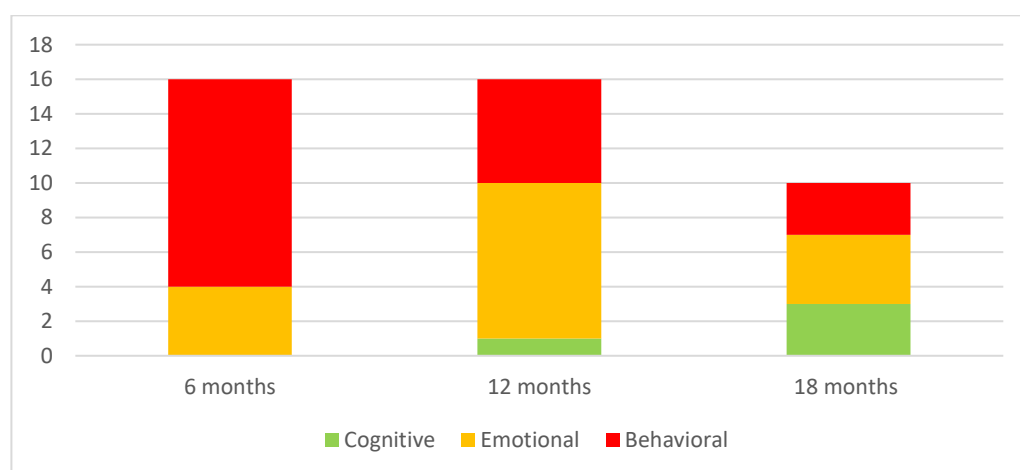


Fig. 9 Programme A: Level of engagement

It is not possible to assess retrospectively participants' understanding of the programme purpose six months post engagement. However, during interviews for this evaluation, all participants said the programme was there 'to help' and/or support them but only two participants recognised explicitly that they were referred to the programme because of the seriousness of their offending and described the purpose of the programme as to help them 'stay out of prison'. The other participants said the purpose was to help: 'get my life in order', 'get a job', 'stay off the streets' and 'get through my court case'.

Participants also struggled to explicitly recognise the seriousness of their offending, preferring instead to dismiss this as 'messaging', the primary cause of which was 'hanging around with the wrong crowd'. At the same time however, when asked what their lives would be like if they were not involved in Programme A, with remarkable certainty and consistency seven out of eight interviewees responded either that they would be 'in

prison’ or ‘dead’. It is clear therefore that at the current moment at least, participants understand that they were offending at a serious level and that their involvement in Programme A is connected to this even if they do not wish to discuss their offending openly in interview.

As demonstrated in Fig 10. below, the March 2019 assessment also determined that by 12 months, seven participants remained in stage 2 Building Trust and nine participants had progressed to stage 3 Engagement/Personal Growth. This is contrary to the programme model and intervention framework which envisage that stage 2 Building Trust would take on average six months to complete and indicates particular difficulties around the transition from stage two Building Trust to stage three Engagement/Personal Growth. The extent of these difficulties is also highlighted by the fact that of the 10 participants who had been engaged in the programme for 18 months or more at the time of the assessment in March 2019, three still remained in stage 2 Building Trust (four had reached stage 3 Engagement/Personal Growth and three had reached stage 4 Cognitive). To address these difficulties, further analysis should be carried out internally to identify the most significant barriers to transition and to plan accordingly, including making any adjustments necessary to the programme model and intervention framework.

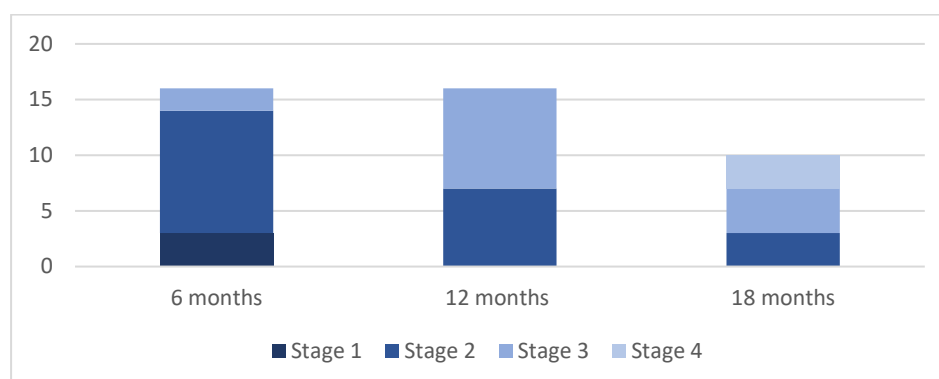


Fig. 10 Programme A: Stage of programme

Conclusions: Stage 1 Determining Suitability and Stage 2 Building Trust

There were 21 young people engaged in Programme A within the first six months of operation, exceeding the target of 20 set out in the intervention model. Of the 21 young people engaged by March 2018, 15 (71%) remained engaged on some level by April 2019 and the participation of one young person is under review.

Programme A has also delivered on the first of two associated short term outcomes which concern the growth of the relationship between participants and key youth workers. The rate of attrition from the programme is low given the profile of the target group with just two participants failing to engage long term despite a positive response to initial targeting.

Consistent contact was maintained with participants in the crucial early stages of the programme, with an average of six monthly contacts with each participant in the first six months.

During interviews for this evaluation, participants described 'trust' as central to their relationship with key youth workers and most participants said their key youth workers were the only adults they could rely on for support when in trouble.

In relation to outcome 2 (Young person is responding to engagement and developing a conscious understanding of programme purpose), while it is not possible to assess retrospectively participants' understanding of the programme purpose six months post engagement, it is clear that at this point participants have a good understanding of the programme purpose and the reasons for their referral.

4.3 Stage 3: Engagement/Personal Growth (month 6-24)

Objective 2: To enable participants to act on positive options identified by key workers

Stage 3 is envisaged as the longest stage in the intervention lasting 18 months. It has a single objective – to enable participants to act on positive options identified by key youth workers – and one associated outcome: young person is willing to acknowledge issues and engage in new activities. The intervention model envisages an average of 2-4 contacts per week between key youth workers and participants throughout stage 3 and engagement at an 'emotional' level on the part of participants.³³

Providing participants with opportunities to engage in positive activities in the areas of sport and recreation, education, training and employment is fundamental to the programme approach to personal development and the reduction of risk.

The following sports and recreational activities are referenced in the 2017 progress report, the 2018 annual report and progress report, the 2019 progress report and the monthly programme reports for January-June 2019 as options that were identified by key youth workers and availed of by participants (in alphabetical order).

- Football
- Go karting
- Gym
- Horse riding
- Movie making
- Music/song writing
- Outdoor adventure

³³ See below Outcome 2 and Martin Stephenson, Henri Giller and Sally Brown (2011) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice*, London Routledge.

- Table tennis
- Weightlifting

All activities were daytime or evening activities and did not involve overnights.

The following education, training and employment related activities are also identified in the 2017 progress report, the 2018 annual report and progress report, the 2019 progress report and the monthly programme reports for January-June 2019 as options that were identified by youth workers and availed of by participants (in alphabetical order).

- Alternative education training programmes
- Barista training
- CV and interview preparation
- Driving and theory test
- Formal education
- Job placements (paid employment)
- Safe pass
- Social enterprise, on-the-job skills development (in house)
- Work placements (unpaid)
- Work readiness classes

Detailed information regarding consistency of attendance, length of engagement, completion etc is tracked through individual case management plans. However, this information has not been collated and analysed for the group as a whole so it is not possible to comment on the full extent to which participants acted upon the opportunities presented.

Outcome 3: Young person is willing to acknowledge issues and engage in new activities

During semi-structured interviews conducted for this evaluation, participants were asked: What things about Programme A help you to stay out of trouble? Participants highlighted the following (in descending order of frequency):

1. Youth workers: having someone you can trust, they don't judge you, they don't give up on you, you can talk to them, they listen to you, they don't get angry;
2. Lifts to where I need to go;
3. Employment: help getting a job, sticking with it, working it out when things go wrong;
and
Education: finding courses, signing up, getting me there, helping if there's a problem;
4. Court support: coming to court, coming to the solicitor, making sure I understand;
5. Doing things I like: football, the gym, music and having a place to go.

It is clear from this feedback that participants value their relationship with key youth workers more than any other element of the programme.

Although last on the list, sports and recreational activities play an important role in enabling the contact between youth workers and participants to intensify in the early stages of the programme and the relationship to deepen gradually. While the crucial role of sport and recreation in relationship building was not recognised by participants, it was highlighted by staff during interviews for this evaluation. Staff also highlighted the importance of enabling participants to find and engage in activities they enjoy in order to broaden their horizons and begin to introduce routine into their lives.

The second item on the list 'Lifts to where I need to go' is a component part of each of items 3, 4 and 5. Again, although not recognised by participants during interview, staff also highlighted time in the car as a valuable opportunity to build on their relationships with participants without the formality of a scheduled one-to-one session.

If you have an interview or job and its far away, they [key worker] would get out of bed to bring you. Programme A participant interview.

Item 3 relates to support around employment, education and training which participants valued equally. Participants said they were supported to prepare for interviews, to find work and once employed to stay in work. Some participants expressed admiration for those in steady employment and said this was something they started to want for themselves as a result of engagement in Programme A.

The working man is my hero. It's easy to mess around. Working every day? That's hard. Programme A participant interview.

But it is also clear that retention in employment remains a serious challenge for many participants, with work and job placements sometimes ending badly after a short time. One stakeholder expressed the view that participants were being 'pushed into work too early' when they were 'not ready'.

I thought - the first time anyone looks at him crooked he is going to lose it - and that's exactly what happened. He didn't last long. Programme A stakeholder interview.

By contrast, staff members said that a lot of work and preparation goes into ensuring that young people are 'job ready' before entering any employment but that despite this not all placements succeed. However, staff also believe that for participants who have never even had an interview, getting a job is 'huge' and represents an important step that can be built on.

'It's a set back that can be looked at with participants. The goal is that to stay longer the next time, and the next time, and the time after that.' Programme A staff member interview.

A similar diversity of experience exists in relation to training and education. Some participants who took part in interviews for this evaluation were clearly committed to and benefitting from the education and training programmes in which they were enrolled. This was particularly the case in relation to an in-house social enterprise which offers on-the-job skills development for up to six Programme A participants at any one time as well as numerous young people taking part in other programmes offered by the service provider. Several participants mentioned this as their first positive training/employment experience and the reason they decided both to join Programme A and to pursue further training and employment opportunities. However, elsewhere inconsistent attendance and drop-out remain a challenge.

Participants gave varying explanations for this including 'having nothing in common' with classmates, classmates being old or being 'junkies', tension or fighting between classmates, being bored and 'changing my mind'. By contrast, staff referred to the long-term absence of structure and routine in the lives of participants and a fear of failure - which is often expressed as a tendency towards 'self-sabotage' - as underlying causes. Ongoing substance abuse was also highlighted by staff as significant for many participants.

The high value placed on court support is reflective of the fact that seven of the eight participants with whom interviews took place were court involved on referral (one was referred from Oberstown). The support that was valued most in this context was:

- Lifts and making sure I turn up for things;
- Coming to court and to meetings with the solicitor;
- Explaining what's happening: to me, to parent/guardian.

They never forget about anything. If it wasn't for them, I would be lost. They even remember your court dates. Programme A participant interview

In relation to court accompaniment, during interviews staff commented that it is not standard practice to attend but rather to support participants at the court while they are waiting to be called, to discuss the outcome with the solicitor and to explain this to the young person if necessary. Moreover, staff would only accompany a young person to court if requested and/or if no parent/guardian was available to do so.

Two participants were interviewed in detention. One said his keyworker was 'sound' but that nothing would keep him out of trouble. The other said he found staying in touch with his keyworker by phone useful, particularly as the time for his release approached. He said

this was because it helps him to know that 'there is someone there for me already when I get out.' He also said that if asked his keyworker would visit him in detention.

During interviews, participants were also asked to identify any aspect of the programme that they felt could work better. The following suggestions were made (in descending order of frequency):

- Overnight trips/respice;
- More day trips;
- Support at weekends/holidays;
- A better building with better facilities
- Bus (for group activities)

A number of participants said they would like the opportunity to go away overnight with the programme to 'get a break'. To date this opportunity has not been offered by the programme with the exception of one participant. According to staff, the possibility of overnight trips for those 'who are ready' is currently under consideration and may go ahead depending on risk assessment. Occasional day trips have also taken place and this will continue.

Several participants remarked that they find it difficult to stay out of trouble at the weekends and that typically they have no contact with key youth workers from Friday evening to Monday morning. However, apart from one participant who suggested that the possibility of checking in with key youth workers by phone over the weekend might be beneficial there were no concrete proposals forthcoming as to how this might be addressed. Staff said that they have been available to participants at weekends on numerous occasions for both crisis and non-crisis interventions and can be reached by phone 24/7 in an emergency. However, regular contact hours are not scheduled at weekends and some staff expressed concern that doing so would create 'dependency'.

Participants consistently said that they needed a 'better building'. Participants were aware that the lease on the current building is due to expire and an alternative had not been identified. Participants said they would like a bigger space to hang out in, with better facilities including a sound system and video games. Currently, the only communal space available in the building is a very small kitchen area.

While it is clear that participants are willing to engage in new activities and have benefitted from this, on the basis of the feedback received during interviews alone it is not possible to measure the extent to which this has enabled participants to make positive changes in their lives over time.

The primary tool used by Programme A to monitor participants' progress throughout the programme is the Traffic Light assessment tool. As stated above, the Traffic Light assessment is conducted at three months post engagement and every six months thereafter. It requires the consent/assent of participants and the consent of parents/primary caregivers for all participants under 18 years of age and is completed by staff on the basis of their knowledge of participants.

A comparison between the results of the first and most recent risk assessment for each participant in the categories most closely related to objective 2 and outcome 3 demonstrates:

- A positive outcome for 10 participants in the area of attitudes/motivation (risk decreased or remained low/moderate) and a negative outcome for six (risk increased or remained high). Overall risk diminished in this category from initial to most recent assessment for five participants and risk remained unchanged for 10 participants;
- A positive outcome for 13 participants in the area of education/employment (risk decreased or remained low/moderate) and a negative outcome for three (risk increased or remained high). Overall risk diminished in this category from initial to most recent assessment for four participants, increased for three and remained unchanged for nine;
- A positive outcome for seven participants in the area of peer group/lifestyle (risk decreased or remained low/moderate) and a negative outcome for nine (risk increased or remained high). Overall risk diminished in this category from initial to most recent assessment for three participants, increased for four and remained unchanged for nine.

Long-established theories of behavioural change such as the transtheoretical model, clearly demonstrate that awareness of a problem - in this case indicated by a positive outcome in the area of attitudes/motivation for the majority of participants (10/16) - necessarily precedes any commitment to action.³⁴ Similarly, as indicated in the programme model, a clear reduction in overall risk is not expected until during stage 5 Lifestyle change (months 30-42), when participants have had 'that lightbulb moment' - as it is describe in the model - and begin to engage on a cognitive level: 'to work towards change'; 'to identify and take their next steps'; and to 'deal with the remaining barriers so they can move forward.' The absence of more tangible progress in the category of peer group/lifestyle should be understood in this context and should not therefore detract from the positive feedback provided by participants.

³⁴ Prochaska J, DiClemente C, & Norcross J (1992) In search of how people change: Applications to the addictive behaviors. *American Psychologist* 47, pp. 1102-1114

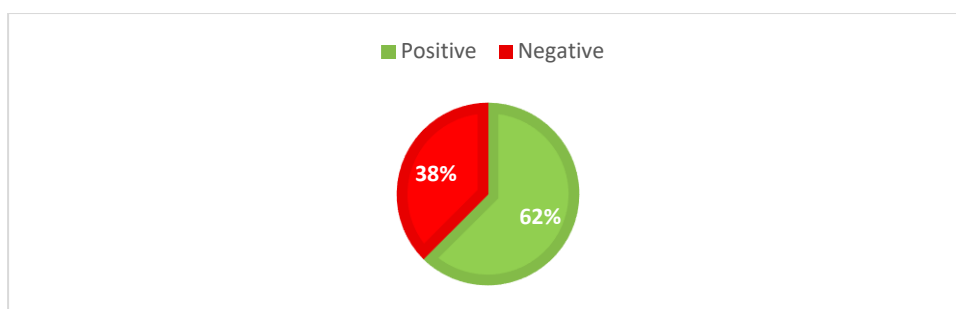


Fig. 11 Programme A: Attitudes/motivation

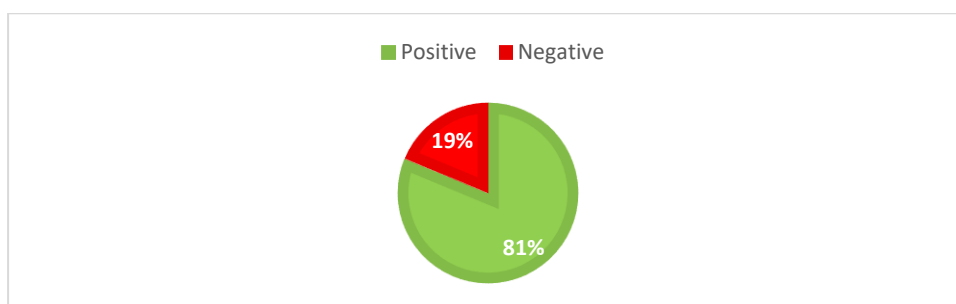


Fig. 12 Programme A: Education/employment

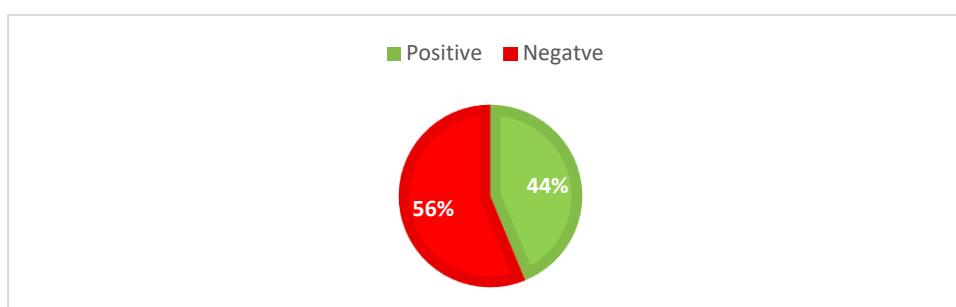


Fig. 13 Programme A: Peer group/lifestyle

The strength of the Traffic Light system is that it provides a periodic assessment of risk in a broad range of categories in relation to each participant. However, as a risk assessment tool, the Traffic Light system is not intended to track progress towards an agreed set of programme objectives in line with clearly identified indicators and benchmarks. Thus, while the Traffic Light system can provide insight into changes in levels of risk over time, it is not adequate on its own to capture more subtle changes in the earlier stages of the programme when risk remains generally high.

To address this shortfall, first and foremost it is necessary to agree specific indicators and benchmarks around all programme objectives and outcomes and to gather the data necessary to track these, particularly those related to stages 1-4 where risk is expected to remain generally high. In relation to involvement in sports and recreational activities, education and employment this may include, for example, setting targets and collating data regarding participant attendance rates and completion etc. In addition, it is also suggested that the introduction of a self-assessment tool that would enable participants

to review and comment on their own progress would be beneficial for measuring the effectiveness of the programme in enabling participants to make positive changes in their own lives.

Conclusion: Stage 3 Engagement/Personal Growth

It is clear that during the first 18 months of the programme, participants have been provided with and availed of multiple opportunities to engage in positive activities including sport and recreation, employment and education in line with objective 2 (To enable participants to act on positive options identified by key workers) and outcome 3 (Young person is willing to acknowledge issues and engage in new activities). However, in the absence of specific indicators and benchmarks around these objectives and outcomes as well as an agreed methodology for tracking the relevant data it is not possible to comment on the full extent to which participants have acted on the opportunities with which they were presented.

A comparison between the results of the first and most recent Traffic Light risk assessment also demonstrates that these activities are beginning to have a measurable impact particularly in the areas of attitude and motivation and education/employment.

During interviews conducted for this evaluation, participants highlighted the support they received from Programme A in the areas of education and employment as of particular benefit in keeping them out of trouble and, to a lesser extent, support around sport and recreation. Participants also identified their involvement in Programme A as life altering, and credited this with both keeping them alive and keeping out of prison.

4.4 Stage 4: Contemplation (months 18-30)

Objective 3: To enable participants to access the additional services they required to reduce risk, particularly in the areas of substance abuse, employment and education.

Stage 4 has a single objective (To enable participants to access the additional services they required to reduce risk, particularly in the areas of substance abuse, employment and education) and one associated outcome (Young person has acknowledged their desire to change and is starting to put plans in place). The intervention model envisages an average of 2-4 contacts per week between key youth workers and participants throughout stage 4 and engagement at a 'cognitive' level on the part of participants.³⁵

The impact of programme activity in the area of employment and education is addressed in section 4.3 above. The analysis below therefore focuses on the impact of activity in other areas related to criminogenic risk including but not limited to substance abuse.

³⁵ See below Outcome 2 and Martin Stephenson, Henri Giller and Sally Brown (2011) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice*, London Routledge.

Despite the high level of risk faced by participants in the area of substance abuse, particularly drug use, Programme A is not staffed to offer drug and alcohol treatment services to participants in-house. To date, Programme A has supported participants to access a total of six external drug and alcohol treatment services. These services are all day services. Access to residential services is extremely limited and although preferable in some cases has not been available to participants.

While detailed information regarding the nature, timing and extent of the treatment accessed is tracked for the purpose of individual case management, this data is not collated or analysed for the group as a whole and is not included in the documents made available to the evaluator. Therefore it is not possible to comment further on the extent to which participants have been involved in these services.

During interviews for this evaluation, participants consistently highlighted drug and/or alcohol abuse as a significant negative influence in their lives at the time of referral. Two participants credited their involvement in Programme A with recovery although the treatment itself was offered elsewhere. However, most participants were not willing to discuss their current drug use, preferring to dismiss this as casual and occasional. In this regard, participants distinguished between the use of heroin and cocaine on the one hand, which they considered to be drug abuse, and the use of cannabis and prescription medication on the other, which they did not.

This depiction of casual and occasional drug use runs contrary to the views expressed by staff who said that while many participants were making progress, substance abuse remains a significant challenge within the group. It also runs contrary to the results of the first risk assessment, which identifies substance abuse as a distinct area of acute risk for 10 out of 15 participants. A comparison between the results of the initial and most recent risk assessment also demonstrates:

- A positive outcome for eight participants in the area of substance abuse (risk decreased or remained low/moderate) and a negative outcome for eight (risk increased or remained high). Overall risk diminished in this category from initial to most recent assessment for three participants, increased for two participants and remained unchanged for eleven.
- Substance abuse remains one of two distinct areas of acute risk for a majority of participants as was the case following the first assessment (see Fig. 14 below).

However, staff also remarked that the lack of more tangible progress for the majority of participants in this area may also be due in part to the fact that participants are often unwilling to disclose the full extent of their drug use to staff until engaged in the programme for a substantial length of time. Hence, it is possible that the full extent of the

drug abuse problem within the group was not reflected accurately in the initial assessment.

During interviews conducted for this evaluation, staff also commented on the absence of specialist drug and alcohol services for young people in the local area and said that having to travel to other parts of the city for treatment/support was an additional barrier to recovery. This was also the case in relation mental health services for young people.

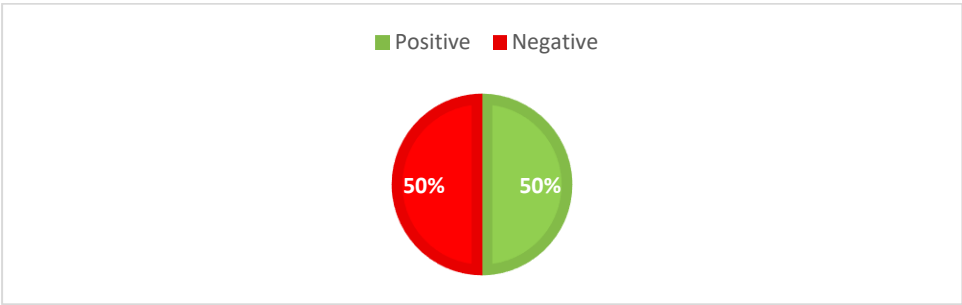


Fig. 14 Programme A: Substance abuse

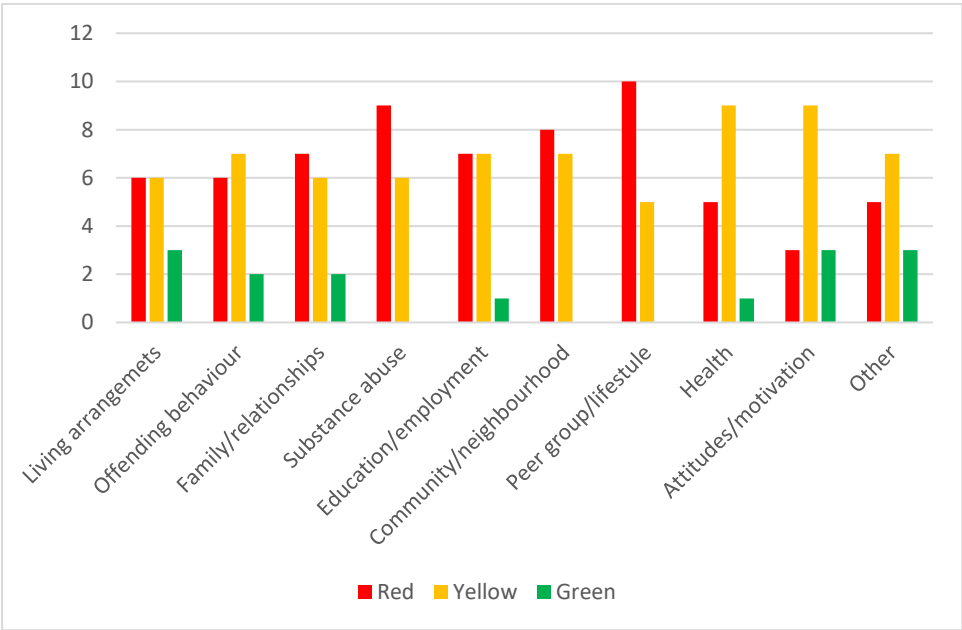


Fig. 15: Programme A: Current risk assessment by category

Other agencies and services in which participants were involved concurrently with Programme A include (in alphabetical order):

- Child and Adult Mental Health Services
- Garda Youth Diversion Projects
- Oberstown Children Detention Centre
- Probation
- Tusla
- Youth justice programmes

- Youth services/clubs

During interviews carried out for this evaluation, participants were asked what other support services/programmes they were engaged in at the time of referral to Programme A. Participants consistently responded that they were not engaged in any. However, programme staff have confirmed that youth services in the area were in a position to support contact with young people following referral and played an important role in their initial engagement in Programme A. Thus, it would seem that while they may not have considered it to be the case, some participants were still engaged in other services at the point of referral to Programme A.

Young people distinguished between services they could access voluntarily including Programme A and services accessed through the courts which they said they had no choice but to take part in and one of which was described as a 'tick box exercise' and 'not about me'.

Some participants described being 'cut' and 'banned' from Garda Youth Diversion projects for 'getting up to stuff' and 'causing trouble' as well as not wanting to attend because the projects were 'useless'.

Outcome 4: Young person has acknowledged their desire to change and is starting to put plans in place.

During interviews conducted for this evaluation, despite a reluctance to take full responsibility for their offending behaviour or recognise the full extent of ongoing challenges around substance abuse, most participants expressed a keen desire for change in their lives. Participants spoke of having 'hope' for the first time as young adults since engaging in Programme A and of their ambition to achieve life goals including qualifying in a trade, working a steady job, 'moving somewhere else' and 'being a good dad'. Participants also spoke of their desire to make more immediate lifestyle changes including most often severing contact with negative peer groups.

Fig. 16 below presents the results of the most recent Traffic Light risk assessment for 15 participants. As compared to the results of the initial assessment (see Fig. 5), Fig. 16 demonstrates that overall risk has diminished for seven participants (A, D, F, I, J, K and N), increased for seven participants (B, E, G, H, L, M and O) and remained unchanged for one (C) at a moderate-to-high level. At the same time, the proportion of participants assessed as high risk in five or more categories has dropped from 60% (9 participants) to 40% (6 participants). Fig. 16 also demonstrates that of the seven participants for whom risk has increased from first to last assessment, it has done so dramatically in the case of one (G), notably for two (B and H) and slightly in the case of four (E, L, M and O).

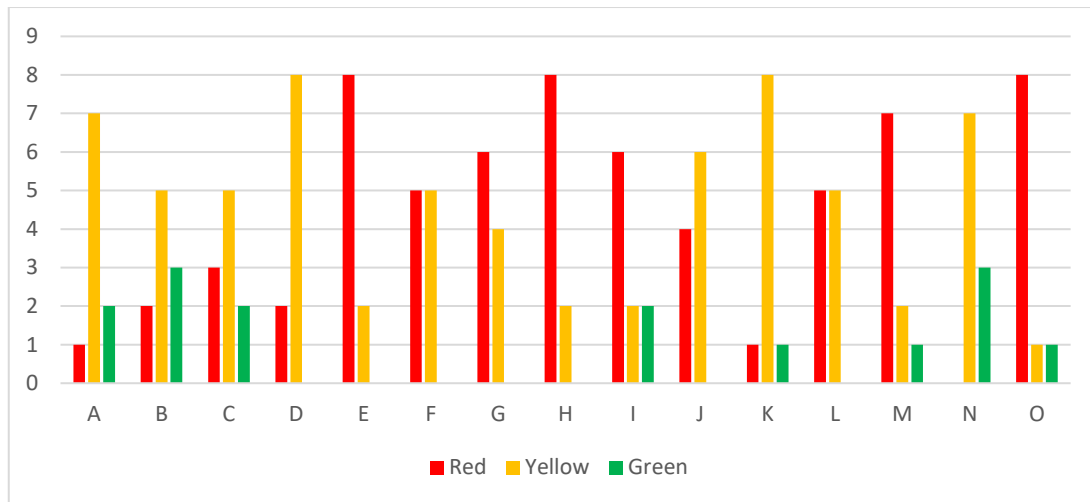


Fig. 16 Programme A: Current risk assessment by participant

During interviews conducted for this evaluation, participants were asked to describe what they were like when they were referred to Programme A, including their hopes for the future and where they believed they were heading in their lives. In response, participants consistently referred to a downward trajectory which was without hope and which they believed would have ended in prison or death but for their involvement with Programme A. The fact that within 18 months, this downward trajectory has been halted or reversed for eight participants (50% of the current group) represents significant progress, particularly since as stated previously a tangible reduction in risk is not anticipated until later in the programme cycle.

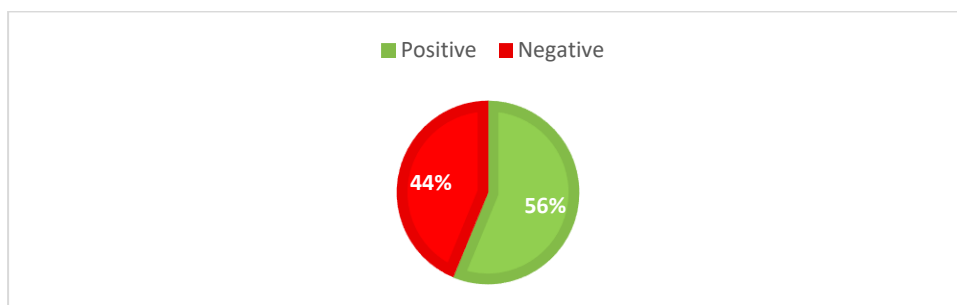


Fig. 17 Programme A: Offending behaviour

Progress has also been noted in the results of the Traffic Light risk assessment for the specific area of offending behaviour. As of April 2019, six participants were assessed as high risk in this area as compared to nine previously. As demonstrated in Fig. 17 below, a positive risk assessment result was noted for nine participants in this area (risk decreased or remained low/moderate from initial to most recent assessment) and a negative outcome for seven (risk increased or remained high). Overall risk diminished in this category from initial to most recent assessment for five participants, increased for one participant and remained unchanged for 10.

Other areas of risk in which a positive Traffic Light risk assessment result was noted for the majority of participants (risk decreased or remained low/moderate from initial to most recent assessment) include attitudes/motivation and education/employment as demonstrated previously. In addition, a positive result for the majority of participants is also noted in the categories of living arrangements (10/16), family/relationships (10/16) and other (10/16). Thus, overall a positive result was noted for the majority of participants in six out of ten categories:

- Attitudes/motivation (10/16)
- Education/employment (13/16)
- Offending behaviour (9/16)
- Living arrangements (10/16)
- Family relationships (10/16)
- Other (10/16)

A negative result (risk increased or remained high from initial to most recent assessment) was noted for the majority of participants in three categories:

- Peer group/lifestyle (9/16);
- Community (9/16);
- Health (11/16).

In the category of substance abuse positive and negative results were noted for an equal number of participants (8/8).

Programme A stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation - including JLOs, legal professionals and youth workers in other programmes - welcomed the development of Programme A as an intervention that specifically targets a-typical offenders unsuitable for the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme. But they were also reluctant to express any firm view as to the impact of the programme, either potential or actual, since at the time of interview most of them had received little or no feedback from Programme A on its progress. In addition, most stakeholders had not been provided with basic information regarding the programme approach and were, as a result, unaware of the fact that the programme is intended as a four year intervention in the lives of young people and that tangible progress was not expected until later in the programme cycle. By contrast, experts in the area of youth justice policy and practice interviewed for this evaluation were aware and supportive of the Programme A approach, including the four year intervention period, although also unable to comment on its progress.

Programme A staff described cooperation with stakeholders as 'good' while at the same time acknowledging the need to keep a distance from stakeholders in or associated with the Gardaí in order to gain the trust of participants who had a very negative view of the Gardaí and any initiative involving them. It was also suggested that given the potentially

high level of participant involvement in organised criminal networks it was necessary to maintain this distance for the safety of both staff and participants.

Conclusion: Stage 4 Contemplation

In line with Objective 3 (To enable participants to access the additional services required to reduce risk, particularly in the areas of substance abuse, employment and education), it is clear that during the first 18 months of the programme, participants have been supported to access a wide variety of services offered by external agencies particularly in the area of substance abuse. While this has not led to a dramatic measurable decrease in risk this is not expected until later in the programme cycle and early signs of significant progress have been noted. These include a clear reduction in risk around offending behaviour for five participants; a clear reduction in overall risk for seven participants and the prevention of further escalation in risk for two participants. Most participants interviewed for this evaluation also credited their involvement with Programme A for keeping them alive and/or out of prison.

In line with Outcome 4 (Young person has acknowledged their desire to change and is starting to put plans in place), participants have expressed their desire for change and their nascent hope for a future free of involvement in the criminal justice system.

The introduction of specific indicators and benchmarks around these objectives and outcomes as well as an agreed methodology for tracking the relevant data would allow further analysis of the extent to which participants are actively planning for change.

5. Programme A: Cost Effectiveness

Year	DoJE funding
2017	€72,000
2018	€108,000
2019	€108,000

A full cost/benefit analysis that incorporates social return on investment is beyond the scope of this evaluation. The analysis below is indicative only.

According to figures obtained from the Department of Justice and Equality, Programme A was launched in August 2017 with an initial grant of €72,000. An annual grant of €108,000 was received in 2018 and in 2019.

During the period August 2017 - August 2019, Programme A also received a total of €48,000 in one-off funding from other non-state donors to cover the shortfall between the Department of Justice and Equality grant and the cost of service delivery. This funding has now come to an end.

With a total annual budget of €132,000, delivery of Programme A at its current level for one year costs approximately €8,250 for each of 16 participants. This figure incorporates all Programme A costs including management, administration and overheads as well as the cost of working with unsuccessful targets (2 of) participants who transitioned away from the programme (2 of) and participants who formally disengaged (1 of).

The total cost per participant for one year is therefore equivalent to approximately eight days in Oberstown Children Detention Campus (the daily cost for a single place during 2018 was €1,039). The total cost per participant per month is €687, of which €562 has been funded by the Department of Justice and Equality to date.³⁶

Assuming an average of 4 years engagement in the programme, the total cost for each of 16 participants over the lifetime of the programme is €33,000. Over 4 years this is equivalent to approximately 32 days in Oberstown Children Detention Campus for each of 16 participants.

³⁶ An increase in annual funding of €15,000 was approved by the Department of Justice and Equality in August 2019.

Programme A is a one-of-a-kind pilot and there is currently no comparable programme that provides a service for a-typical youth offenders of similar intensity and duration with which to make a direct comparison of cost.

There are similarities between Programme A and Programme B, in particular the targeting of a-typical youth offenders with an intensive individualised service. However, Programme B is intended as a much shorter intervention in the lives of young people than Programme A, with an average engagement period of nine months reflective of the lower level of risk, need and offending within the participant group as well as the prioritising of participants for referral to Programme B that demonstrate a motivation to change from the outset.

In addition, there are differences between the intensity of engagement with participants in each programme. Programme A aims to deliver between one and six contact hours per week every week with each participant depending on the stage of the intervention model at which they are located (i.e. between one and four contacts per week lasting an estimated one/one and a half hours each). By comparison, Programme B aims to deliver an average of just under five contact hours with each participant each week throughout the period of their engagement (15 participants/3 full time youth workers delivering a total of 24 contact hours each).

Programme B is substantially better resourced than Programme A. Programme B was launched in August 2015 with a grant of €135,000. Thereafter Programme B has received an annual grant of €210,000 from the Department of Justice and Equality. Programme B does not receive funding from any other source. Assuming an average monthly caseload of 14 participants, the average cost of Programme B service delivery per participant per month is €1,250 as compared to €687 for Programme A.

Since its launch in August 2015 up to April 2019, Programme B has provided support to 43 young people, two of whom were repeat referrals (45 cases). The average cost of the Programme B intervention for every case worked is thus €18,167 [$€210,000 \times 3 + €135,000 + €52,500$ (Q1 2019)/45] as compared to €33,000 for Programme A.

In terms of return on investment, during the period August 2017 to April 2019 (19 months) risk was stabilised or reduced for 50% of current Programme A participants as demonstrated by the results of the Traffic Light assessment. To achieve this result, a total investment of €208,848 was required ($€687 \times 19 \text{ months} \times 16 \text{ participants}$) or an average of €13,053 for each of 16 participants. This figure is significantly below the €18,167 average investment required per participant to achieve similar results from Programme B (52% reduction in risk demonstrated by the results of the YLS/CMI 2.0).

There are also some similarities between Programme A and the Bail Supervision Scheme which is currently being piloted in Dublin in so far as both programmes target young people deemed unsuitable for the mainstream diversion programme due to the frequency and seriousness of their offending. The average intervention period for the Bail Supervision Scheme is between five and seven months and the average cost per intervention is €18,500.

The Programme A approach is reasonable in light of the high risk profile of the target group and funding should be continued to allow the production of tangible results in line with the programme model.

6. Programme A: Conclusions

Target group

Programme A targets young people who are no longer suitable for or refusing to engage in the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme and who are involved in the criminal justice system at a serious level due to the nature and/or frequency of their offending.

12 of the 16 current Programme A participants (75%) are:

- repeat offenders (4+ charges);
- are involved disproportionately in certain types of crime not typical of youth offending (including possession with intent to sell, assault causing harm, burglary, dangerous driving and possession of a dangerous weapon);
- or both.

In addition, the young men engaged in Programme A face a multitude of complex underlying challenges in their lives. As demonstrated by the results of the first Traffic Light risk assessment, 60% of participants were assessed as at the highest level of risk in five or more of the 10 available categories on first assessment. Eight participants were assessed as low risk in only one category and a further four were not assessed as low risk in any category. No participant was assessed as low risk in more than three categories.

Although Programme A does not deliberately target young people involved in organised criminal activity, an initial assessment carried out for this evaluation suggests that 12 of the 16 young people who are currently part of Programme A may be involved in organised criminal networks (75%).

Programme model

The short, medium and long term objectives of Programme A set out in the programme model, intervention framework and other programme documentation support the realisation of youth diversion policy, which is committed to the use of detention as a last resort and which recognises the need to address a-typical youth offending with targeted interventions as discussed in section 2.

The Programme A model and intervention framework are implicitly underpinned by a causal chain that conceives of high criminogenic risk and need coupled with lack of access to individualised support and specialist services for young people in this position as the root cause of a-typical youth offending. Once engaged in a-typical youth offending, risk and need increase leading to further offending, thereby binding young offenders into a self-perpetuating cycle that often leads them into conflict with the law as adults.

The basic logic of Programme A is that it is possible to break this cycle by introducing a targeted, long-term intervention that can reduce risk, need and consequently offending by:

- 1 Building trusting relationships with young people who are no longer suitable for diversion, who are continuing to offend and who will not simply grow out of crime;
- 2 Providing these participants with a support base from which to make the changes necessary in their lives and access any additional services they need (in particular those around substance abuse, employment and education).

Programme A is based on the assumption that participants have agency and that with the right support they can engage in pro-social behaviours without facing serious negative consequences. Programme A is also based on the assumption that the additional services required by vulnerable young people taking part in the programme are available and can be accessed with the support of 'one good adult' (i.e. Programme A youth worker) when participants are ready to engage with these services.

Programme performance

The Programme A model and intervention framework is largely based on the Roca model which has been implemented successfully in another jurisdiction. However, as yet a fully developed monitoring and evaluation framework that specifies indicators and benchmarks for all objectives and outcomes has not been established by Programme A and as a result in some cases the data necessary to measure progress in relation to these has not been gathered systematically.

On the basis of all the information available to the evaluator, Table 3. below provides an overview of Programme A performance in relation to the objectives and outcomes identified for the programme. The colour green is used to indicate the achievement of an objective or delivery of an outcome, the colour orange is used to indicate progress towards the achievement of an objective or delivery of an outcome and the colour red indicates little or no progress. Performance regarding the later stages of the programme (30+ months) has not been evaluated and these are marked in grey.

Given the number of services involved in the lives of participants as described in section 4.3, in each case where progress is noted Programme A is conceived of as part of a causal package that has rendered the result in question rather than as a sufficient condition for its achievement.

18 months into a four year programme cycle, Programme A is part of a causal package that has in the case of 8 individuals or 50% of the current participant group, either halted or reversed the downward trajectory of their lives which they described as being without

hope when referred and, in the absence of the programme, certain to end in either prison or death.

Programme A has achieved its objective for stage 1 and 2 of the intervention framework and delivered on the two related outcomes. Programme A has made progress towards the achievement and delivery of all objectives in stage 3 and 4 of the intervention framework. One associated outcome has been delivered and progress has been made in relation to the delivery of the second associated outcome.

Table 3. Programme A: Performance

Stage	Objective	Outcome	Month
1 Determine suitability	1. Engage 20 participants	1. Relationship between young person and keyworker is growing.	1-2
2 Building Trust		2. Young person is responding to engagement and developing a conscious understanding of programme purpose.	2-6
3 Engagement/ Personal growth	2. To enable participants to act on positive options identified by key workers.	3. Young person is willing to acknowledge issues and engage in new activities.	6-24
4 Contemplation	3. To enable participants to access the additional services they required to reduce risk, particularly in the areas of substance abuse, employment and education.	4. Young person has acknowledged their desire to change and is starting to put plans in place.	18-30
5 Lifestyle change	4. To reduce risk particularly in the areas of substance abuse, education and employment;	5. Young person is making more positive lifestyle choices.	30-42
6 Sustaining change	5. To reduce the level of offending among the target group; to reduce youth offending in the district; 6. To reduce the numbers of young offenders committed to a period of detention	6. Young person takes full personal responsibility for their actions and decisions on an on-going basis.	36-48

The results of the Traffic Light risk assessment also demonstrate a positive result (risk diminished or remained low/moderate) for the majority of participants in six out of ten categories:

- Attitudes/motivation (10/16)
- Education/employment (13/16)
- Offending behaviour (9/16)
- Living arrangements (10/16)
- Family relationships (10/16)

- Trauma (10/16)

A negative result (risk increased or remained high from initial to most recent assessment) was noted for the majority of participants in four categories:

- Substance abuse (9/16);
- Peer group/lifestyle (9/16);
- Community (9/16);
- Health (11/16).

In addition, the results of the Traffic Light risk assessment also demonstrate that:

- Overall risk has diminished for seven participants since engaging in the programme, it has increased for seven participants and remained unchanged for one participant.
- Of the seven participants for whom risk has increased from first to last assessment, it has done so dramatically in the case of one, notably in the case of two and slightly in the case of four.
- Substance abuse and peer group/lifestyle remain two distinct areas of acute risk for the majority of participants as was the case following the first assessment.

During interviews conducted for this evaluation, although reluctant to discuss their offending, participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the fact that they were offending at a serious level and that their referral to Programme A was a direct result of this. Participants also expressed a clear desire for change in their lives although for most the changes desired are yet to be realised, particularly in the areas of substance abuse and peer group/lifestyle.

These results are in line with the transtheoretical model of change which demonstrates that awareness of a problem precedes commitment to action. They are also in line with the programme model which does not anticipate a tangible decrease in overall risk until stage 5 Lifestyle change (months 30-42).

7. Recommendations

Funding

Programme A is performing in line with expectations and represents value for money in terms of the intensity and duration of the service offered to participants. It is therefore recommended that funding for the programme is extended for a further four years in order to allow completion of the current four year programme cycle and a full assessment of end results at the midway point in the second cycle. It is also recommended that annual funding is increased to a minimum of €136,265 in line with the 2019 grant application in order to allow continuation of service delivery at current levels in the absence of supplementary funding from other non-state sources.

It is not recommended that the programme approach is extended to other areas until the four year pilot has been completed and evaluated. If the decision is taken to extend the programme to other areas following a positive four-year evaluation, it is recommended that this should be done on a case-by-case basis in partnership with existing youth services. Care should also be taken to ensure that as far as possible, the service providers selected are seen as independent of the Gardaí. It is therefore suggested that extension through the current network of GYDP service providers should only be considered in areas where the numbers of potential participants are small and there are no viable alternatives to GYDP provision. Any future extension/replication of Programme A will also require a detailed analysis of the local context in each case both in terms of need and the availability of supporting services. In carrying out such analysis, particular attention should also be paid to the possibility of target group involvement in organised criminal networks.

Organised criminal networks

The transtheoretical model of change which underpins the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme is predicated on the assumption that the young people targeted have agency – that they have the capacity to direct their own actions – and that acting pro-socially will have no serious negative consequences for them. However, existing research demonstrates that once engaged in a criminal network, while factors such as reverence towards network patrons, the acquisition of social capital by association and access to money and drugs act as important ‘pull factors’ enabling the retention of young contractors, ‘darker push dynamics’ are equally at play, for example debt and other obligations as well as fear of ubiquitous surveillance and retribution.

Given the impact that involvement in organised criminal networks may have on the agency of participants it is suggested that assessment of the extent to which participants are so involved should be kept under close scrutiny internally, particularly since this may impact negatively on the achievement of programme objectives and require an adjustment to the programme model and approach.

Additional services

Programme A participants face a wide variety of extremely complex challenges in their lives. The full range of supports they require to address these challenges cannot be provided by one service and this has been recognised in the programme model which sees keyworkers acting as a conduit for participants to access the other services they need. However, the extent to which these services are available locally and can in fact be accessed when participants are ready was not the subject of any formal analysis conducted by the programme either at the point of launch or during development of the programme model. Systematic mapping of participants' needs as well the services available to meet these is therefore suggested. Any significant gaps should be identified since these will impact on the ability of the programme to achieve its objectives. The programme model and approach should be adjusted accordingly if and as necessary.

Given the prevalence of substance abuse as an area of acute risk for most participants it is also suggested that the in-house provision of youth drug and alcohol treatment is considered subject to the availability of additional funding.

Monitoring and evaluation

In order to ensure thorough monitoring and evaluation of Programme A on an ongoing basis, first and foremost it is necessary to agree specific indicators and benchmarks around all programme objectives and outcomes and to systematically gather the data needed to track progress in relation to these.

In addition, it is also suggested that the introduction of a self-assessment tool that would enable participants to review and comment on their own progress may be beneficial for measuring the effectiveness of the programme in enabling participants make positive changes in their own lives.

Finally, it is suggested that the Traffic Light system is reviewed to enable the award of an overall score or result for each participant following each assessment (similar to the YLS 2.0). This would facilitate ongoing use of the data generated to indicate the progress of the programme in meeting its objectives overall.

Enhanced communication with stakeholders

Communication with stakeholders has not been managed successfully to date. The programme is reliant on stakeholders for referrals and a positive relationship with stakeholders is therefore beneficial to all concerned. In order to develop this, it is suggested that care is taken to ensure that, at a minimum, stakeholders are fully aware of the programme approach, how overall progress will be monitored, to whom it will be reported and what to expect in terms of the delivery of results at each stage. The aim is to enable stakeholders to formulate a more accurate understanding of the programme, its objectives and achievements without sharing personal information in relation to individual participants.

Programme B

8. Programme B: Description

8.1 Overview

Programme B was launched in 2015 to provide individually tailored support to young people at risk of escalating their offending/anti-social behaviour.

Programme B can accept referrals of young people aged 12-17 years that are prioritised by Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLOs) in the urban area in which it is based. The programme can also accept referrals prioritised by the Young People's Probation Service of persons aged up to 23 years from the same urban area, surrounding county and one neighbouring county. All referrals should meet the following three criteria:

- A. They should be assessed by the JLO's as demonstrating high levels of need or risk of progressing through the justice system (an indicator is they are scoring high or very high in their YLS/CMI 2.0 and/or scoring high in 4 of the 8 primary needs);
and
They should have been referred to a Garda Youth Diversion Project (GYDP) project but are not engaging or engaging poorly and continuing to offend or adversely come to the attention of the Gardaí;
or
- B They should be identified by Probation Officers/JLO's as requiring immediate community support to reduce potential for re-offending or requiring support in re-integrating following a period of detention.

In addition to these criteria, all referrals are also guided by the practice wisdom of referring agents.

Programme B content is based on meeting specific individual needs through the development of pro-social behaviours, resiliency and positive community interactions using a combination of interventions including:

- Individual work;
- Activities;
- Special interest opportunities;
- Family focused work;
- Residential Overnights;
- Group work.

Programme B maintains a close and cooperative relationship with referring agents. Detailed written information about participants' progress is provided to referring agents at allocation meetings that take place every six weeks. This informs case management and enhances programme oversight by allowing for the involvement of the referring agency in the review

process. The information presented is also used by referring agencies to inform the manner in which each case is progressed within the justice system.

Maintaining a good working relationship with other services involved in the lives of participants - such as those in the areas of education and health - as well as with the families of participants is also key to the programme approach.

The programme was launched with capacity to deliver service to 12 participants at any one time. In 2017, following an internal review of service delivery the caseload was increased to 15.

Since its launch in August 2015, the programme has worked 45 cases involving 43 individuals (two individuals were repeat referrals). The length of time participants engage in the programme ranges from three to thirty three months with an average engagement period of nine months. Consent is required for participation on the programme and this must be obtained from parents/primary caregivers for all participants under the age of 18.

Since 2015, the programme has closed a total of 32 cases (see Fig. 18 below). According to programme staff, of these, 12 cases (38%) were positive closures including:

- Six cases (19%) that were closed due to successful completion of the programme;
- Two cases that were closed due to achievement of personal objectives;
- Three cases that were closed due to completion of a probation order;
- One case that was closed because the participant in question went into residential care in another county.

According to programme staff, 20 cases (62%) were negative closures including:

- 10 cases (31%) that were closed due to low attendance/non-engagement;
- Seven cases (22%) that were closed because participants lacked motivation to change;
- Three cases that were closed for a variety of other negative reasons (left the jurisdiction to avoid sentencing; participant in question was sentenced to a period of detention; participant in question formally disengaged from the programme).

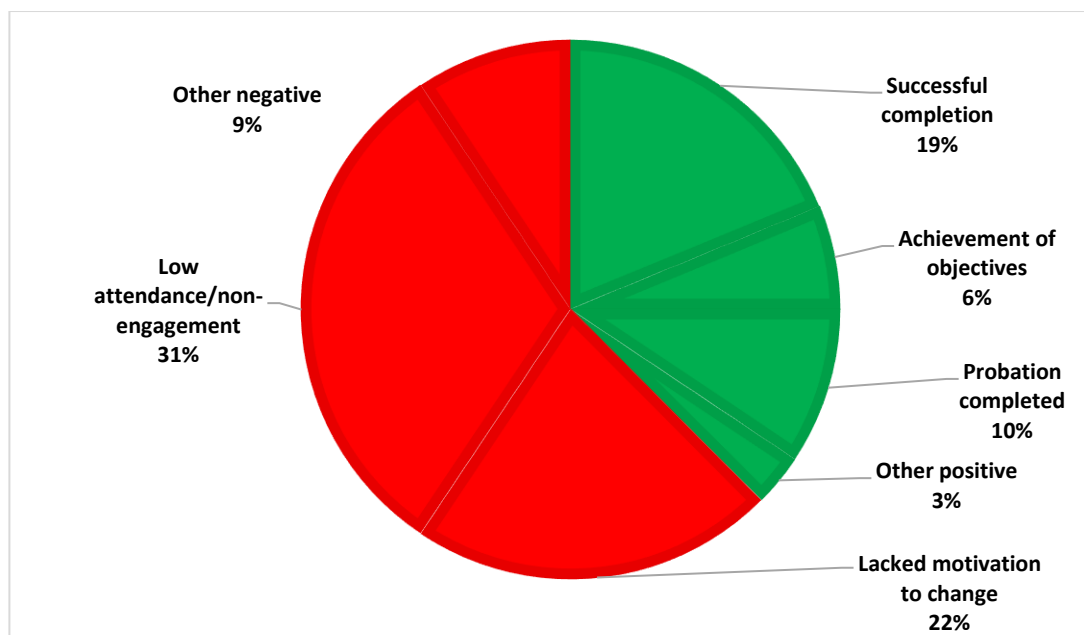


Fig. 18 Programme B: Reasons for case closure

The programme employs three full time project workers and is overseen by a part time project coordinator.

8.2 Target Group

Profile

Allocation meetings take place every 6 weeks and are attended by the programme coordinator, JLO Sergeant and Senior Young Peoples Probation Officer.

A total of 30 of the 43 young people who have engaged in the programme were referred through the Garda Youth Diversion Programme and the remaining 15 were referred by Young People's Probation. The majority of referrals are from the urban area in which the programme is based (33), five from the surrounding county and seven from a neighbouring county.

The average age of participants at the point of referral is 15 years. There were 37 male participants and six female. Seven participants were from the traveller community. All participants were of Irish nationality.

Offending behaviour within the participant group is mixed. In 21 cases (47%), the individuals referred were court involved either at the point of referral to the programme or during their engagement on the programme. In 53% of cases, the individuals referred were involved in the criminal justice system at a less serious level and were not before the courts either prior to or during engagement on the programme.

37 participants (86%) are known to have accrued four or more JLO cautions (including formal and informal cautions). 18 of these are repeat offenders (42%) and have accrued four or more charges for criminal offenses. Of these 18 participants all but one have accrued charges for crime types a-typical of youth offending including burglary, robbery, assault, possession of a weapon, possession of drugs for sale or supply, dangerous driving and arson (40% of the entire participant group).

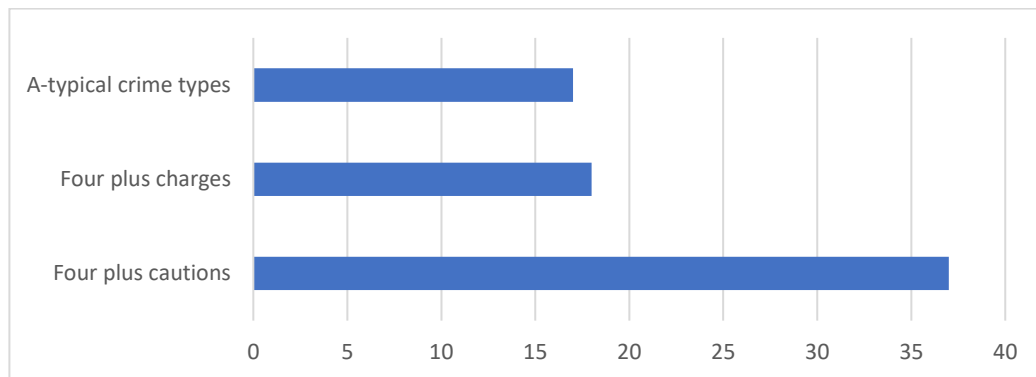


Fig. 19 Programme B: Number and nature of offenses

A variety of tools have been used by Programme B to assess criminogenic risk and need within the participant group and to measure impact and over time. These include:

- The Outcomes Based Accountability framework and the accompanying Criminogenic Questionnaire;
- The Outcomes star (Teen Star and Justice Star);
- YLS/CMI 2.0.

Outcomes Based Accountability is a planning process developed by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) in Northern Ireland. In 2015, the development of an Outcomes Based Accountability framework to measure the impact of Programme B was commenced in cooperation with the NCB. However in late 2017, after a substantial trial period during which it became apparent that the Outcomes Based Accountability process was not suitable for use by Programme B due to the small number of programme participants involved, the decision was taken not to pursue the development of the framework any further. At the same time, use of the accompanying Criminogenic Questionnaire, which was developed internally by programme staff, was also abandoned as a tool with which to measure programme impact although it remains in use as a case management tool. Following on from these developments, in early 2019 a further decision was taken to supplement the continued use of the YLS/CMI 2.0 with the Outcomes Star (specifically Teen Star for under 18s and Justice Star for over 18s), which the Programme B service provider has found to be useful in measuring progress elsewhere. However, this decision has only recently been operationalised and it was not therefore possible to include data generated by the Outcomes Star in this evaluation.

The tool that has been used most consistently since the programme launched in 2015 is therefore the YLS/CMI 2.0. However, its application has not been without difficulties. In particular, project staff have questioned the accuracy of the assessment in the following categories for the following reasons:

- Offending behaviour – The YLS presents data regarding convictions, detention, probation and failures to comply for those who have been processed through the courts. It does not reflect pre-court indicators of risk such as the nature and/or number of cautions and charges accrued with the result that participants who have accrued multiple cautions and/or charges and are at serious risk of progressing through the criminal justice system by the time they are referred to Programme B appear in the assessment as low-risk overall. In addition, while the YLS includes prior probation as a factor in assessing risk it does not include current probation (35% of participants) and it is not suitable as a tool for assessing criminogenic risk in participants over the age of 18 (13% of participants).
- Education – The YLS assesses behaviour and performance in an educational setting as well as levels of attendance. But the assessment does not include exclusion from education due to expulsion or drop out as a specific risk factor (28% of participants) nor does it allow for the difficulties this presents in assessing classroom behaviour with the result that participants who have been excluded from education for long periods prior to referral can appear low risk in this category.
- Substance abuse – Participants are often slow to disclose the full extent of their drug use to project workers with the result that risk in this category may be underestimated at first and appear to increase over time as disclosure occurs.

From a total of 45 cases, an initial YLS/CMI 2.0 assessment has been completed for 34 cases including 19 closed cases and 15 open cases. No assessment was completed for 11 cases for the following reasons:

- Over 18 (YLS.CMI 2.0 is not a valid assessment tool for adults);
- New referral, assessment not yet completed;
- Did not engage long enough/consistently enough to be assessed;
- Invalid result due to human error (one case).

The available data demonstrates that out of 34 cases, three were assessed as overall low risk/need on initial assessment (approximately six weeks post engagement), 19 were assessed as moderate risk, 12 were assessed as high risk and none was assessed as very high risk (Fig. 20).

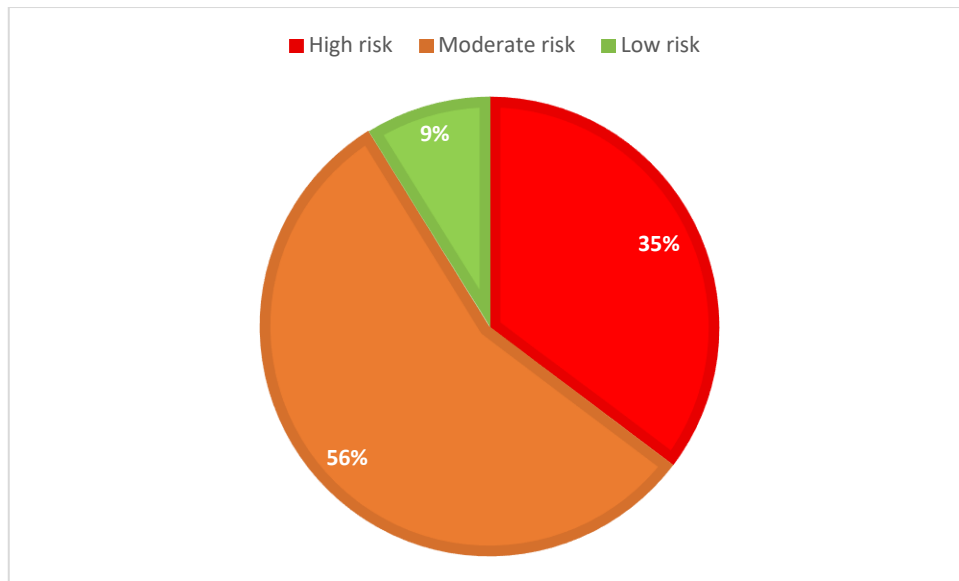


Fig. 20 Programme B: Initial risk assessment (34 participants)

Of the 22 cases assessed initially as at a low or moderate level of overall risk/need:

- Two were assessed as high risk/need in three categories,
- Nine were assessed as high risk/need in two categories,
- Eight were assessed as high risk/need in one category
- Three were not assessed as high risk/need in any category.

This indicates that due to the recognised shortcomings of the YLS, referrals are informed to a large extent by the practice wisdom of referring agents as opposed to strict adherence to the indicators of high risk/need suggested in the referral criteria (i.e. scoring high or very high in the YLS/CMI 2.0 and/or scoring high in 4 of the 8 primary needs).

During interviews conducted for this evaluation, the presence of certain factors that indicate risk of escalation through the criminal justice system – rather than prior involvement in the criminal justice system at a serious level – emerged as the primary reason for referral to the programme. The factors to which referring agents said they paid particular attention were failure to engage with the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme, exclusion from of education, negative peer groups, mental illness, family criminality and homelessness. Ongoing substance abuse was also seen as significant, although difficult for referring agents to assess with any accuracy.

In addition to these factors, referring agents also confirmed that, since places on Programme B are limited, young people within this high risk category who demonstrated motivation to change are prioritised over those who do not.

If a young person is actively offending and showing no motivation to change I won't refer them no - they will be processed through the courts. I guard my places on the programme for those who demonstrate a willness to make changes. The programme is not here just so young people have someone to talk to and drive them to their appointments. Programme B stakeholder interview.

If substance abuse plays a major role in a young person's offending for example, I would need to see some evidence that they are motivated to address this before making a referral. Willingness to engage with substance misuse treatment in the community would be one indicator of this. Programme B stakeholder interview.

Prioritisation of young people for referral who demonstrate some degree of motivation to change prior to engagement is in line with the programme approach which allows a relatively short targeting period (average of eight to ten weeks after which targeting will cease in the absence of engagement). It is also in line with the overall timeframe for the intervention (average of nine months for each participant).

*I'm not going to give a place to a young person who is still telling me to F*** off at the door. They are not ready to engage. I'll give the place to someone who will use it. Programme B stakeholder interview.*

Risk and need

The complexity of the welfare needs within the target group is reflected in Fig. 21 below, which demonstrates that 27 participants (63%) have a history of involvement with Tusla. The prevalence of mental illness among participants and their families is also striking. 24 out of a total of 43 participants have a diagnosed mental illness (56%) and 22 have been involved in CAMHS (51%). 30 participants also have a parent with mental illness (70%). In addition to mental illness, the high incidence of family criminality is also notable (70%).

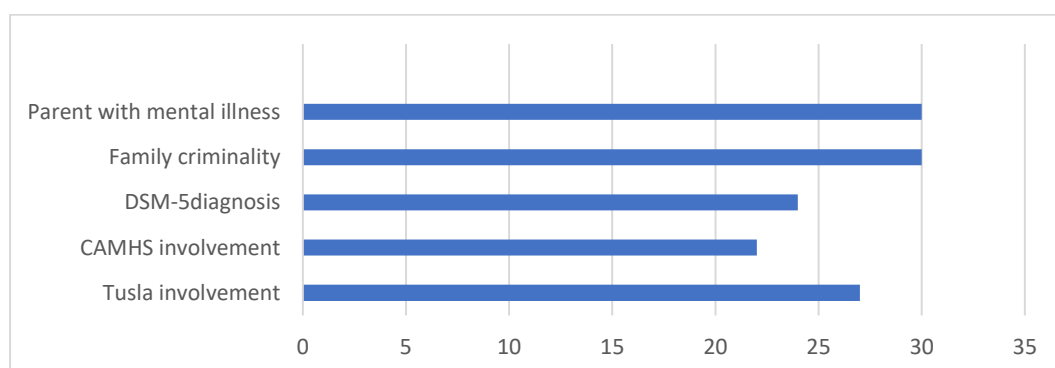


Fig. 21 Programme B: Risk and need

As demonstrated in Fig. 22 below, the initial YLS/CMI 2.0 risk assessment made available to the evaluator for 34 of the 45 cases worked also identifies leisure/recreation as an area of acute risk/need for in majority of cases (88%) followed by peer relations (53%). In addition, the areas of personality/behaviour (32%) and education/employment (32%) also stand out as high risk in a significant portion of cases as does that of substance abuse (24%).

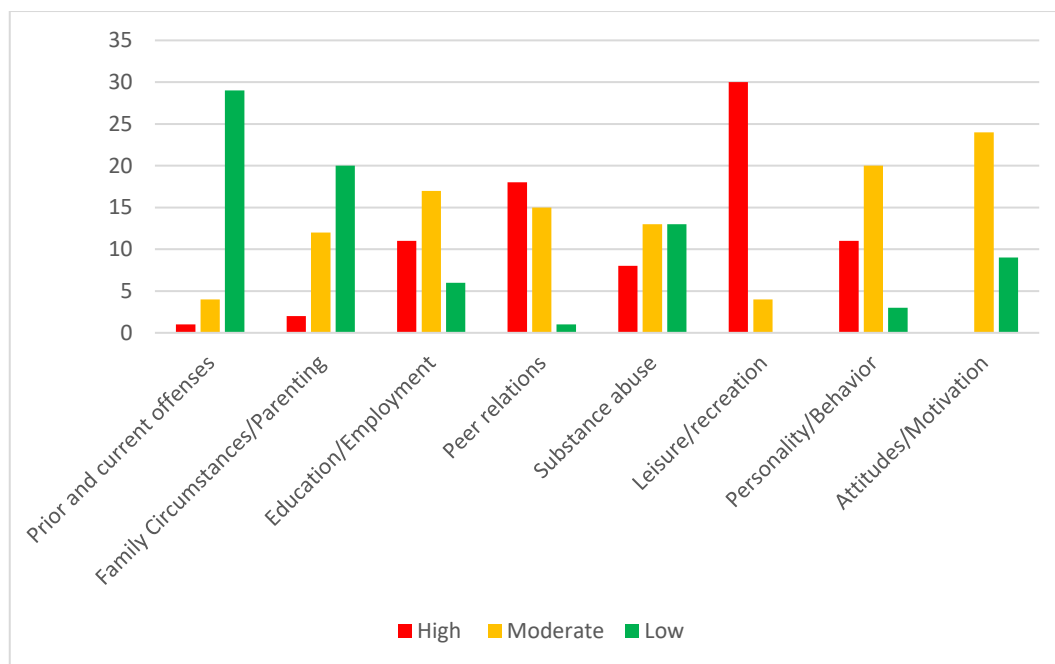


Fig. 22 Programme B: Initial assessment by category

The categories of peer relations and leisure/recreation are recognised by programme participants, staff and stakeholders as areas of high risk for the majority of the target group. As highlighted previously, programme staff and stakeholders have also suggested that risk in the area of offending behaviour is underestimated in the YLS results particularly since the assessment does not reflect pre-court indicators of risk (86% of participants have accrued four or more cautions, 42% have accrued four or more charges and 40% have accrued charges in relation to a-typical crime types). It is also possible that risk in the area of substance abuse may be higher than indicated by the initial YLS although no data has been presented to demonstrate this. In addition, programme staff have suggested that risk in the area of education may be higher than reflected in the initial YLS due to the difficulties involved in assessing risk for participants excluded from education/training. Data presented by programme staff demonstrates that from a total of 32 closed cases, nine participants (28%) were excluded from education on referral due to expulsion or drop-out.

It is important to note that despite the prevalence of family criminality and mental illness within the target group and the consideration given to these issues in referring cases as well as in designing and planning individual interventions, these issues are not reflected in the risk assessment results since they are not included in Part I of the YLS/CMI 2.0 on which the assessment is based. Other common characteristics of Programme B participants referred to during interviews with programme participants, staff and stakeholders but not reflected in Fig. 21 and Fig. 22 above include experiences of homelessness as well as developmental and/or learning difficulties. Data presented by programme staff indicate that 11 out of a total of 43 programme participants (26%) have experienced homelessness. No data has been presented in relation to developmental/learning difficulties.

During the course of this evaluation, programme staff also stated that they had reason to suspect that 10 out of the 43 programme participants (23%) may be involved in organised criminal networks on some level. However, it is not possible to conclude with any confidence that involvement in organised criminal networks is a significant feature of the target group on this basis only and it is acknowledged by staff that further consideration must be given to whether or not the gangs in question can be considered organised criminal networks and that further research to establish the extent to which the indicators for involvement in organised criminal networks are reflected in the target group would be valuable.

8.3 Programme B Model

Objectives and Outcomes

The Programme B model piloted in 2015 closely mirrors that of a pre-existing social care programme offered by the same service provider, which works intensively on a one-to-one basis with young people aged 10-17 years who are living in the community or within the care system and whose behaviour is challenging, posing a risk to themselves and others. The purpose of the 2015 pilot was to extend the reach of this programme by providing a dedicated service to high risk young people referred through the Garda Youth Diversion Programme and Young People's Probation.

Programme B provides individually tailored support to young people at risk of reception into custody or at risk of escalating their offending/anti-social behaviours. As such, the aims of the programme support the realisation of youth diversion policy, which is committed to the use of detention as a last resort.

The objectives of Programme B as stated in the programme documentation reflect those of the pre-existing programme on which it was based. These are to:

- Strengthen family relationships and support them to remain together;
- Assist young people to develop problem solving skills;
- Assist young people to develop social and life skills including positive peer interaction and positive community engagement;
- Support young people to maximise their educational and vocational opportunities.

Because Programme B is closely modelled on a pre-existing programme located outside the justice sector, reducing the offending behaviour of young people is not stated as a core objective of Programme B. Rather it is described as one of seven long-term programme outcomes.

Programme B Outcomes

Short Term /Medium Term Outcomes:

- Young people staying in education and going onto further education/employment;
- Improved pro social behaviour;
- Young people develop empathy and awareness of the impact of their behaviour;
- Young people develop positive, healthy peer relationships;
- Young people develop awareness of negative impact of substance misuse.

Long Term Outcomes:

- Reduced offending and safer communities;
- Improved empathy amongst young people in the community;
- Reduced impulsivity;
- Improved relations between young people and Gardaí;
- Improved family dynamics;
- A more coordinated, individual and interagency planning and community action response for young people;
- Young people reduce or abstain from substance misuse.

According to Programme B staff, it was envisaged from the outset that during the course of the pilot programme the way in which the objectives and outcomes of the programme were framed could be further refined as learning evolved and that, in particular, key performance indicators specific to Programme B as a youth justice intervention would be developed. However, while a considerable amount of work has gone into various attempts to develop tools to measure overall programme performance - including the Outcomes Based Accountability framework and the accompanying internal Criminogenic Questionnaire - the objectives, outcomes and key performance indicators for the programme have never been revisited and remain as stated in 2015.

Key Performance Indicators

The key performance indicators for the programme are:

- **80%** of young people remaining in their **current living arrangements** at the end of their programme;
- **80%** of young people sustained in **education/vocational training** or returned to education or vocational training;
- **Minimum 24 hours direct contact per week** by each Full Time Project Worker;
- **Minimum one home visit per month** for each carer/parent;
- **Provision of four month review** process for each young person.

The first two KPIs relate to the stated objectives and outcomes of the programme, the final three relate to the level of service delivery.

Existing research demonstrates that providing optimal 'intervention dosage' can be as critical to the success of youth justice programming as matching services to individually assessed

criminogenic risk/need.³⁷ The aim of providing intervention dosage at the optimal level is not stated explicitly as a programme objective however, it is understood as such given the inclusion of three separate KPI's intended to track the level of service delivery. The aim of delivering intervention dosage at the optimal level is therefore added as a supplementary objective to Table 4 below, which sets out the relationship between all Programme B objectives, outcomes and key performance indicators.

As is evident from this table:

- No short term outcomes have been identified in relation to Core Objective 1 (Strengthen family relationships and support them to remain together);
- No KPIs have been developed for Core Objective 2 and Core Objective 3 (Assist young people to develop problem solving skills; Assist young people to develop social and life skills including positive peer interaction and positive community engagement);
- The KPI associated with Core Objective 1 conceives of maintenance of the status quo as an indicator of progress;
- No long term outcomes have been identified in relation to Core Objective 4 (Support young people to maximise their educational and vocational opportunities);
- Reduced offending is not specified as an explicit objective of the programme with associated outcomes and KPIs despite its position as a youth justice initiative;
- Despite the prevalence of mental illness within the participant group none of the programme objectives, outcomes or KPIs address this specifically.

These gaps are recognised by programme management and it is intended that the work needed to address them will get underway following completion of this evaluation, which has required a great deal of input from programme management and staff.

³⁷ M Baglivio et al (2013) 'The search for the holy grail: Criminogenic needs matching, intervention dosage, and subsequent recidivism among serious juvenile offenders in residential placement.' *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol 55, pp. 46-57

Table 4: Programme B: Objectives, outcomes and Key Performance Indicators

Core objectives	Short term outcomes	Long term outcomes	KPIs
1. Strengthen family relationships and support them to remain together.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved family dynamics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of young people remaining in their current living arrangements at the end of their programme.
2. Assist young people to develop problem solving skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved pro social behaviour. Young people develop awareness of impact of their behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved empathy amongst young people in the community; Reduced impulsivity. 	
3. Assist young people to develop social and life skills including positive peer interaction and positive community engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people develop positive healthy peer relationships; Young people develop awareness of negative impact of substance misuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved relations between young people and Gardaí; A more coordinated, individual and interagency planning and community response for young people. Young people abstain from substance misuse. Reduced offending and safer communities. 	
4. Support young people to maximise their educational and vocational opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people staying in education and going onto further education/employment. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of young people sustained in education/ vocational training or returned to education/vocational training.
Supplementary objective			KPIs
1. Deliver intervention dosage at the optimal level.	N.A.	N.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 24 hours direct contact per week by each Full Time Project Worker; Minimum one home visit per month for each carer/parent. Provision of four month review process for each young person.

Working methods

The content of Programme B is based on meeting specific individual needs through the development of pro-social behaviours, resiliency and positive community interactions using a combination of the following interventions:

- Individual work (needs led, up to three times per week);
- Activities and special interest opportunities that offer a choice of physical, educational/ vocational, cultural and social activities;
- Family focussed work;
- Planned day trips;
- Residential overnights (planned and responsive);
- Group work.

The programme model allows a targeting period of approximately eight-ten weeks before the commencement of more intense work planned in partnership with participants and recorded in a written 'contract'. Thereafter, an attendance target is set for participants at 80% of sessions offered.

The following factors are central the programme approach:

- Close cooperation with referring agents including detailed written reporting on participants' progress;
- Strong and trusting relationships with participants and families;
- Individualised need-to-service matching;
- The delivery of intensive one-to-one support;
- Active engagement with other services.

As such, the programme draws on a number of theoretical frameworks including risk-need-responsivity, social ecology and the transtheoretical model of change.³⁸ The programme is also based on the concept of the 'interventive relationship', which is defined as a focused creative relationship involving a range of skilled interventions aimed at supporting a process of change.

While participation in Programme B requires consent, unlike the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme it does not also require young people to take responsibility for their offending behaviour, to agree to be cautioned or to agree to supervision - thereby lifting

³⁸ D Andrews and J Bonta (2010) 'The psychology of criminal conduct' 5th ed, New Providence, NJ: (LexisNexis Matthey Bender); U Bronfenbrenner (1989) 'Ecological systems theory' in R Vasta (ed) *Annals of Child Development* Vol. 6. (London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers), pp. 187–249; Prochaska J, DiClemente C, & Norcross J (1992) In search of how people change: Applications to the addictive behaviors. *American Psychologist* 47, pp. 1102-1114

several of the barriers that impede participation. In principle, participation in Programme B is voluntary and according to programme staff this is an important feature of the programme approach. As a result, staff are resistant to accepting programme participation as a condition of probation although this has occurred in at least one case.

The young people must decide themselves that they are willing to engage. No one is forcing them. The programme is here to help them, it is not something they have to do as a punishment. This can change the way they engage from the very beginning. Programme B staff interview.

However, the distinction between voluntary and involuntary participation is blurred by the fact that the programme is introduced to participants by referring agents who also often take part in the initial meeting between project workers, young people and their families; project workers report regularly to referring agents on participants' progress and this reporting is used to inform decisions taken by JLOs and Probation Officers on how to progress individual cases; and the programme contributes to pre-sanction probation service reporting. As a result, during interviews and consultations conducted for this evaluation, participants were ambivalent about whether their engagement in the programme was a matter of choice.

He [JLO] turned up with [project worker]. That was the first I heard. Maybe they said I didn't have to join, I don't remember, but I'm hardly going to say no. Programme B participant interview.

Referrals to the programme are made at allocation meetings which take place every two months and are attended by the project coordinator, a JLO Sergeant and a Senior Young People's Probation Officer. Thereafter, contact with referring agents is maintained in relation to each case through weekly phone calls, email and meetings etc, the submission of bimonthly reports with detailed information relating to the progress of each participant and a 16 week review of service for each participant. All case closures, both positive and negative, are discussed and agreed with referring agents. The views of referring agents regarding overall programme performance were also sought as part of a wider survey of stakeholders undertaken by the programme in 2016 and 2018 which also includes participants and parents/primary caregivers.

Close cooperation with other services and agencies involved in the lives of participants is also fundamental to the programme approach and in this regard the programme benefits from the established network of relationships enjoyed by the service provider in the urban centre in which it is based.

Causal chain

Programme B is underpinned by a causal chain that conceives of escalating youth offending as resulting from both an abundance of risk and weak protective factors within an individuals' ecology. The programme seeks to promote protective factors, reduce risk and consequently offending behaviour by focussing on individually assessed needs, particularly in the areas of family circumstances/parenting, education/employment and community.

Programme B is based on the assumption that participants exist within a functioning ecology that presents a mixed landscape of risks that can be reduced and protective factors that can be strengthened. Programme B is also based on the assumption that participants have agency and that with the right support they are free to act pro-socially without facing serious negative consequences.

9. Programme B: Evaluation

9.1 Sources of Information

As is evident from Table 4 above, Programme B currently lacks a fully developed monitoring and evaluation framework. As a result, in several cases the data necessary to accurately measure progress for the purpose of evaluating the overall performance of the programme has not been identified or gathered systematically. It is also notable that there are significant gaps in programme reporting with just three Service Review reports submitted on request to the funder since 2015 covering the following periods:

- August-December 2015
- January-September 2017
- January-October 2018

To a certain degree, these gaps in reporting and the lack of attention paid to completing the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework that is fit for purpose can be explained by the fact that up until late 2017, attention was focused on refinement of the Outcomes Based Accountability framework and the accompanying Criminogenic Questionnaire. However, significant time has passed since work on the Outcomes Based Accountability framework ceased and the decision was taken not to pursue its use or that of the Criminogenic Questionnaire as a tools for monitoring programme performance any further. This has been acknowledged by programme management and as stated above it is intended to address these shortcomings following completion of this evaluation.

The evaluation below relies on the following sources of information to assess, as far as possible, programme performance in relation to stated objectives, outcomes and KPIs:

- Semi- structured interviews with two programme participants;
- Small group consultation with four programme participants;
- Semi-structured interviews with six programme staff and eight stakeholders;
- Results of the 2016 and 2018 stakeholders surveys;
- Service Review reports for August to-December 2015, January-September 2017 and January-October 2018;
- Results of the YLS/CMI 2.0 for 19 participants for whom initial and follow-up scores are available;
- Data compiled by programme staff to describe the profile of the target group and measure progress in the area of education/employment as part of this evaluation.

In relation to feedback from programme participants, it is important to note that - for practical reasons - the group of participants recruited by programme staff to take part in interviews and consultations for this evaluation did not include any participants whose cases were closed due to negative reasons (62% of the total). It is possible therefore that the views expressed by participants during interviews and consultations may differ from those of the majority.

In relation to the stakeholder surveys, it is important to note that these surveys are simple tools designed in-house and as such they contain certain flaws that may induce response bias. This includes in particular: acquiescence bias in which respondents to a survey have a tendency to agree with all questions posed; social desirability bias which influences participants to deny undesirable traits and ascribe to themselves traits that are socially desirable; and demand characteristics which among other things influences participants to try to be 'good subjects' by confirming the hypothesis they believe is being tested, in this case that Programme B has had a positive impact in the lives of young people.

For example, all questions in both surveys are positively framed which may induce acquiescence bias. All questions also allow only a 'Yes', 'No' or 'Don't Know' answer with the result that even a very minor improvement may be recorded as an unreservedly positive response. The degree to which respondents with low educational attainment understood the survey questions and the degree to which respondents were confident of their anonymity given their small number and the fact that some respondents delivered completed surveys by hand to key workers is also uncertain. Moreover, it is not possible to ascertain from the results provided how many of the participants and parents/primary caregivers who responded to the survey were commenting on open cases, how many were commenting on closed cases and in each case the reasons for closure. As such, the results can provide no insight into whether or not participants who were closed for positive and negative reasons shared similar views of the programme.

Programme performance in relation to each objective is analysed separately below along with all relevant outcomes and KPIS in each case.

9.2 Core Objective 1: Strengthen family relationships and support them to remain together

Short term outcome:

None stated

Long term outcome:

Improved family dynamics

KPI:

80% of young people remaining in their current living arrangement

Programme B works with families to promote the role of the family as a protective factor in the lives of participants. Regular contact is maintained with parents/primary caregivers throughout and difficulties recognised as criminogenic are addressed including inadequate supervision, difficulty controlling behaviour, inappropriate discipline, inconsistent parenting and poor relations with either parent. Specific interventions include the Strengthening Families Programme, Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families and the Non Violent Resistance Programme.

As discussed previously, the results of the initial YLS/CMI 2.0 risk assessment indicate that the area of family circumstances/parenting was not high risk for the majority of the 34 participants assessed on entry to the programme. Likewise, the results of the final assessments made available for some 19 closed cases indicate that although risk diminished in this area for four participants, and increased for four it remained unchanged for eleven, preserving the overall picture of low-to-moderate risk in relation to family circumstances/parenting for the target group as a whole. This represents a positive outcome for 15 participants (risk diminished or remained moderate/low) and a negative outcome for four participants (risk increased).

These results are in line with those presented in the 2018 Service Review report, which demonstrates that of the 23 participants supported by the programme during the reporting period, 22 were living at home when they engaged in the programme and they remained at home at the end of the reporting period. One participant was living in relative care when engaged in the programme and they remained in relative care at the end of the reporting period, exceeding the 80% target set in the relevant KPI by 20%. No data relating to living arrangements is included in earlier service reviews so it is not possible to comment on performance in relation to other periods.

The results of the most recent stakeholder survey for 2018 to which 13 participants and 14 parents/primary care givers responded states that:

- 92% of participants feel they get on better with their family;
- 92% of participants feel they talk more in their family about things;
- 100% of participants feel they enjoy positive time with family;
- 86% of parents/primary caregivers stated that their relationship with their child has improved;
- 79% of parents/primary caregivers feel more confident in their role as a parent;
- 86% of parents/primary caregivers feel they can more easily recognise their child's personal strengths;
- 93% of parents/primary caregivers believe they can now communicate better with their child;
- 86% of parents/primary caregivers feel they are better at understanding and managing their child's needs;
- 86% of parents/primary caregivers feel their child now gets on better with them;
- 86% of parents/primary caregivers believe their child now gets on better with other family members;
- 93% of parents/primary caregivers stated their child can now communicate better within the home.

Similar results were also achieved in the 2016 survey. Notwithstanding the possibility of response bias and the fact that the data presented is not disaggregated to show reason for case closure, on the whole these survey results indicate a positive view of programme impact in the area of family relationships. This positive view was also confirmed in interviews and consultations conducted for this evaluation.

Two parents/primary caregivers of participants whose cases were still open took part in interviews for this evaluation. They described themselves prior to involvement in the programme as 'lost' in relation to their parenting and 'at the end of my rope'. They said the support they received from project workers played a crucial role in allowing them to 'take control' when necessary as well as to 'listen better' and 'keep my cool' rather than getting into conflict with their sons/daughters. Most participants also confirmed improved family dynamics as a result of programme participation with less 'shouting', 'storming off' and 'slamming doors' as the most prominent features of this. However, it is also notable that this improvement was not mentioned spontaneously by any participant as one of the primary benefits of the programme and was only referred to in response to specific questions about the impact of the programme at home.

After case closure, the programme does not continue to gather data or other information that would indicate whether not these positive results were sustained long term. As a result, it is not possible to comment on the delivery of the relevant long term outcome.

Conclusions core objective 1

As far as can be ascertained from the available data, programme documentation, interviews and consultations conducted for this evaluation, Programme B has had a positive if not dramatic impact in relation to achievement of Core Objective 1 Strengthening family relationships. However, further research is necessary to establish whether or not those closed for positive and negative reasons held similar views of programme impact in this area.

According to the YLS/CMI 2.0, the area of family circumstances/parenting was low-moderate risk for the majority of Programme B participants on entry to the programme and the final YLS assessment for some 19 participants indicates little change in this picture over time. This represents a positive outcome for 15 participants (risk diminished or remained moderate/low) and a negative outcome for four participants (risk increased).

Despite the absence of significant change in the overall YLS results, the majority of participants surveyed in 2018 claimed that they get on better with family members as a result of their participation in Programme B and the majority of parents/primary care givers said they were more confident in their role as a parent. This positive view of programme impact in the area of family circumstances/parenting was also confirmed by staff, stakeholders and participants interviewed for this evaluation.

According to the 2018 Service Update report, 100% of participants served during the reporting period were maintained in their current living arrangement on case closure, exceeding the KPI for this objective by 20%.

9.3 Core Objective 2: Assist young people to develop problem solving skills

Short term outcomes:

- Improved pro social behaviour;
- Young people develop awareness of impact of their behaviour.

Long term outcomes:

- Improved empathy amongst young people in the community;
- Reduced impulsivity.

KPIs: None stated

Programme B supports participants to develop problem solving skills, engage in pro social behaviours and make positive life choices during weekly individual sessions which employ a variety of tools and techniques including the following:

- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention;
- Life Space Interviews;
- SODAS (Situation, Options, Disadvantages, Advantages, Solution)
- Restorative Justice Questioning;
- Real U Programme;
- Cool Anger Management Programme.

During interviews for this evaluation, programme staff also underlined the importance of the work done in supporting participants to engage in sustainable, positive leisure time activities such as woodwork, going to the gym, football, cooking and equine care. In each case, the programme of activities is led by participants' interests. In addition, one off activities such as go-karting can be offered from time to time as a reward for completion of a particular piece of work or for achieving a particular goal.

The YLS is not intended as a tool to assess cognitive function including problem solving skills or an ability to recognise the impact of one's behavior. Rather it is used to predict the risk of reoffending over a 12-month period post assessment by assessing criminogenic risk in eight specific areas. It is therefore of little assistance in evaluating performance in relation to Core Objective 2 (Assist young people to develop problem solving skills) and one of its associated outcomes (Young people develop an awareness of the impact of their behavior). In the absence of any other data specifically relating to these areas the analysis below relies on more general feedback from interviewees including participants and stakeholders as well as the results of the stakeholders surveys.

As part of the evaluation process, four participants took part in a small group consultation, the aim of which was to find out what changes had occurred in their lives as a result of their engagement in the programme, what was working well in the programme and what they would change about the programme. Semi structured individual interviews were also held with two participants to explore these topics. As stated previously, participants whose cases were closed due to negative reasons were not included in the consultation or interviews for practical reasons and their views are not therefore represented in the analysis below.

Participants who took part in interviews and consultation identified the following as playing a key role in getting them into trouble (in descending order of frequency):

- Hanging around with the wrong people;
- Dropping out of school;
- Drug and alcohol misuse;
- Mental health issues;
- Homelessness.

Participants identified the following aspects of the programme as working well and helping them to stay out of trouble (in descending order of frequency):

- Relationship with project worker (key worker);
- Overnights;
- Support returning to education;
- Court support.

Participants were clear that the aspect of the programme that they most valued was having 'someone to talk to' who was 'always there to listen'. Participants described 'trust' as fundamental to their relationship with their project workers. Participants also appreciated the informal way in which project workers engaged with them. The possibility to go on regular overnight trips was highly valued as an opportunity to 'get a break', and also to spend extended periods of time with project workers in order to 'talk things over' and learn new skills including cooking in particular.

You are not sitting in a chair with them looking at you or filling in forms. We go out, we get something to eat and we talk. It feels normal. Programme B participant interview.

Support from project workers with practical issues was also recognised as valuable including in particular, support reengaging in education and support preparing for court dates, as well as attending court.

The major positive changes in the lives of participants that were credited to engagement in Programme B were as follows (in descending order of frequency):

- Not hanging around with the same people
- Going back to school/education
- Not getting into trouble with the Gards
- Not using drugs/alcohol
- Better mental health
- More confidence
- Finding things to do that I like

While participants were predominantly positive about the impact of the programme in their lives during interviews and consultation, two concerns were also highlighted. First, several participants expressed concern around case closure. This was expressed in different ways by current and former participants. Some current participants said they were not confident that they would cope well without the support of the programme and were fearful that their case would be closed too quickly. One former participant described struggling to find alternative supports in a rural area after case closure and said that participants in this situation would perhaps reoffend in order to 'get back on the programme'. Secondly, several participants expressed concern that their case would be closed and they would not have any contact with project workers, if sentenced to a period of detention although they were aware that the possibility to reopen following release existed.

From the outset, all participants are made aware that the support they receive from the programme will not be in place permanently and that their engagement will come to an end. During interviews for this evaluation, programme staff described a long lead in to successful closure with steps taken along the way to ensure that participants have access to alternative community supports. However, staff also recognised that closure can be difficult for some participants, particularly those living outside the urban centre in which the programme is based, and the introduction of a longer-step down is already under consideration. Staff were also aware of concerns regarding continued engagement during periods of detention and the possibility of maintaining contact through occasional visits and regular phone calls is being discussed internally.

When asked what they would change about the programme, participants said they would allow a longer period of engagement in the programme, more overnights and more day trips. The possibility of support during the evenings and at weekends was also suggested although no firm suggestions as to what this might look like were made.

Stakeholders including JLOs, Probation, local GYDP projects and social workers were also positive about the changes brought about by the programme in the lives of participants. Although the term 'problem solving skills' was not used by stakeholders, the key role of the programme in developing participants ability to think 'consequentially' and 'independently' was highlighted by some stakeholders.

We are getting the most chaotic young people often at a late stage and yet we are seeing changes in behaviour – clear periods of doing well accompanied by consequential thinking. Some even stop offending altogether.
Programme B stakeholder interview.

Developing their own sense of identity, often in direct conflict with negative influences from within their own family or community, is extremely difficult for young people without a high level of support which is relationship based. With this in place, young people can make pro-social choices and move away from offending behaviour,

often going against peer led behaviours and sometime family attitudes and values. Programme B stakeholder interview.

The positive impact of the programme in several of these areas is confirmed by the 2018 stakeholders survey report which states that:

- 100% of participants said that overall things had improved for them since they started the programme;
- 100% of parents/primary care givers said that their child had been supported to stay out of trouble;
- 86% of parents said that overall things had improved for their child as a result of engagement in Programme B;
- 81% of referring professionals said that Programme B assisted participants to get on better in their day to day lives.

Similar results were also achieved in the 2016 survey.

As demonstrated in Fig. 22 above, the category of leisure/recreation which is closely related to the development of pro social behaviour stands out as an area of acute risk/need for the majority of the 34 participants for whom an initial YLS assessment was made available (88%). As stated above, during interviews and consultations for this evaluation, 'Finding things I like to do' was noted by some participants as among the positive changes in their lives that they credited to engagement in Programme B. In addition, in the 2018 stakeholders survey, the majority of programme participants, parents/primary care givers and referring agents also stated that the programme had had a positive impact in the area of leisure/recreation and the development of pro social behaviours:

- 77% of participants said they had learned about good things to do in their area through Programme B;
- 93% of parents/primary caregivers said their child was involved in more positive activities as a result of their engagement in Programme B;
- 75% of referring professionals said that engagement in Programme B enabled participants to develop pro-social behaviours;
- 81% of referring professionals said that engagement in Programme B had led to a reduction in participants' anti-social behaviour.

However, this positive view of programme impact is not supported by the results of the YLS/CMI 2.0 risk assessment in the area of leisure/recreation which is closely associated with the development of pro social behaviour. According to the results available for 19 closed cases, risk diminished in this category from initial to final assessment for two participants and remained unchanged for 17 (Fig. 23). Given the high overall level of risk in this area on initial assessment, this represents a positive result for three participants (risk diminished or

remained low/moderate) and a negative result for 16 participants (risk increased or remained high).

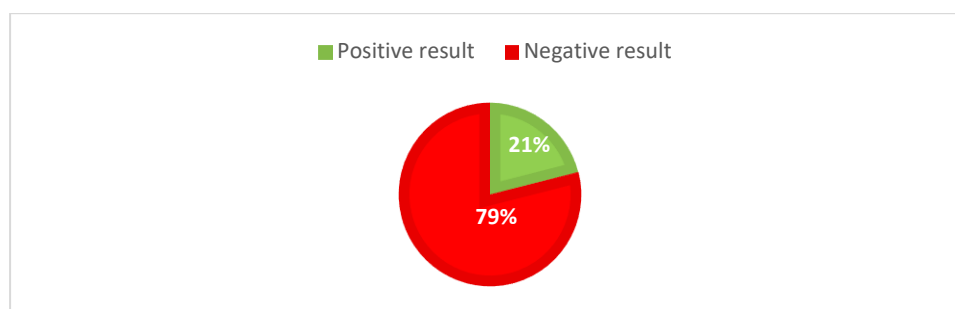


Fig. 23 Programme B: Leisure/Recreation

No data has been gathered or presented to measure progress in relation to long term improvement in empathy and reduced impulsivity and it is not therefore possible to comment on progress in these areas.

Conclusions core objective 2

During interviews and consultations conducted for this evaluation, programme participants were consistently positive about the impact that the programme has had in their lives and this positive view was widely supported in interview with stakeholders and by the results of the stakeholders survey. However, on the basis of the information available to the evaluator, it is not possible to draw a conclusion as to whether or not engagement in the programme has assisted participants to develop their problem solving skills since this was not highlighted by participants as a benefit of engagement, it was referred to only infrequently as a benefit by stakeholders and no other data was presented that could be used to measure programme impact in this area.

It is clear that engagement in the programme has assisted some of the six participants who took part in interviews and consultations for this evaluation to develop pro-social behaviors. The majority of programme participants, parents/primary caregivers and referring agents also stated that the programme has had a positive impact in the area of leisure/recreation and the development of pro social behaviours in the 2018 stakeholders survey. By contrast, the results of the YLS assessment for 19 participants in the area of leisure/recreation demonstrate a positive result in this area for four participants (risk diminished or remained low/moderate) and a negative result for 15 participants (risk increased or remained high). Given this conflicting evidence, it is not possible to draw a definitive conclusion as to the impact of the programme in this area on the basis of the information made available.

It is also clear that the participants who took part in interviews and consultations for this evaluation clearly understood that along with other factors such as mental health difficulties and homelessness, their own behaviour has had a negative impact on their lives and has played a key role in getting them into trouble. This includes in particular an awareness of the negative impact of hanging around with the wrong people, dropping out of school and drug

and alcohol abuse. Participants also clearly recognised the role of the programme in supporting them to desist in these behaviours. Given the consistency with which these views were expressed and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it is therefore possible to conclude that participants have been supported to develop an awareness of the impact of their behaviour through engagement in Programme B.

To facilitate more accurate monitoring of progress in relation to Core Objective 2 it is essential for Programme B to more carefully define its associated outcomes, to develop relevant KPIs and to collate the data necessary to assess performance against these.

9.4 Core Objective 3: Assist young people to develop social and life skills including positive peer interaction and positive community engagement

Short term outcomes:

- Young people develop positive healthy peer relationships
- Young people develop awareness of the negative impact of substance abuse

Long term outcomes:

- Improved relations between young people and Gardaí;
- A more coordinated, individual and interagency planning and community response for young people
- Reduced offending and safer communities;

KPI: None stated

Programme B assists participants to develop social and life skills including positive peer interaction, and positive community engagement through:

- Group work sessions with other participants on the programme;
- Supporting participants to engage in positive leisure and recreational activities;
- Overnights with project workers;
- Other methods including for example role modelling, developing communication skills and the use of star charts/contracts.

As demonstrated in Fig. 22 above, in the YLS risk assessment the categories of leisure/recreation and peer relations which are closely related to Core Objective 3 and its associated outcomes stand out as areas of acute risk/need for the majority of the 34 participants for whom an initial assessment was made available (88% and 52% respectively). In addition, the categories of personality/behaviour and substance abuse, which are also closely related to Core Objective 3 and its associated outcomes, are high risk for a sizeable portion of programme participants if not the majority (32% and 24% respectively).

The results of the YLS/CMI 2.0 assessment in the area of leisure/recreation are discussed above in section **9.3 Core objective 2**. A comparison between the results of the initial and final YLS assessment for 19 closed cases in the areas of peer relations, personality/behaviour and substance abuse demonstrates as follows:

- In the category of peer relations, four participants were assessed as being at a lower level of risk on closing, three at a higher level of risk and 12 at the same level (Fig. 24) – this represents an overall positive result for nine participants (risk diminished or remained low/moderate) and an overall negative result for 10 participants (risk increased or remained high);
- In the category of personality behaviour, four participants were assessed as being at a lower level of risk on closing, one at a higher level of risk and 14 at the same level of risk (Fig. 25) – this represents an overall positive result for twelve participants (risk diminished or remained low/moderate) and an overall negative result for seven participants (risk increased or remained high);
- In the category of substance abuse, one participant was assessed as being at a lower level of risk on closing, four were assessed as being at a higher level and 14 remained at the same level of risk (Fig. 26) - this represents an overall positive result for ten participants (risk diminished or remained low/moderate) and an overall negative result for nine participants (risk increased or remained high).

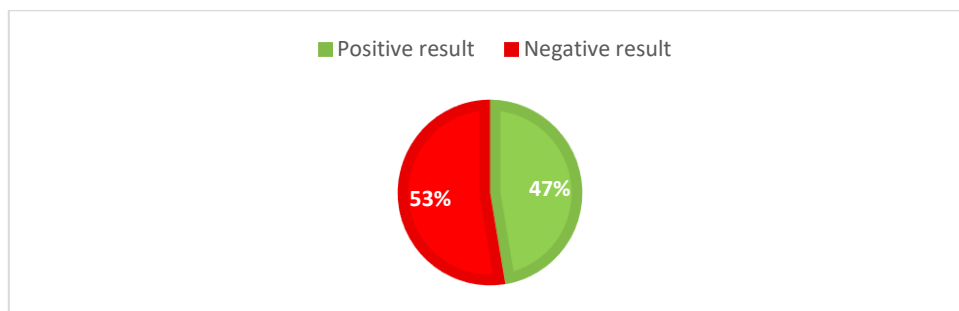


Fig. 24 Programme B: Peer relations

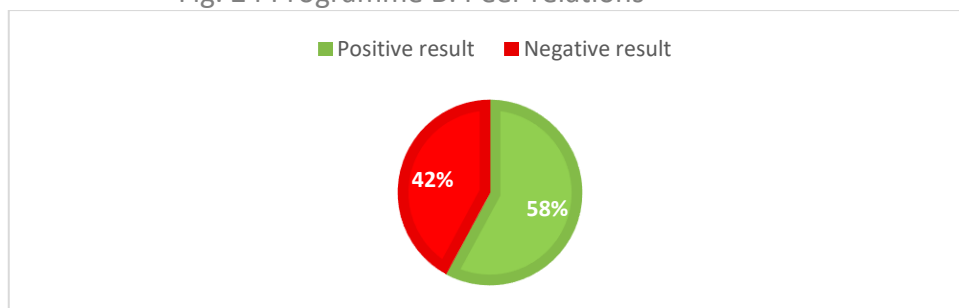


Fig. 25 Programme B: Personality/Behaviour

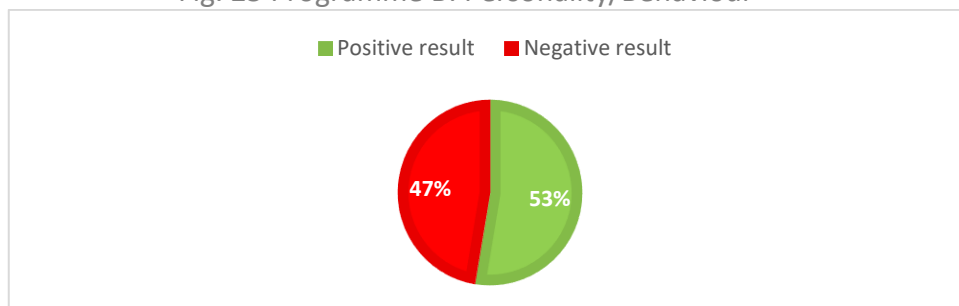


Fig. 26 Programme B: Substance abuse

During interviews for this evaluation, programme participants and stakeholders in particular were positive about the impact that the programme has had especially in the area of peer relations. As stated in section **9.3 Core objective 2**, participants consistently recognised negative peer influences as playing a major part in their offending behaviour prior to engagement with the programme. Participants also consistently stated that as a result of their engagement they were consciously trying not to ‘hang around with the same people’. The importance of the transition to more positive peer groups was also recognised by referring agents who said the programme played a vital role in enabling participants to begin to sever ties with negative peer influences.

Respondents to the 2018 and 2016 stakeholders surveys, including participants and parents/primary caregivers, were not asked to comment directly on whether or not they or their son/daughter associated with a more positive peer group as a result of participation in Programme B. However, 92% of participants who responded to the 2018 stakeholders survey said that Programme B had encouraged them to get on better with other young people and 71% of parents/primary caregivers said their child’s ability to get on with other young people had improved as a result of the support received from Programme B.

In relation to substance abuse, as stated previously it is likely that risk in this category may be underestimated at initial assessment, disguising somewhat the positive impact that programme participation may have had in relation to substance abuse by misrepresenting the actual scale of the challenge faced by the participant group. This possibility was confirmed during interviews and consultations with participants, some of whom described serious levels of substance abuse that were not disclosed in the early stages of engagement with the programme.

As stated in section **9.3 Core objective 2**, overnight stays with project workers were also highlighted during interviews and consultations as an area of the programme that was working particularly well for participants and that helped them to stay out of trouble. Participants themselves described these as an opportunity to deepen their relationship with project workers and to learn new skills. The benefits of overnight respite were also recognised by programme stakeholders who described this opportunity as ‘unique’ to the service provider and of ‘enormous benefit to participants and their parents.’

Getting away for over nights can provide young people with a chance to practice basic skills like cooking, winding down to go to bed, dis-engaging from technology and demonstrating what a good day time/night time routine should look like. This cannot be under estimated as many of these young people come from extremely chaotic environments and have not observed this at home. Programme B stakeholder interview.

Stakeholders also said Programme B had made a valuable contribution in ensuring a more coordinated and individualised service for participants who are on probation or failing to engage with or benefit from the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme.

Without [Programme B] I am on bended knees to Tusla to try to get high risk young people who are refusing to engage in mainstream projects referred elsewhere. The fact that [Programme B] exists means I now have an avenue through which to directly refer young people so that they can get the help they need and get it quickly. Programme B stakeholder interview.

[Programme B] is the link that draws it all together – services, families and young people. Programme B stakeholder interview.

[Programme B] provides young people with consistent support at a vulnerable time in their lives when other agencies are also coming in and out. Preparing young people and their families for meetings and accompanying them where appropriate can remove a barrier to engagement with mandated services. Programme B stakeholder interview.

100% of referring agents who responded to the 2018 stakeholders survey and 69% who responded to the 2016 survey also said Programme B supported participants to access existing community-based resources.

In this regard, Programme B benefits from the long-established reputation of the service provider in the area in which it is based as well as close and cooperative relationships already in place with a range of other agencies and service providers. In addition to the Garda Youth Diversion Programme and Young People's Probation these include but are not limited to:

- Alternative education and training centres
- CAMHS
- Community Substance Misuse Team
- Education Welfare Office
- GYDP projects
- HSE
- Mainstream schools
- Juvenile Court
- Oberstown Children Detention Campus
- Tusla

The programme does not gather data relating to participants' offending behaviour post-closure. But according to the Service Review for January-October 2018, of the 21 participants who were supported by the programme from January to October 2018 and for whom information regarding offending behavior was made available by the Gardaí, 62% (13 participants) were not known to have committed any new offences during the reporting period. This includes nine open cases and four closed cases. The remaining 38% (8 participants) had committed new offences, this includes four cases that remained open and four cases that had closed during the reporting period. Unfortunately, similar information regarding offending behavior was not included in the two earlier reports for August-

September 2015 and January-October 2017 so it is not possible to comment on offending behavior outside of this narrow timeframe.

That Programme B is seen by stakeholders and participants to have played a role in the reduction of offending behavior observed in the 2018 report was confirmed during interviews and consultations for this evaluation. Referring agents described reserving their highest risk cases for Programme B. They said that the decision to do so was made only on the basis of the results observed on the ground.

I refer hard-cases to [Programme B] because it works. There is no other reason for me to do so. Programme B stakeholder interview.

Although unwilling to discuss their offending behavior in any detail during consultations and interviews, participants also specified ‘Not getting into trouble with the Gards’ as a positive change in their lives resulting from engagement in the programme.

According to the results of the YLS/CMI 2.0 for 19 closed cases, the overall level of criminogenic risk (high, moderate or low) was reduced from initial to final assessment for seven participants and increased for four. It remained unchanged for eight participants, five of whom remained high risk, two of whom remained moderate risk and one of whom remained low risk. Thus, on case closure:

- Overall risk was diminished or stabilised (i.e. did not increase further from a low or moderate base) for 10 participants (52%);
- Overall risk either increased or remained high for nine participants (48%).

As demonstrated in Fig. 27 and Fig. 28 below, as a result of these changes, the percentage of participants assessed as low risk within this group of 19 has increased substantially from 5% initially (1 participant) to 32% on final assessment (6 participants).

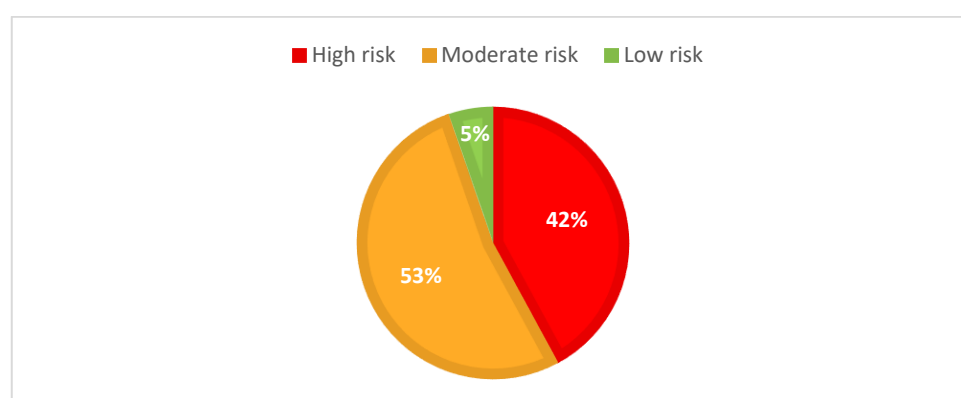


Fig. 27 Programme B: Initial risk assessment (19 participants)

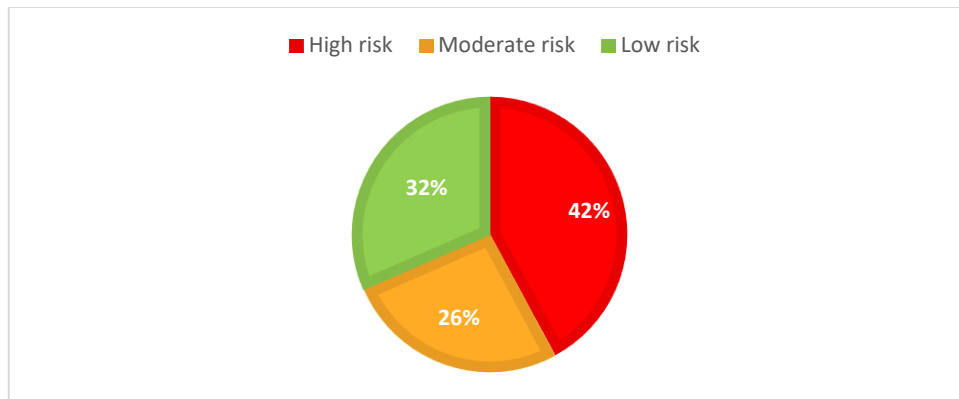


Fig. 28 Programme B: Final risk assessment (19 participants)

As stated previously in section **8.1 Overview**, of the 32 cases closed to date, 20 cases (62%) were closed for negative reasons and 12 cases (38%) were closed for positive reasons. By contrast, the YLS data presented above is based on risk assessment applied to 10 participants closed for positive reasons (53% of 19) and nine participants closed for negative reasons (47% of 19). It is therefore possible that the overall result may be positively biased.

The likelihood of this possibility is underlined by the fact that a positive YLS result (overall risk diminished or remained either low/moderate) was noted for eight out of 10 participants closed for positive reasons (80%) and a negative result was noted for seven out of nine participants closed for negative reasons (78%).

Notwithstanding the limitations of the YLS assessment noted previously, perhaps unsurprisingly this data also suggests that those who successfully complete the programme/achieve their programme objectives and progress to planned closure in consultation with project workers, referring agents and family members benefit most from their engagement. Conversely, those whose cases were closed for negative reasons are less likely to have benefitted from their engagement. Given the high percentage of cases (62%) closed for negative reasons this conclusion signals the need to temper any expectation of more widespread positive results from programme engagement. It also raises questions with regard to the suitability of the programme model and approach for the majority of the target group.

As stated previously, the programme model allows a targeting period of approximately eight to ten weeks before the commencement of more intense work planned in partnership with participants and recorded in a written 'contract'. Thereafter, an attendance target is set for participants at 80% of sessions offered over an average engagement period of nine months and a close relationship is maintained with referring agents and parents/primary caregivers throughout. The manner in which participants engage in the programme is also monitored to ensure that participants who engage well but do not meet the 80% attendance target can remain on the programme if appropriate.

The fact that 62% of cases closed to date have closed for negative reasons - including but not limited to failure to demonstrate adequate motivation to change and failure to meet the standard of attendance and/or engagement required - indicates that this model has not worked for the majority of participants.

Given the profile of risk and need within the target group it is possible that a portion of the target group may benefit from a much more gradual approach to relationship building as well as a significantly longer intervention that allows greater flexibility with regard to the achievement of personal objectives similar to that offered by Programme A. It is also possible that the visibly close working relationship between programme staff and referring agents in particular may stand in the way of relationship building for some participants.

Conclusion core objective 3

On the basis of the information available it would appear that some progress has been made in areas related to Core Objective 3 (Assist young people to develop social and life skills including positive peer interaction and positive community engagement) and short term outcome one (development of positive healthy peer relationships) and short term outcome two (awareness of the negative impact of substance abuse).

In relation to peer relations, a positive YLS result was noted for nine out of 19 participants on closing. In relation to substance abuse, a positive YLS result was noted for 10 out of 19 participants on closing. In relation to personality/behaviour, a positive YLS result was noted for 11 out of 19 participants.

During interviews and consultations for this evaluation, participants and stakeholders were also largely positive about the impact of the programme in these areas.

While it is not possible to thoroughly evaluate progress in relation to the achievement of long terms objectives, it is clear that:

- Overall criminogenic risk has been reduced or stabilised in 52% of closed cases;
- Programme B is viewed by stakeholders as a crucial part of the youth justice infrastructure in the urban area in which it is based;
- Programme B is viewed by stakeholders as playing a vital role in facilitating a timely and coordinated interagency response to a-typical youth crime.

Given an established pattern described by staff and referring agents of escalating risk and offending prior to referral the results outlined above are satisfactory, particularly in relation to overall criminogenic risk and offending behaviour. However, it must be recalled that participants are typically engaged with a wide range of services while also taking part in Programme B. For example, some 34% of programme participants are also on probation

during engagement in Programme B which may provide an added incentive to desist from offending in the short term. Programme B must therefore be conceived of as part of a causal package that has rendered these results rather than as a sufficient condition for their achievement.

The fact that 62% of cases closed to date have closed for negative reasons raises questions with regard to the suitability of the programme model and approach for the majority of the target group, particularly when the high correlation between these cases on the one hand and either increased overall risk or continuing high risk on final assessment on the other hand is taken into consideration. In order to explore how and if the programme model can and should be adjusted to meet the needs of this group or whether perhaps an additional service with a different model is needed, a detailed review of each case is required including participant profile, length of engagement, outcomes achieved and reasons for closing. As far as possible, former participants themselves should be consulted as part of this process. A full review of the results achieved by Programme A at the end of the four-year intervention period should also be instructive in this regard.

To facilitate more accurate monitoring of progress in relation to Core Objective 3 it is essential for Programme B to develop relevant KPIs and to collate the data necessary to assess performance against these.

9.5 Core Objective 4: Support young people to maximise their educational and vocational opportunities

Short term objective: Young people staying in education and going on to further education/employment

Long term objective: None stated

KPI: 80% of young people sustained in education/vocation or returned to education/vocation

Supporting participants to maximise their educational and vocational opportunities and attainment is a programme priority. To facilitate this, Programme B works closely with local Education Welfare Officers to secure new placements in mainstream schools and alternative education centres for participants and support those placements that are under threat. Programme B project workers conduct regular school visits and provide basic practical support for participants, including for example lifts to and from the venue to re-establish the routine of attendance. Anger management interventions are also a key part of sustaining participants in education/training as well as role modelling and individual sessions to help participants learn from past experiences and plan how they will interact with others in an educational/training setting.

Data presented by programme staff demonstrates that of a total of 32 closed cases:

- One participant was in stable mainstream education on referral;
- One participant was in stable vocational/alternative education on referral;

- One participant was employed on referral;
- 18 participants (56%) were in mainstream education/vocational training with poor behaviour and/or poor attendance;
- Nine participants (32%) were excluded from education (due to expulsion or drop-out);
- Two participants were unemployed (6%).

Thus, 94% of the participant group were neither in stable education/training nor employment on referral.

The situation on case closure was as follows:

- One participant was in stable mainstream education on closing;
- One participant was employed on closing;
- Seven participants were in stable vocational/alternative education on closing;
- 16 participants were in mainstream education/vocational training with poor behaviour and/or poor attendance on closing;
- 5 participants were excluded from education;
- Two participants were unemployed.

The data provided does not include detailed information about participants' attendance and behaviour in an educational setting so it is not possible to comment on whether or not any improvements were achieved for some 15 participants (47%) who remained in the poor behaviour/poor attendance category on closing. However, the figures clearly demonstrate that the percentage of participants who were in neither stable education/vocational training nor employment declined from 94% on referral to 72% on closing. In total, according to the data presented by programme staff, seven participants (21%) were in a better overall position in relation to education and employment on closing than on opening and no participant was in a worse position.

Despite the limitations of the YLS as a tool for assessing risk in the area of education/employment highlighted previously in section **8.2 Target Group**, it is worth noting that the results of the YLS risk assessment in the area of education/employment also show a clear positive outcome in this area on closing as follows:

- Risk diminished for five out of 19 participants;
- Risk increased for four participants;
- Risk remained unchanged for ten participants.

Overall, this represents a positive result for 12 participants (risk diminished or remained low/moderate) and negative result for seven (risk increased or remained high).

In relation to the relevant KPI (80% of young people sustained in education/vocational training or returned to education/vocational training); according to the data presented by

staff, 21 participants were in education/vocational training or employment on referral to Programme B including 18 with poor attendance/behaviour. On closing, this figure had increased to 25 – including 16 with poor attendance/behaviour – or 78% of closed cases which is slightly below the 80% target set.

The generally positive impact of the programme in the area of education/employment is also reflected in the 2018 stakeholders survey as follows:

- 75% of referring agents stated Programme B has assisted participants to progress in their educational attainment;
- 92% of participants said Programme B has encouraged them to attend school;
- 85% of participants said Programme B has assisted them to get on better with their teachers;
- 64% of parents said their child's educational attendance had improved;
- 71% said their son/daughter's relationship with teachers has improved;
- 86% of parents stated their child now understands the importance of education.

These results were equaled or exceeded in the 2016 report.

Education and training providers were not included in the surveys so it is not possible to comment on whether or not they would confirm the positive impact of the programme in the area of education/employment noted by other stakeholders.

As stated previously, during interviews for this evaluation participants and stakeholders highlighted the practical support provided by project workers in securing vocational training and school placements for participants as well as in re-establishing a routine of attendance.

Conclusion core objective 4

Programme B is part of a causal package that has enabled a clear improvement in the area of education/employment for seven participants (21%) on case closure. The percentage of participants who were in neither stable education/vocational training nor employment declined from 94% on referral to 72% on closing.

78% of participants whose cases were closed were sustained or returned to education/vocational training or employment slightly below the 80% target set in the relevant KPI.

In the area of education/employment, the YLS risk assessment also shows a clear positive result for 12 participants on closing (risk diminished or remained low/moderate) and a negative result for seven participants (risk increased or remained high).

During interviews and consultations conducted for this evaluation, participants and stakeholders highlighted the practical support provided by project workers in securing vocational training and school placements for participants as well as in re-establishing a routine of attendance as aspects of Programme B that are working well and having a positive impact in the lives of participants. It is not possible to confirm whether this view is shared by education/training providers since they were not included in the stakeholders surveys.

9.6 Supplementary Objective 1: Deliver intervention dosage at the optimal level

KPIs: Minimum 24 hours direct contact per week by each full time project worker; minimum one home visit per month for each carer/parent; provision of four month review process for each young person.

Programme performance in meeting the targets set by the relevant KPIs was included in reporting to the funder in the 2018 Service Update report which includes data for the period January – June 2018 only. The report states that:

- The target of 24 hours of direct contact with programme participants each week for each full time project workers was exceeded by 2% with programme staff delivering 1033 direct contact hours during the reporting period.
- The target of 14 home visits per month was not met with an average of 12.5 home visits per month during the reporting period.
- The target of providing four monthly reviews for each participant was met.

The report also demonstrates that during the period January – June 2018, the average monthly rate of direct contact for each participant was 12 hours, or just under 2 hours 45 minutes per week.

The information provided in the report is not categorised by reason for closure (positive or negative) so it is not possible to comment on whether or not direct contact hours, home visits and four monthly reviews were evenly distributed across both groups.

Conclusion supplementary objective 1

From the information available it appears that Programme B is achieving its objective of delivering service at the level specified. Service delivery has exceeded the target specified in one KPI, met the target specified in one KPI and slightly underachieved the target specified in one KPI.

10 Programme B: Cost Effectiveness

Year	Programme B
2015	€135,000
2016	€210,000
2017	€210,000
2018	€210,000
2019	€210,000
Total	€840,000

A full cost/benefit that incorporates social return on investment is beyond the scope of this evaluation. The analysis below is indicative only.

According to figures obtained from the Department of Justice and Equality, Programme B was launched in August 2015 with an initial grant of €135,000. An annual grant of €210,000 was received in each of 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Development of the Outcomes Based Accountability framework was funded separately. Programme B has received no other funding from any other source. However, staff have expressed concern that pressure for places on Programme B will increase in 2020 when funding for three referrals from Young People's Probation to the pre-existing programme on which Programme B is closely modelled comes to an end.

Since its launch in 2015 up to April 2019, Programme B has provided support to 43 participants (45 cases including two repeat referrals). The average cost of the intervention per case is thus €18,167 [$€210,000 \times 3 + €135,000 + €52,500$ (Q1 2019/45)]. Assuming an average monthly caseload of 14 participants, the average cost of service delivery per participant per month is €1,250. This figure incorporates all Programme B costs including management, administration and overheads.

The average cost per participant per month is therefore less than one and a half days in Oberstown Children Detention Campus (the daily cost for a single place during 2018 was €1,039). The average cost per case is equivalent to just over 17 days in Oberstown Children Detention Centre.

Programme B is a one-of-a-kind pilot and there is currently no comparable programme that provides a service for atypical youth offenders of similar intensity and duration with which to make a direct comparison of cost. There are similarities between Programme A and Programme B, and a rudimentary comparison of costs between the two services has been included in section 7 **Programme A: Recommendations**.

On the basis of an average of 14 participants engaged in any single month as indicated in the 2018 service review, the average cost of Programme B service delivery per participant per month (€1,250) is close to twice that of Programme A (€687). With an average nine month period of engagement in Programme B (as opposed to 4 years for Programme A), the average cost of participation in Programme B per case (€18, 167) is slightly over half that of Programme A (€33,000).

There are also some similarities between Programme B and the Bail Supervision Scheme in terms of target group and intervention period. As stated previously, the average cost per intervention on the Bail Supervision Scheme is €18,500 with an average intervention period of between five and seven months.

Programme B is well supported and has received €975,000 in funding from the Department of Justice since 2015. This level of funding can only be justified in the presence of clear results.

On the basis of all the information available it would appear likely that the programme has achieved satisfactory results and these are particularly evident in the reduction or stabilisation of overall criminogenic risk for some 52% of participants for whom an initial and closing YLS assessment is available (10 of 19).

11 Programme B: Conclusions

Target group

Programme B targets young people at risk of escalating their offending/anti-social behaviour. Prior involvement in the criminal justice system at a serious level is not necessary for referral to the programme. Rather, young people are prioritised for referral if they are judged by referring agents to be at a high risk of progression through the criminal justice system. Referring agents also prioritise young people who demonstrate motivation to change.

A total of 43 young people have engaged in the programme since its launch in August 2015. Of these, 30 were referred by the Garda Youth Diversion Programme and the remaining 15 were referred by Young People's Probation.

According to the results of the initial YLS risk assessment available for 34 cases, three were assessed as overall low risk/need on initial assessment (approximately six weeks post engagement), 19 were assessed as moderate risk/need and 12 were assessed as high risk/need.

Referrals are informed to a large extent by the practice wisdom of referring agents as opposed to strict adherence to the indicators of high risk/need suggested in the referral criteria (i.e. scoring high or very high in the YLS/CMI 2.0 and/or scoring high in 4 of the 8 primary needs). In making referrals to the programme, particular attention is paid to the following factors:

- Failure to engage with the mainstream Garda Youth Diversion Programme;
- Exclusion from education;
- Negative peer groups;
- Mental illness;
- Family criminality;
- Homelessness;
- Substance abuse.

Offending behaviour within the participant group is mixed. In 47% of cases, the individuals referred were court involved either at the point of referral to the programme or during their engagement on the programme. In 53% of cases, the individuals referred were involved in the criminal justice system at a less serious level. 86% of participants have accrued four or more JLO cautions. 42% of participants have accrued four or more charges for criminal offenses including charges for crime types a-typical of youth offending in all but one case.

The prevalence of mental illness among participants and their families is striking. 24 out of a total of 43 participants have a diagnosed mental illness (56%) and 22 have been involved in CAMHS (51%). 30 participants also have a parent with mental illness (70%). In addition to mental illness, the high incidence of family criminality is also notable (70%).

Programme model

Programme B is closely modelled on a pre-existing programme located outside the justice sector. As a result, the objectives, outcomes and KPIs of Programme B were not specifically developed for Programme B as a youth justice initiative but were directly transposed from its parent programme. It was intended that the way in which the objectives and outcomes of Programme B were framed could be further refined as learning evolved during the pilot and that, in particular, key performance indicators specific to Programme B would be developed. However, this has not been done to date and the objectives, outcomes and KPIs remain as stated in 2015. As a result, reduced offending is not specified as an explicit objective of the programme with associated outcomes and KPIs despite its position as a youth justice initiative.

It is also possible to identify a number of other gaps in the existing programme model:

- No short term outcomes have been identified in relation to Core Objective 1 (Strengthen family relationships and support them to remain together);
- No KPIs have been developed for Core Objective 2 and Core Objective 3 (Assist young people to develop problem solving skills; Assist young people to develop social and life skills including positive peer interaction and positive community engagement);
- The KPI associated with Core Objective 1 conceives of maintenance of the status quo as an indicator of programme impact;
- No long term outcomes have been identified in relation to Core Objective 4 (Support young people to maximise their educational and vocational opportunities);
- Despite the prevalence of mental illness within the participant group none of the programme objectives, outcomes or KPIs address this specifically.

These gaps are recognised by programme management and it is intended that the work needed to address them will get underway following completion of this evaluation, which has required a great deal of input from programme management and staff.

Programme B provides individually tailored support to young people at risk of reception into custody or at risk of escalating their offending/anti-social behaviours. As such, the aims of the programme support the realisation of youth diversion policy, which is committed to the use of detention as a last resort.

Programme B is underpinned by a causal chain that conceives of escalating youth offending as resulting from both an abundance of risk and weak protective factors within an individuals' ecology. The programme seeks to promote protective factors, reduce risk and consequently offending behaviour by focussing on individually assessed needs, particularly in the areas of family circumstances/parenting, education/employment and community.

Programme B is based on the assumption that participants exist within a functioning ecology that presents a mixed landscape of risks that can be reduced and protective factors that can be strengthened. Programme B is also based on the assumption that participants have agency and that with the right support they are free to act pro-socially without facing serious negative consequences.

Programme performance

On the basis of the information available to the evaluator, Table 5. below provides an overview of Programme B performance in relation to the objectives and outcomes and KPIs identified for the programme in 2015. The colour **green** is used to indicate the achievement of an objective or delivery of an outcome, the colour **orange** is used to indicate progress towards the achievement of an objective or delivery of an outcome and the colour red indicates little or no progress. Areas in which it has not been possible to draw a conclusion regarding programme impact on the basis of the information made available are marked in grey.

Programme B has made progress in relation to the achievement of three of four core objectives and the delivery of four of five outcomes. Programme B has achieved Supplementary objective 1 and all programme KPIs have been met. Given participants are typically engaged with a wide range of services while also taking part in Programme B, in each case, where progress is noted Programme B is conceived of as part of a causal package that has rendered these results rather than as a sufficient condition for their achievement.

While it is not possible to thoroughly evaluate progress in relation to the achievement of long terms objectives, it is clear that:

- Overall criminogenic risk has been reduced or stabilised in 52% of closed cases for which an initial and final YLS assessment was completed (10 of 19);
- Programme B is viewed by stakeholders as a crucial part of the youth justice infrastructure in the urban area in which it is based;
- Programme B is viewed by stakeholders as playing a vital role in facilitating a timely and coordinated interagency response to a-typical youth crime in the urban area in which it is based.

During interviews and consultations for this evaluation, programme participants identified the following aspects of the programme as working well and helping them to stay out of trouble (in descending order of frequency):

- Relationship with project worker (key worker)
- Overnights
- Support returning to education
- Court support

The major positive changes in the lives of participants that were credited to engagement in Programme B were as follows (in descending order of frequency):

- Not hanging around with the same people
- Going back to school/education
- Not getting into trouble with the Gardaí
- Not using drugs/alcohol
- Better mental health
- More confidence
- Finding things to do that I like

Participants expressed concerns around the timing and criteria for case closure. Participants also expressed concern regarding case closure following sentencing to a period of detention. In addition, participants identified the following as things that they would change about the programme:

- Longer period of engagement
- More overnights
- More day trips
- Support during weekends and/or evenings

Table 5: Programme B Performance

Core objectives	Short term outcomes	Long term outcomes	KPIs
5 Strengthen family relationships and support them to remain together.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved family dynamics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of young people remaining in their current living arrangements at the end of their programme.
6 Assist young people to develop problem solving skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved pro social behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved empathy amongst young people in the community; Reduced impulsivity. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people develop awareness of impact of their behaviour. 		
7 Assist young people to develop social and life skills including positive peer interaction and positive community engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people develop positive healthy peer relationships; Young people develop awareness of negative impact of substance misuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved relations between young people and Gardai; A more coordinated, individual and interagency planning and community response for young people. Young people abstain from substance misuse. Reduced offending and safer communities. 	
8 Support young people to maximise their educational and vocational opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people staying in education and going onto further education/employment. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of young people sustained in education/ vocational training or returned to education/vocational training.
Supplementary objective			KPIs
2 Deliver intervention dosage at the optimal level.	N.A.	N.A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 24 hours direct contact per week by each Full Time Project Worker; Minimum one home visit per month for each carer/parent. Provision of four month review process for each young person.

12 Programme B: Recommendations

Funding

Funding of Programme B is recommended for a period of one year in order to allow completion of a monitoring and evaluation framework that is particular to Programme B accompanied by systematic data collection and consistent programme reporting. As part of this initiative, the reasons underpinning the high volume of negative case closures should be explored in greater detail.

Assuming these steps are taken within this timeframe, continued funding of Programme B is recommended for a further three years to allow completion of an in-depth evaluation by 2023 including a full cost-benefit analysis that incorporates both financial data and social return on investment. Depending on the results of this exercise, it is recommended that possible extension of the Programme B model to other geographic areas can be given further consideration thereafter.

Programme model

The fact that 62% of cases closed to date have closed for negative reasons raises questions with regard to the suitability of the programme model and approach for the majority of the target group, particularly when the high correlation between these cases on the one hand and either increased overall risk or continuing high risk on final assessment on the other hand is taken into consideration.

Given the profile of risk and need within the target group it is possible that a portion of the target group may benefit from a much more gradual approach to relationship building as well as a significantly longer intervention that allows greater flexibility with regard to the achievement of personal objectives similar to that offered by Programme A. It is also possible that the visibly close working relationship between programme staff and referring agents in particular may stand in the way of relationship building for some participants. In order to explore how and if the Programme B model can and should be adjusted to meet the needs of this group or whether perhaps an additional service with a different model is required, a detailed review of each case is needed including participant profile, length of engagement, outcomes achieved and reasons for closing. As far as possible, former participants themselves should be consulted as part of this process. A full review of the results achieved by Programme A at the end of the four-year intervention period should also be instructive in this regard.

The recognised prioritisation of young people for referral to Programme B who demonstrate some level of motivation to change from the outset raises the possibility that a cohort of harder to reach atypical youth offenders exists in the programme catchment area and that this cohort is currently excluded from participation in Programme B. This possibility should be explored in consultation with referral agents in order to establish the level of unmet need and identify possible solutions which may include, for example, the need to fund additional

places on Programme B or the need to provide an alternative service in addition to Programme B.

Attention should also be paid to addressing as far as practicable the concerns raised by participants in relation to the timing and criteria for case closure including the possibility of a longer step-down service particularly for participants in areas where alternative services may not be available and the possibility of continued engagement following sentencing to a period of detention.

Monitoring and evaluation

Immediate steps should be taken to complete the development of the Programme B monitoring and evaluation framework.

Particular attention should be paid to data collection in areas where staff are of the view that the results of the YLS assessment do not accurately reflect the level of risk within the participant group. These include offending behaviour, education/employment and substance abuse.

In addition, attention should be paid to the collection of data in areas of particular relevance to the target group but which are not reflected in Part 1 of the YLS assessment. These include but are not limited to: mental illness, family criminality, learning difficulties and/or disabilities and homelessness. This could be achieved by collating data gathered for Part III of the YLS/CMI 2.0.

In order to assess the extent to which participants may be involved in organised criminal networks, attention should also be paid to the indicators for criminal network involvement highlighted in this report. These should be discussed with referral agents and applied periodically to the participant group.

In order to enhance the value of the stakeholders survey steps should be taken to reduce as far as possible the potential for response bias.

Programme staff have also made a number of suggestions as to how data collection might be enhanced and these should be followed up on. These suggestions include the following:

- Adaptation of referral forms to capture additional information;
- JLO service to provide detailed information regarding compliance with conditions of cautions;
- Collection of longitudinal data regarding offending behaviour in particular but also regarding other long term outcomes.

13 Overarching Conclusions and Recommendations

Pilot programmes can generate valuable learning for policy makers faced with the challenge of attempting to address wicked problems by testing innovative approaches and signposting which aspects of which interventions can work to ameliorate the problem under which particular circumstances as well as which aspects are less likely to have an impact.

In order to ensure that the learning generated by such programmes is captured, it is necessary for funders and grantees to agree a clear schedule and template for reporting progress from the outset and for grantees to be provided with guidance as to what information is required, how it should be presented and at what intervals.

In the case of Programme A and Programme B it would appear that this clarity and guidance has been lacking. Following conclusion of this evaluation it is therefore essential to reach agreement on these issues and ensure that both programmes are adequately skilled and resourced not only to meet their reporting obligations but to capture the learning they generate in a manner that may help to guide the future direction of youth justice policy in Ireland.

